

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: EQUIPPING SMALL CHURCHES TO MAKE
DISCIPLES BY INTEGRATING WESLEYAN PRINCIPALS

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ABSTRACT**TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: EQUIPPING SMALL CHURCHES TO
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This ministry thesis project will use qualitative research to address Wesleyan Transformational Leadership and how to apply the principles to equip churches to make disciples for Jesus Christ. The principles addressed within the project are defined by the acronym L.E.A.D: L-Love, E-Educate, A-Adapt and D-Duplicate. In today's politically correct culture, the persecution of the Christian worldview occurs in communities, politics, and the church. Transformational leadership introduces biblical principles in conjunction with time-tested leadership principles to promote and strengthen individual and corporate growth. Individual and corporate growth transforms lives of individuals as relationships and stories are shared. As transformation takes place, the individual's spirituality strengthens, lives are changed, and disciples are made. This project consists of a qualitative examination of leadership traits and qualities designed to promote growth. The Holy Scriptures will corroborate the leadership traits identified. This project will create a duplicatable plan that can be implemented by small membership church pastors.

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CHAPTER I Introduction

Statement of the Problem

According to most ecclesiastical sources one can encounter today, church membership is on the decline. Thom Rainer said, “Based on our research of 557 churches from 2004 to 2010, nine out of ten churches in America are declining or growing at a pace that is slower than that of their communities.”¹ Churches and denominations are spending time and resources in an attempt to stop the hemorrhage of members through creative and innovative plans, but decline continues and more and more people, especially those considered Millennials and those in Generation Z, are not attending, much less joining, the institutional church.

Individuals and organizations attempt to blame the cause of decline to aging membership, but this project will attempt to debunk this wrongly placed cause and introduce the decline of effective discipleship as cause for membership decline in the church. Ineffective discipleship occurs for a variety of reasons. This project will identify these reasons through qualitative research and surveys of small membership churches.

Many studies have already been conducted and provide statistical information, but statistical information without practical application does little to alleviate the decline in membership. For that reason, this project will address four areas of personal growth for church participants necessary for sustainable numerical growth in church membership. The areas to be addressed are Love, Educate, Adapt and Duplicate or LEAD. These four areas mimic Jesus, the Wesley’s and Paul which will be covered in Chapter 4.

¹ Thom S. Rainer, *I Am A Member* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), 4–5.

Leadership within the context of ministry can seem convoluted at times. In fact, leadership styles vary from individual to individual, creating a near impossible task to state which leadership style works best in every ministry setting. This fact should not make individuals weary but instead free them to know that ministry leadership is not about the individual leading but about whom they, as the leader, are working for. Henri J. Nouwen states, “One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly give in to the temptation of power...even though they continued to speak in the name of Jesus, who did not cling to his divine power but emptied himself and became as we are. Every time we see a major crisis in the Church...we always see that a major cause of rupture is the power exercised by those who claim to be followers of the poor and powerless.”² Nouwen’s statement explains the importance of understanding ourselves as leader and individuals.

In a personal communication, Dallas Willard defines Christian leadership as “power without position...position is not necessary, for authority has power that comes from the person.”³ James MacGregor Burns internalizes the struggle, stating, “All leaders are actual or potential power holders, but not all power holders are leaders.”⁴ Herein lies the difference between leader/disciple and leadership/discipleship. Another way to state what Burns is saying is that all disciples are leaders but not all leaders are disciples. For the church, the dilemma of discipleship lies in this restatement. In the small membership church, many leaders are chosen because of who they not taking into account their spiritual gifts. Many times this type of

² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 58–59.

³ Dallas Willard, Personal Communication author, February 15, 1991.

⁴ James M. Burns, “The Crisis of Leadership” in *The Leaders Companion: Insights on Leadership Through the Ages*, ed. J. T. Wren (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1995), 18.

leadership selection is due to who will do the job and often many jobs are held by a limited number of individuals.

Statement of Limitations

The project acknowledges that each denomination adheres to the traditions expounded by the founders of their faith tradition. Acknowledging that different traditions exist allows the writer and reader to move beyond denominationalism, beginning the process of making disciples for Jesus Christ.

This project primarily addresses the Wesleyan way of making disciples, which can be traced back to John Wesley and Charles Wesley. In order to stay true to the intent of this project, Wesley's sermons, notes, and journals will be a primary source of information gathered. The Wesleyan approach to discipleship will not be presented as the "only" way of discipleship. The intent of this project is to use a historical model as the basis for a model of discipleship that engages the generations of today and forward.

Theoretical Basis

Making disciples for Jesus Christ encompasses the mission of the universal church today. The Gospel of Matthew outlines the theological basis for discipleship in the church. Matthew 28:16–20 says:

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 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."⁵

⁵ Matthew 28:16–20 (*New International Version*).

Jesus sets the purpose and mission. His disciples are called to carry out the mission, which creates confrontation between the church and the world.

In the church, much emphasis has been given over the years on what it means to be a disciple, discipleship, leadership, and leadership development. One could argue that too much time trying to define and less time doing is one reason for the decline in mainline denominations today. In the scripture, the very heart of discipleship and leadership engages every follower of Christ with the purpose of their lives. A basic understanding of what it means to be a disciple and discipleship provides a starting point for spiritual and church growth.

The Gospel of Luke states, “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.’”⁶ Discipleship requires the disciple to go and tell others.

Discipleship requires the disciple to make disciples by offering the grace that comes from the Heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. The salvation that occurs in the individual leading them to discipleship comes only through Jesus Christ. Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”⁷ As the disciple lives out his or her faith, others are drawn in through the process of discipleship.

Discipleship is a process. Discipleship is a life-long process. In fact, it could be argued, discipleship in an intentional process of accepting Jesus (salvation) and requiring adherence to the Word of God (training) within a community of believers (Priesthood of all believers), which

⁶ Luke 10:1–3 (*New International Version*).

⁷ John 14:6 (*New International Version*).

results in a life change for the disciple and those who are discipled. Discipleship and training are mutually inclusive and necessary for proper leadership development in the church. Effective leadership, discipleship, and adherence to the Word of God moves the individual to productive stewardship applications.

Stewardship involves more than simply giving money to the church. Many churches get focused on the dollars turning inwardly. A church focused inwardly no longer asks “how the church can make a difference for the Kingdom” but rather views themselves as the center.⁸ Inward focused churches are in a death spiral, forgetting that Jesus sent them *out*.

Discipleship often gets confused with evangelism in the small membership church, and that confusion results in the lack of spiritual growth for the individuals in the discipleship relationship. And when there is a lack of spiritual growth for individuals within the church, membership will continue to decrease. This project will analyze discipleship and leadership from a resource and socio-economic focus. The effectiveness of a church’s discipleship program appears in the unity and morale of those who are moving through the life changing process—from simply attendees to true disciples. This project will analyze discipleship and leadership from a resource and socio-economic focus. The effectiveness of a church’s discipleship program appears in the unity and morale of those who are moving through the life changing process from simply attendees to true disciples.

Jesus gives a description of a disciple in Matthew: “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

⁸ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), 35.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”⁹ Grace is a main ingredient of the salvific change in the individual. Grace is when the individual realizes they can do nothing to save themselves. Salvation is a gift from God through the individual’s faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, disciple is defined as follows: A Holy Spirit and grace-filled follower of Jesus Christ who puts his or her faith into action. Individual action is the beginning of discipleship.

All disciples are leaders, but not all leaders are disciples. This statement seems unnecessary, but it engages the differences between the two descriptors. Who is a leader? One can find any number of definitions for “leader,” but for the purposes of this project, a “leader” is simply someone who guides or leads. This definition suggests that someone or something must be present to move a person, plan, or idea along toward a specific vision.

Max De Pree states that “the leader has three tasks to perform: (1) Define reality (2) Become a servant and a debtor to others and (3) Say thank you.”¹⁰ A good leader is an individual who allows him or herself to be transformed by the relationships he or she has with others. Good leaders allow themselves to grow spiritually, personally, and professionally through engaging others, education, and culture/tradition.

Leaders are not locked into any one style of leadership. Leadership styles vary but, as Marcus Buckingham explains, “Leaders rally people to a better future. Great leaders get us to feel that the future is possible and better than where we are now.”¹¹ Investigating leadership

⁹ Matthew 16:24–25 (*New International Version*).

¹⁰ Max De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1987).

¹¹ Marcus Buckingham, “What Great Managers Do” *Harvard Business Review* (2005, March 1): 71.

styles is beyond the scope of this paper, but a basic knowledge of leadership is imperative to recognize the link of the leader to the disciple and discipleship.

Rod Dempsey states, “Before a church embarks on the process of making disciples, there must be absolute clarity on what a disciple looks like.”¹² The disciple of Jesus Christ has three distinct guiding principles, which can be ascertained from the ten scriptural passages. These principles include: (1) Sacrificial, (2) Relational, and (3) Transformational. Using these guiding principles, Dempsey defines a “disciple” as follows: “A disciple is a person who has trusted Christ for salvation and has surrendered completely to Him. He or she is committed to practicing the spiritual disciplines in community and developing to their full potential for Christ and His mission.”¹³ Therefore, the definition of “disciple” for this project is: A Holy Spirit and grace-filled follower of Jesus Christ who puts their faith into action.

Purpose of the Project

Evangelism and discipleship are two different activities performed by the church in America. Churches and pastors, regardless of the size of the church, “lack commonly understood definitions.”¹⁴ While evangelism is necessary for churches and individuals to perform as Jesus commanded, it is discipleship of individuals which promotes growth numerically and spiritually. The target audience of this project is small membership churches. The purpose is to design a

¹² Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Discipleship Making Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&h Publishing Group, 2013), 26.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁴ Grey Matter Research, “National Study on Disciple Making in USA Churches,” Discipleship.org (Discipleship.org / Exponential, February 19, 2020), <https://discipleship.org/national-study-on-disciple-making-in-usa-churches/>, 2.

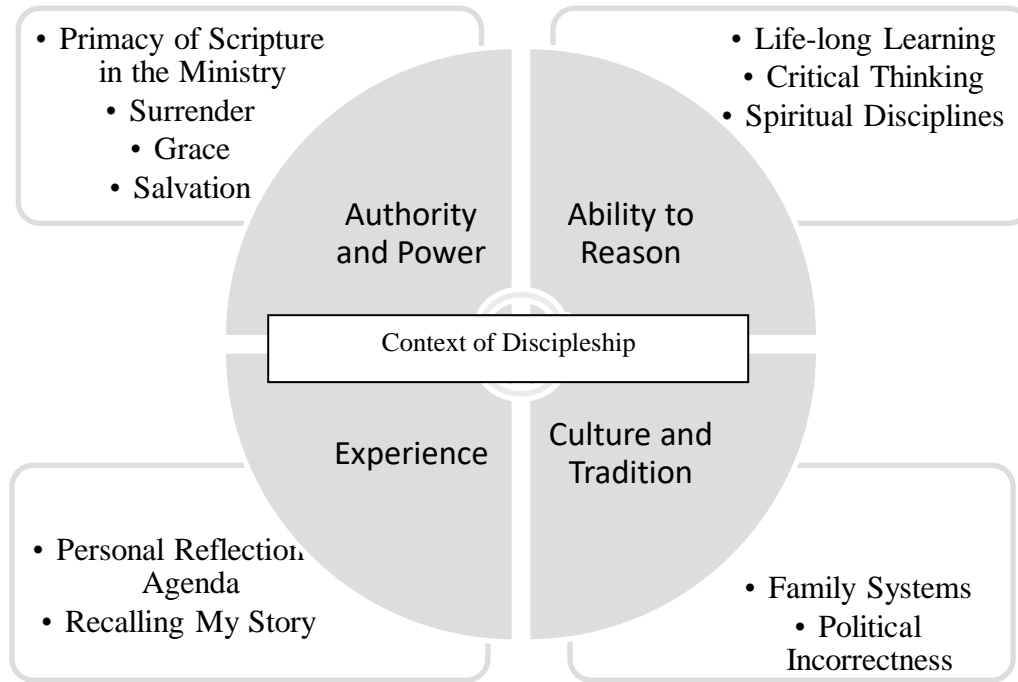
discipleship program which can be used by small membership churches to promote growth in average attendance, professions of faith, attendance in small groups, participation in missions, and the amount of dollars spent by the churches on missions.

The discipleship program developed uses the acronym L.E.A.D. which stands for Love, Educate, Adapt and Duplicate. The program is built on the four pillars of intentional, relational, sacrificial, and transformational. Throughout the following chapters evangelism and discipleship will be presented to better inform the reader. The discipleship program is designed to assist with formulation of a discipleship plan for the church.

Statement of Methodology

Given the current state of the church, a process of discipleship is needed. Discipleship looks different for each individual because each person is unique, but the context of discipleship exists in the individual authority, experience, tradition, and reason. Illustration one illustrates the context of discipleship, which is the foundation of this thesis project. This model is reflective for each individual as he or she begins to examine individual hearts. The importance of experience relates to the individual relationship between the person and Jesus Christ. Tradition and culture are less important but need to be addressed due to the different viewpoints encountered. A basic understanding of culture allows discipleship to address the untruths that exist in society today. Reason addresses the spiritual disciplines practiced, forming the basis of individual leadership and willingness to learn.

Illustration 1: Reflective Discipleship Model 15



The context of discipleship will be addressed in the subsequent chapters leading to the formation of the discipleship model designed for the small membership church.

The first chapter of the thesis project will examine the state of the church today. Using a survey sent to pastors the state of the church will be developed and will drive the remainder of the thesis project. Chapter 1 will identify “the state of the church.”

The second chapter will address specifically the small membership church and “How and why the church has gotten to where it is.” Using the same surveys, a thesis for the decline is identified. Identification and subsequent planning will lead to formation of the models in chapter four.

The third and fourth chapter will examine the correlation of individual spiritual discipline of evangelism and discipleship. Discipleship is best accomplished when a life change takes place. Life change “begins at the time of salvation and is a life-long commitment that takes time.”¹⁶ The change that Wesley acknowledges is “the ‘twice-born’ model where justification is joined with immediate deliverance from sin implying conversion as a dramatic, if not traumatic experience.”¹⁷

The fifth chapter will introduce discipleship from the early Wesleyan, Pauline, and Jesus movements to formulate a working model of discipleship. The project will discuss love, education, adaptation, and duplication as a model for discipleship. The discussion via surveys and data from other sources will be used to design and implement a discipleship program for the small membership church.

The last chapter will outline the plan developed by the two small membership churches pastored by the author. The author will develop a strategic plan that measures average worship attendance, professions of faith, small group ministries, and mission involvement in order to measure effectiveness of the program. This plan is duplicatable by other organizations as a measurement tool only.

Review of Literature

A vast array of articles, books, thesis writings, and journal articles addressing leadership exist today. Many articles address similar thoughts and ideas, suggesting leadership studies

¹⁶ John Emery White, *Rethinking the Church: A Challenge to Creative Redesign in An Age of Transition*, 7th ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 58.

¹⁷ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 155.

continue to evolve and morph into leadership practices that incorporate various leadership models. However, the question, “How does the church combine these leadership models with discipleship to make disciples?” still needs to be addressed.

As with leadership, many studies exist for discipleship. Discipleship and leadership cannot be separated. They are mutually inclusive. This section of the project reviews the literature used to develop the idea of transformation leadership leading to discipleship.

The Nehemiah Leadership Principle

Nehemiah encompasses the characteristics of a disciple and leader. Nehemiah becomes the leader who rebuilds Jerusalem. In this biblical story, the reader encounters a man who is sold out to God. The Nehemiah Leadership Principle begins by setting the scene for the story. Nehemiah was the cupbearer for the king. The dangerous position carried a degree of prestige. After all, Nehemiah held the attention and trust of the king. As Nehemiah receives word of the walls in Jerusalem, the cupbearer-turned-architect begins to pray for audience with the king. God places on his heart the need to rebuild the walls.

Nehemiah was persistent in his prayer. Nehemiah knows if God puts something into the individual’s heart, it can be done. The question is not so much a matter of “how” but “when.” Nehemiah continues to pray. The article moves away from Nehemiah’s time and begins to investigate applications for today. The article introduces three questions, the first of which is; “Does a crying need exist for something to be done?” Of course, the walls of Jerusalem had fallen, and safety was an urgent need. The article was written in 1982, but this question is still relevant today. In the U.S., the richest country in the world, people still live without shelter and the basics for life. This need is urgent and gives the church an opportunity to introduce Christ to the world. This article created a secondary question: What keeps the church from being more

active in local missions? Does the church only want the projects outside of their area of influence? For Nehemiah, the most urgent need was local: rebuilding the wall.

The second question the article introduces is: “Does the Bible suggest that God wants it done?” Of course, for Nehemiah, God was central to the commencement of working on the walls. As we can see from the life and teachings of Jesus, God is in the midst of everything. Nehemiah’s concern is for the people in Jerusalem who needed protection. Individuals today crave safety as well. The church becomes the hands and feet in the world as needs of individuals are addressed, so the answer to the question is “yes.”

The third question posed by the article is; “Will this task help God’s redeemed people?” Helping others should be a priority for every Christian. Many times, people base decisions on the “bang for the buck” scenario. Nehemiah overcomes this phenomenon by dividing the work on the wall based on where the people lived. This insured that people took ownership of the work being done at their own location. Helping God’s people should always be a consideration of the Christians, not matter how big our small. It is not about the size but the impact on a life.

The work that God calls us to is greater than any one person. The job of the Holy Spirit is to direct and lead us. Surrendering to the Holy Spirit gives the one undertaking the work courage to continue even against difficulties. If God called you to leadership, God will see you through. The old saying goes, “God does not call the equipped. God equips the called.”

Today, people quit on themselves and on others readily. Often the reasoning is simply, “I cannot do what you want me to do.” The Nehemiah principle reiterates that God is in control. Are we willing to surrender?

Autopsy of A Deceased Church

The book, *Autopsy of A Deceased Church*, written by Thom Rainer, addresses fourteen reasons why a church dies. Today, many churches find themselves in one or more of the fourteen categories Rainer introduces, which results in unhealthy environments and eventually death. Rainer uses case studies of once vital congregations to perform the autopsy and determine why each died. The case studies in this book assisted with the survey developed for the purposes of this project.

Kingdom Principles

The book, *Kingdom Principles*, by Gene Mims, is a great book for study by church leaders and others. In the book, the author gives the “1-5-4 principle.” The 1-5-4 principle represents the following: “1 – Driving force, 5 – Five things each church must do and 4 – Four results of Kingdom growth.”¹⁸ The driving force represents the Great Commission. Chapter 2 of this book covers biblical and practical elements of carrying out the Great Commission.

Each church must undertake five action items for church growth. Mims addresses each of the five essential church functions in detail. The first essential function is evangelism. The author defines evangelism as, “The good news spoken by believers and lived out in their lives.”¹⁹ The second essential function is discipleship, or “a process that begins after conversion and continues throughout the believer’s life”.²⁰ The third function is fellowship, *koi onia*. Ministry and worship

¹⁸ Mims, Gene, *Kingdom Principles for Church Growth*. (Nashville: Life Way Press, 2001), 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

comprise the last two essential functions of the church. These five functions are tilling the soil as the church prepares for the harvest.

The four results make up the harvest. The results are the measure of the church's effectiveness at planting and tilling. The harvest exists of numerical growth, spiritual transformation, ministry expansion, and Kingdom advance.

Finally, Mims discusses the application process for churches. Every person, every Christian, is a minister. As ministers, Christians are responsible for carrying out these Kingdom principles. The author makes it clear that this cannot be accomplished solely by humankind. Prayer, commitment, surrender, and the Holy Spirit are critical to the success of the 1 – 5 – 4 program.

Transforming Discipleship

The book *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*, by Dr. Greg Ogden offers timely information for leaders. Ogden offers the premise that many churches today are squandering opportunities to make disciples for Jesus Christ for reasons that speak to inadequate leadership, apathy, and lost vision of what followers of Christ are called to do.

If Ogden were to stop at the issues without offering hope, the book would simply be a treatise of why Christianity is failing. Thankfully, Ogden presents the scriptural way of disciple making and is careful to offer details that lead to a plan. Ogden's thesis is found in the discipleship process he outlines, called "triads." A triad is when we move beyond the traditional discipleship method engaging two or more individuals. Ogden states, "Triads provide the setting

to bring together the necessary elements for transformation or growth to maturity in Christ.”²¹

The elements to which he alludes are found in scripture, giving the church a biblical foundation for discipleship.

Ogden introduces the premise that effective discipleship can be examined and duplicated from scripture. In part two of the book, Ogden shares his view of discipleship and challenges the reader to form his or her own biblical foundation of discipleship. Biblical foundations for a discipleship plan are imperative to returning authenticity to the process of growing disciples for Jesus Christ. One component of effective discipleship is the maturity of the individual’s discipling and being disciplined. According to Ogden, “By following the imperative of Scripture, we can work within small discipling units to carefully grow people in the faith...of our age.”²²

Growing in Christ is not something that simply happens. It requires commitment from the individual. Leadership is derived from continuous commitment toward discipleship—a leadership that results in “denying oneself and taking up your cross daily.”²³ Jesus and Paul worked a discipleship plan that can be readily adapted today. In order for the church to effectively make disciples, we must return to simplicity. Larger is not always better. Discipleship for Jesus and Paul occurred in the context of what the church today calls “small groups.”

Growing in Christ means growing in love. As the participants of the discipling process grow in love, multiplication occurs. People have an innate need to be loved. Transformational

²¹ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 15.

²² *Ibid.*, 61.

²³ Luke 9:23 (*New International Version*).

discipleship moves the participant through relationship building, accountability, and authenticity. Together, the participants “build a bridge” in which growth, love, and transformation occur.

Disciple Making Is...

Understanding the importance of the Great Commission and how the Christian is called to be a part of the Great Commission is key to Wesleyan Discipleship. *Discipleship Making Is...*, written by Rod Dempsey and Dave Earley, covers philosophical and biblical foundations of discipleship introducing the reader to scripture and thought processes for disciple making.

Jesus’ words in Matthew are one basis for Rod Dempsey’s and Dave Earley’s definition of a disciple. Dempsey uses ten scriptural passages to formulate his definition of a disciple: “Before a church embarks on the process of making disciples, there must be absolute clarity on what a disciple looks like.”²⁴ The disciple of Jesus Christ has three distinct guiding principles, which can be ascertained from the ten scriptural passages. These principles include: (1) Sacrificial, (2) Relational, and (3) Transformational. Using these guiding principles, Dempsey defines a disciple as follows: “A disciple is a person who has trusted Christ for salvation and has surrendered completely to Him. He or she is committed to practicing the spiritual disciplines in community and developing to their full potential for Christ and His mission.”²⁵

This book covers models of discipleship making, which will be used here to illustrate the relevance of history to the present for small groups in light of Wesleyan discipleship. Dempsey

²⁴ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Discipleship Making Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 26–27.

²⁵ Dave Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity: How the Church Does More by Doing Less* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 28.

and Earley elaborate on small group models by working through four different model types, eventually settling on three distinct models. The three models given credence in their book are Traditional, Organic, and Hybrid. The Attractional model is the fourth model mentioned. Each model will be presented in light of Wesleyan discipleship in this project.

Deliberate Simplicity

Sometimes bigger is not better. Today, many churches are trying to be everything to everybody only to fall short of the intent of the Great Commission. In the book, *Deliberate Simplicity*, the author Dave Browning establishes the thesis that smaller is both better and easier. The book encourages the reader that the church is not lost but rather is at the brink of revival. As a pastor of a small membership church, the individual gains a greater insight as to what is truly important. The remainder of this review will take the points of the book and apply them to the author's specific situation. The information in this book will have different applications to different size churches, but the message of the book has practical applications to every size church.

Browning writes that church should be *simple*. Many churches have made church about "the show" instead of the Savior. Three areas of emphasis in the church include worship, small groups, and outreach.²⁶ These three actions are common to all size churches. Browning addresses the areas within the context of minimality. Browning writes, "It's not about the hours you put in; it's about what you put into those hours."²⁷ This notion of minimality is opposite to what many

²⁶ Dave Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity: How the Church Does More by Doing Less* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 35.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

United Methodist pastors are taught. In the high church order of worship, many activities are placed into the time allotment, which leaves little if any time to allow the Spirit to move.

Ritual, tradition, and liturgy take precedence over the Gospel in many churches today. Browning refers to churches that try to be everything to everybody. These churches take on the task of developing programs that do not complement their mission or have little regard as to how they will be implemented. In other words, church can be so crowded with “fat” that the church goer never tastes the “meat.” In the deliberately simplistic church, the activities stress “worship—loving God more, small groups—loving people more, and outreach—loving more people.”²⁸ The deliberately simple church is a church driven by relationships that work to fulfill the Great Commission.

Church Transfusion

The main theme of *Church Transfusion* by Neil Cole and Phil Helfer is recognizing that change requires the church to be intentional about moving toward becoming a more fluid, loving entity. According to Cole, “Churches should become simpler, more organic disciple-making spiritual families that reproduce.”²⁹

Love is a choice. Love is more than duty. Cole challenges the church to move beyond duty and embrace “the new covenant that would provide a true and complete salvation and transformation.”³⁰ Embracing the new covenant requires the church to take up their cross and

²⁸ Dave Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity: How the Church Does More by Doing Less* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 47.

²⁹ Neil Cole and Phil Helfer, *Church Transfusion: Changing Your Church Organically From the Inside Out*, (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2012), xiv.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

follow Jesus, “releasing believers to reach their full God given potential.”³¹ Therefore, for transfusion to be a part of the churches future, the church needs to realize its DNA.

Cole uses an analogy that he refers to as the “theology of death.”³² “Death always comes before resurrection,” which suggests churches, like individuals, must die to self.³³ A church that tries to preserve its life focuses inward trying to preserve current structures and thereby loses out in the end as the institution takes precedence over relationship.

Finally, the book *Church Transfusion* supports the concept that “large” does not always mean “good.” Transfusion occurs more readily in simpler settings where the focus is relational. Relationships move the organization from superficiality to authenticity as values, goals, and needs are shared. For the small membership church, change in the way church is done can bring about growth—spiritually and numerically.

True Discipleship

What does a disciple and discipleship look like? Should individuals be able to recognize disciples based on the way they carry themselves? These two questions drive the discussion in the book, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus*, by John Koessler. Koessler states, “Discipleship is not primarily a matter of what we do. It is an outgrowth of what we are.”³⁴ True discipleship moves us from simply knowing to being.

³¹ Neil Cole and Phil Helfer, *Church Transfusion: Changing Your Church Organically From the Inside Out*, (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2012), xiv., 18.

³² Ibid., 71.

³³ Ibid, 71.

³⁴ John Koessler, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 12.

Discipleship is a process. Discipleship is a life-long process. In fact, discipleship, it could be argued, is an intentional process of accepting Jesus (salvation) and requiring adherence to the Word of God (training) within a community of believers (Priesthood of all believers), which results in a life change for the disciple and those whom are discipled. According to Koessler, “The disciple has entered into a transformational relationship that will ultimately change the individual into His image.”³⁵ In order for the church to effectively make disciples, a return to simplicity is necessary. Larger is not always better. Discipleship for Jesus and Paul occurred in the context of what the church calls “small groups” today. Discipleship cannot occur outside of a trusting, loving, authentic relationship.

One component of effective discipleship is the maturity of the individuals in the discipleship relationship. Growing in Christ is not something that simply occurs. It requires commitment from the individual. A disciple becomes stronger through continuous commitment to discipleship, which results in “denying oneself and taking up your cross daily.”³⁶ Jesus and Paul worked a discipleship plan that can be readily adapted in the church and community today.

The Next Generation Leader

Andy Stanley’s book, *Next Generation Leader*, investigates how actions and decisions of individuals within the organization become the catalyst for change in an organization. Stanley addresses leadership by analyzing the Competence, Courage, Clarity, Coaching, and Character of the leader. Stanley believes these are “the irreducible minimum, the essentials for next

³⁵ John Koessler, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 191.

³⁶ Luke 9:23 (*New International Version*).

generation leaders.”³⁷ These essentials move the leader toward self-awareness. Self-awareness moves the individual into the realm of "becoming" from "doing." Becoming becomes the defining measure of one's character and resolve.

Personal Styles and Effective Performance

Many theories exist to explain the way relationships develop and operate, but no theory is universal. This is one of the challenges pastors and church leaders must address when developing leaders. Each individual has patterns of behavior that define their individual self, but we do not need to understand everyone's inner self in order to develop a relationship with individuals. Understanding their behavior helps the leader identify his or her personal style. For the leader, this is vital to “understanding how someone's style will affect them.”³⁸

Each individual style is different and varies according to the social environment. Individuals typically react differently given the social setting, whether it be at home or at work. However, it is not so much how one reacts to a situation in the different environments as it is to the “individual's ability to process and respond with versatility.”³⁹ Many different tools exist today that allow the leader to assist with identifying different behaviors of potential leadership. One of the most widely known and used tools is the DISC profile addressed in *Personal Styles and Effective Performance*.

³⁷ Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 11.

³⁸ David W. Merrill and Roger H. Reid, *Personal Styles and Effective Performance: Make Your Style Work for You*, (Radnor, PA: Chilton Book, 1981) 3.

³⁹ David W. Merrill and Roger H. Reid, *Personal Styles and Effective Performance: Make Your Style Work for You*, (Radnor, PA: Chilton Book, 1981), 178.

The Forgotten Ways

The book *The Forgotten Ways*, by Alan Hirsch, is an investigative look at why Christian churches are not reproducing today with the zeal and drive of the church in the past. The early church numbered fewer than ten thousand in the first century, but by the year 300 early church Christians made up ten percent of the population or approximately six million.⁴⁰ However, today, in the United Methodist Church, membership numbers have been on a steady decline. The question is; Why has the church been losing members?

Hirsch presents a diagram of an organization that comes from his experience as well and research from other sources. Hirsch labels his findings as Apostolic Genius and missional DNA or mDNA. His thesis suggests the church can return to be a movement by returning to a missional ecclesia. Hirsch's thesis drives the reader to look at methods, stories, and theology to initiate this new movement for making disciples by recalling the "Forgotten Ways."⁴¹ Hirsch refers to the Forgotten Ways as "that energy all God's people have within themselves the same potencies that energized the early Christian movement and that are currently manifest in Apostolic Genius."⁴² Hirsch's theory is that we simply do not know how to unlock this primal power today.

The book is divided into two very distinct sections that assist the reader with garnering the information Hirsch presents. In the first section (two chapters) the information presented sets the scene for the second, allowing the reader to travel the journey toward transformation and

⁴⁰ Robert Louis Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2012), 65-66.

⁴¹ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 22.

multiplication. *The Forgotten Ways* offers the reader a prescriptive look at changing the missional paradigm to making disciples, and discipleship.

Hirsch challenges the reader to test his or her understanding of church growth. Change is not achieved easily in an organization that historically, since Constantine, has become more and more institutionalized. Especially in the rural, small membership churches of today, death may occur before change takes place. As churches move away from the attractional model, older institutionalized churches are finding it difficult to maneuver as people are not drawn to the building or denomination any longer. Hirsch produces a matrix that allows the reader to recognize three historical eras and characteristics of the church.⁴³ The church, as noted by the matrix, has moved from missional to attractional and back to missional. Many of the institutionalized churches are too entrenched in ritualism and traditionalism to adapt to the necessary changes quickly. As a result, discipleship is not a leading practice because many are not familiar with or comfortable making disciples. Sadly, the attractional model church removed the relationship component and replaced it with innate objects. Focus on mDNA allows the church to become more intentional in moving from traditionalism and embracing the movement of the Holy Spirit. As the church surrenders to God's plan, the church begins to focus on Christ born, crucified, and resurrected.

At a time in which the church is losing numbers, *The Forgotten Ways* is a timely addition to the church transformation conversation. Many churches today suffer from traditionalism; they still do the things they did in the past in the same way as they did in the past. With the ever-changing world, churches must adapt in order to be more effective in carrying out the Great Commission; this means changing to meet individuals outside of the church walls. It means

⁴³ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 64.

taking the Gospel to the masses. *The Forgotten Ways* offers distinct insight to change and how the church needs to

The Works of John Wesley, Volumes 1–14

The Works of John Wesley will serve as the primary source for John Wesley's thoughts, letters, sermons, and journal for this project. All of Wesley's manuscripts have been compiled from the primary sources into these volumes to ease investigation and research. Wesley wrote a lot but published little during his lifetime. Wesley would note that "it was his earnest desire to save his own soul and them that heard him."⁴⁴

The information in the fourteen volumes will be used to identify the thoughts of Wesley as they pertain to the Great Commission. Information will be used to formulate a model of discipleship that will be compared to more contemporary models for the development and implementation of the Wesleyan Discipleship Model.

Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church

The book, *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church* by Ronald Crandall and Herb Miller is somewhat dated, but it addresses specifically small church growth. Small membership churches have specific characteristics and obstacles that are not always consistent with medium to large churches. The obstacles of small churches include "lack of visioning to a lack of finances."⁴⁵ Crandall presents information relevant to the small church overcoming these

⁴⁴ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, reprinted from the 1872 edition issued by Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London, vol. 1, 2, *Journals*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2007), Preface.

⁴⁵ Ronald K. Crandall, and Herb Miller, *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 60.

obstacles and turning the church around so that vitality returns. Arguably, many of the elements of this book can be found in books that are more current, but this book addresses the needs of the small membership church.

Leading the Small Church

Leading the Small Church by Glenn Daman challenges pastors to return to the simplicity of ministry by caring for and loving the people they serve through proclaiming God’s Word in relevant, transformational ways. Crandall calls for the ministry professional to return to a “much simpler biblical model of ministry,” instead of the prevalent business model espoused today.⁴⁶ According to Daman, biblical leadership “provides the church with a godly model to follow in leading and proclaiming the Word.”⁴⁷

Scriptural References

Throughout scripture, one can envision what it means to follow God by being obedient to all His commands. Being a disciple means that regardless of the situation, an individual will follow the sovereign God who controls all things. For the purpose of this project, ten biblical scriptures will be used to guide the discussion on discipleship and leadership.

Galatians 5:22–25 addresses being filled with the Holy Spirit. The disciple displays the fruit of the spirit, which manifests in their actions:

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those

⁴⁶ Glenn Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.⁴⁸

John 14:6 is crucial to describing who a disciple follows. Disciples must decide what they believe and who they will follow. In this passage Jesus exhorts an uncompromising doctrine. Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”⁴⁹

In Luke 14:27, it is God’s grace at work in the disciple that allows the disciple to carry the Cross. Jesus said, “Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”⁵⁰ Discipleship becomes the shared relationship of the disciple with Jesus, and the cross becomes the focus for one’s vertical and horizontal relationships.

Realizing that all are sinners, it is only by God’s grace through Jesus Christ that one can be saved. This is the focus of Luke 17:1–4. Yet, it goes further than this. An individual disciple must be willing to forgive and love, which allows the fruit of the Holy Spirit to manifest.

Jesus said to his disciples, “Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive.”⁵¹

Forgiveness, therefore, becomes a prerequisite of grace for every believer. The disciple understands that forgiveness and love are mutually inclusive.

⁴⁸ Galatians 5:22–25 (*New International Version*).

⁴⁹ John 14:6 (*New International Version*)

⁵⁰ Luke 14:27 (*New International Version*).

⁵¹ Luke 17:1–4 (*New International Version*).

Truth comes from the Word of God. In the Word of God, we encounter endless hope. Hope is the certainty of life eternal, which comes from Jesus Christ. In John 8:31–32, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”⁵²

Love is described in many ways. For many it is simply an emotion while for others becomes a strong affinity for another. John 13:34–35 describes how the love one practices comes from their relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said,

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.⁵³

Karl Barth wrote, “God himself is present, not in weakness that permits men to suffer without hope and perspective, but in the sovereignty of his love.”⁵⁴ It is the love of God that gives humankind the ability to love fully.

Today, too many individuals think membership carries along perks without any responsibility. Membership for many has become about being served instead of being of service. James warns the believer against only being hearers of the Word. In James 1:22, James speaks to action through faith, saying, “But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.”⁵⁵ Other translations of this verse help the reader to ascertain James’ meaning: “Alternative translation models for this verse may be: 1) You must obey [or follow] God’s

⁵² John 8:31–32 (*New International Version*).

⁵³ John 13:34–35 (*New International Version*).

⁵⁴ Donald G. Bloesch, *God, the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 3.

⁵⁵ James 1:22 (*New International Version*).

message and not just listen to it. If you only listen, it is the same as lying to yourself. 2) Don't just listen to God's message but obey it. Otherwise you simply deceive yourself."⁵⁶

It seems easier to walk away when God is calling His people to action. In John 21:15–19, scripture speaks to how God's love existing in the life of the believer feeds and transforms lives. In the church today, understanding the mission is vital to living out God's plan for His people. Transformation comes from loving each other, being fed, practicing one's faith, and serving with courage:

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."⁵⁷

In this pericope, the believer is reminded that leadership "should not be from a goal of achieving personal gain but from a sense of calling to serve others."⁵⁸ Leadership and subsequently discipleship is derived from love. Further, this scripture makes clear that God has a task for Peter in the post-resurrection.

⁵⁶ Jin Loh and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Letter from James*, UBS Handbook Series (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1997), 48.

⁵⁷ John 21:15–19 (*New International Version*).

⁵⁸ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, vol. 25B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 336.

Everything Jesus has given the believer the authority over can be accomplished. Throughout scripture, the power of God can be seen in the people of God—from Moses to Nehemiah to Paul. Matthew 17:20–21 reminds the believer that God uses even the smallest of faith: “He said to them, ‘Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.’”⁵⁹ This is no different for the church today. When we place God’s will before our will and surrender to His authority, great things can be accomplished.

The Book of Nehemiah serves to illustrate the need to assign individuals in the church to areas where their strengths lie. The development and implementation of the discipleship plan in Chapter 4 relies heavily on leadership development which is not traditional in the small membership church. The leadership/discipleship plan developed in Chapter 4 will outline L.E.A.D. acronym, suggesting that growth is first love, second spiritual through education, third adaptive to individual churches, and fourth reproducible.

In the small membership church, spiritual growth in the church is “focused in its ministry” and not being everything to everybody.⁶⁰ Membership growth is an intentional act of discipleship which requires relationship to be built, sacrifice to take place and transformation to occur. All four elements are present in the L.E.A.D. model of discipleship.

⁵⁹ Matthew 17:20–21 (New International Version).

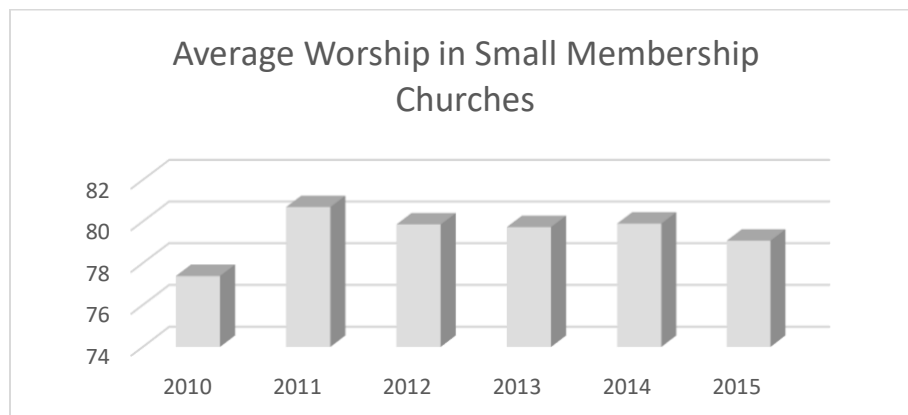
⁶⁰ Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues*, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005), 32.

CHAPTER 2 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN THE VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

In the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church, the small membership church represents fifty-two (52) percent of the total churches.⁶¹ For the purposes of this project, a “small membership church” is considered a church with one hundred fifty (150) or fewer members. These churches are located throughout the state in rural, suburban, and city settings, but a quick glance at the statistics for the Virginia Conference depicts a trend of declining average worship attendance in both small membership churches and the conference as a whole.

The conference is likewise suffering from a decline in general membership and active churches. The number of small membership churches has increased, while the average worship in small membership churches have declined. Graph 1 shows how growth in average worship has declined from 2011.

Graph 1: Average Worship in the Small Membership Church⁶²

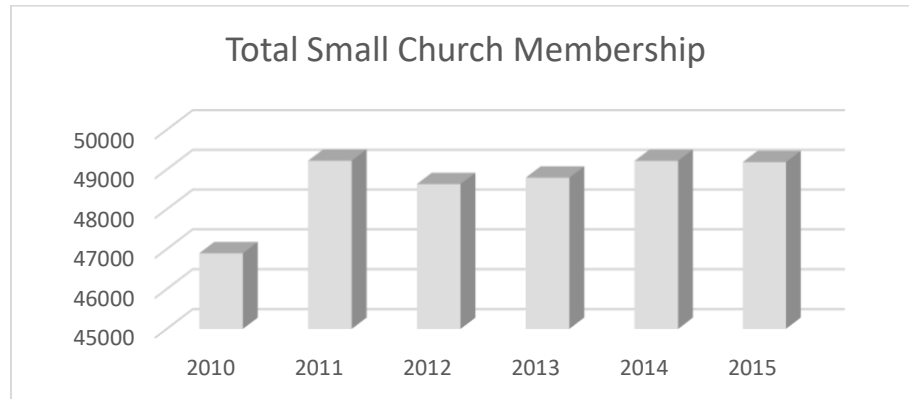


⁶¹ Information inferred from the data presented by the Conference Comptroller at Virginia United Methodist Conference Statistics. <http://vaumc.org/StatisticalData>

⁶² Virginia United Methodist Conference Statistics. <http://vaumc.org/StatisticalData>

The increase in average worship is due to redesignation of churches from medium size to small. Graph 2 correlates with Graph 1 to corroborate the claim of declining average attendance with the increase of small membership churches.

Graph 2: Total Small Church Membership in the Virginia Conference⁶³



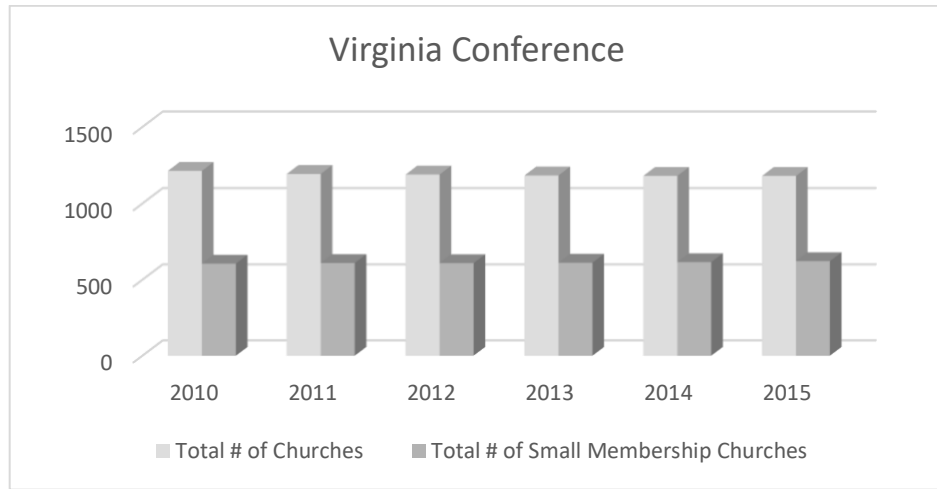
In the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church, average worship is on the decline, the number of overall churches is on the decline, and the number of small churches is increasing. What has created this anomaly within the Virginia United Methodist Conference?

Many of the mid-to-large churches are losing members, which moves their churches to a different category. In the Virginia Conference, the number of small membership churches is being driven by the number of church plants and the number of medium size churches being redesignated as small membership churches. However, many churches are closing reducing the total number of churches.⁶⁴

⁶³ Virginia United Methodist Conference Statistics. <http://vaumc.org/StatisticalData>

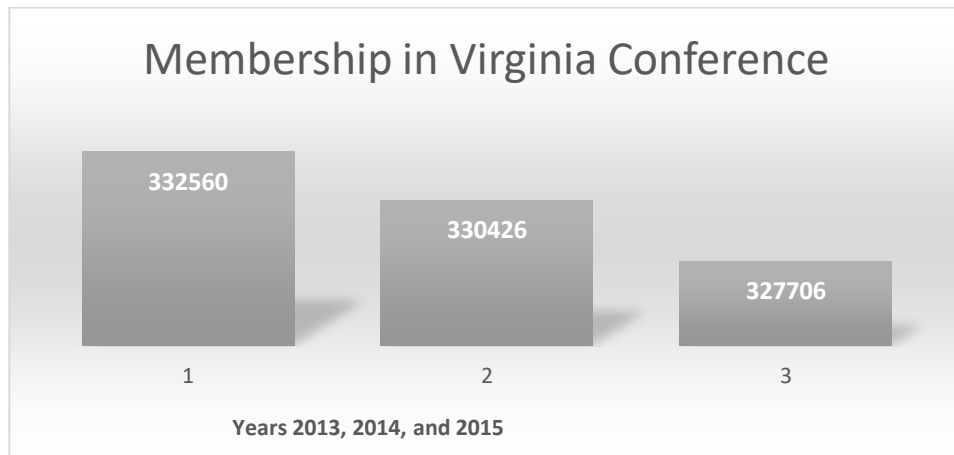
⁶⁴ Ibid.

Graph 3: Total # of Churches vs. Total # of Small Churches⁶⁵



Statistics presented by the statistician for the Virginia Conference illustrates the decline in membership in 2013, 2014, and 2015. Graph 4 illustrates this decline numerically. These declines represent a 1.5 percent decrease in membership in the 3-year period.

Graph 4: Numerical Decline of Membership in the Virginia Conference⁶⁶



⁶⁵ Virginia United Methodist Conference Statistics. <http://vaumc.org/StatisticalData>

⁶⁶ Ibid.

What does this mean for United Methodist Church in the Virginia Conference? What are the reasons behind the decline?

Thom Rainer suggests that the decline is a common occurrence throughout Christendom. Rainer says, “Two-thirds of the builder generation are Christians while only fifteen percent of millennial generation are Christians.”⁶⁷ A whole generation is missing from church membership today. According to Barna, “only three in ten millennials (28%) have attended church in the last week and only thirty-three percent of Gen-Xers.”⁶⁸ Many individuals are searching for other ways to find fellowship. For many churches, membership is more aligned with “age, ethnicity, and geography”⁶⁹ suggesting individuals seek commonality instead of diversity. Consumerism has infiltrated the church and church attendance is no longer relevant to the younger generations. In fact, according to research by the Barna Group, “two out of five believe that church and religion are part of the problem.”⁷⁰

Membership

The book of Acts presents the beginning history of the church and how quickly the church grew. Numerically and spiritually the church grew exponentially throughout the first century and beyond. Robert Wilken, professor of history at the University of Virginia states:

At the end of the first century, Christians numbered fewer than ten thousand in the Roman Empire. By the end of the year 200, the number increased to twelve thousand. However,

⁶⁷ Thom S. Rainer, *I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude That Makes the Difference*, (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), 5.

⁶⁸ *Barna Trends 2017: What's New and What's Next at the Intersection of Faith and Culture*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 148.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

by the year 300, Christians made up 10 percent of the population or approximately six million.⁷¹

Since 1970 the membership United Methodist Church has been in decline.⁷²

In his book *Forgotten Ways*, Hirsch presents a diagram of an organization that comes from his experience as well and research from other sources. He addresses his findings as Apostolic Genius and missional DNA or mDNA. Hirsch suggests the church return to being a movement by returning to a missional ecclesia or the “Forgotten Ways.”⁷³ Hirsch refers to the Forgotten Ways as “that energy espoused by the early church which can become the driving force unlocking the power of the early church by manifest in today’s Apostolic Genius.”⁷⁴

mDNA and the Apostolic Genius are driven by six reproducible understandings, which are present and understood by Paul and the Wesley’s. The first is “Jesus is Lord.”⁷⁵ The mDNA and Apostolic Genius are Christo-centric. The second understanding is “becoming like Jesus by embodying his message” through reclamation of the Great Commission.⁷⁶ Discipleship for Paul and the Wesley’s contained an element of evangelism and spiritual maturity. The third is “Missional-Incarnational Impulse inherent to the great missional movements of the past embeds

⁷¹ Robert Louis Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2012), 65-66.

⁷² General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church. <http://www.gc.ah.org/history/united-methodist-membership-statistics>

⁷³ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 22.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

and seeds the gospel into the different cultures and peoples encountered.”⁷⁷ Adherence to scripture is crucial to success. The fourth element, “Apostolic Environment,” deals with leadership and ministry requirements needed to impact the movement.⁷⁸ In this step we experience love, education, adaptation, and duplication. These four elements lead us to the final two characteristics, which deal with the “Organic system and *Communitas*.”⁷⁹ Organic and simplistic characteristics are what we realize in all of Jesus’, Paul’s and Wesley’s discipleship activities.

Change is not achieved easily, as churches have become institutionalized. Especially in the rural, small membership churches of today death may occur before change takes place. Many of the institutionalized churches are too entrenched in ritualism and traditionalism to adapt to the needed changes quickly. As a result, discipleship is not a leading practice because many are not familiar with or comfortable making disciples. Sadly, the attractional model church removed the relationship component and replaced it with innate objects. Focusing on mDNA allows the church to become more intentional in moving from traditionalism to embracing the movement of the Holy Spirit. As the church surrenders to God’s plan, the church begins to focus on Christ born, crucified, and resurrected.

As the church moves back to missional focus, the church is moving back to a predominately *relational* experience for individuals. Hirsch states, “When dealing with discipleship, and the related capacity to generate authentic followers of Jesus, we are dealing

⁷⁷ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

with the single most crucial factor” in mDNA.⁸⁰ Discipleship requires one person to be dedicated to a cause greater than self, mainly to making disciples, to Jesus Christ. However, this person should not see discipleship as the end but rather a part of a longer journey where “it is the fulfillment of his or her destiny.”⁸¹

Hirsch introduces the mDNA component of Missional-Incarnational Impulse. This component speaks to the churches organic dimension. In any entity life continues and is dependent upon the entities ability to reproduce. The missional church is a sending church and is “embodied and lived out in the missional impulse.”⁸² The missional nature of the church today has moved from a static attractional model to the more dynamic missional model which is dependent upon individuals moving in and out of community. The fluidity of the relationships created in the missional church allows individuals to come into close proximity of God’s presence in the work of the church.

As the individual’s lifestyle becomes dependent on the communal quality of the church, the body moves through an incarnational birth. Hirsch writes, “The Incarnation not only qualifies God’s acts in the world but must also qualify ours.”⁸³ Scripture supports this statement in 1 Corinthians 9:22–23, “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.”⁸⁴ The church takes the gospel out into the world engaging

⁸⁰ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 102.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 129.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁸⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:22–23 (*New International Version*).

individuals where they live and work. People are transformed as disciples are made.

“Incarnational ministry essentially means taking the church to the people, rather than bringing people to the church.”⁸⁵

Discipleship and the missional-incarnational mDNA of the church become a part of the apostolic environment of the church. The environment supports the activities geared to equipping, leading, and growing the disciples. In fact, the apostolic kingdom environment defines the church and gives meaning to the structure the church. An organic entity is alive and thrives by “becoming an upside-down kingdom.”⁸⁶ One characteristic of the upside-down apostolic kingdom environment is to focus upwardly and outwardly.

Focusing upward toward our Creator places us in the presence of God while focusing outwardly places emphasis on others becoming a servant. Fluidity and reproduction make the apostolic environment kingdom focused through serving, worship, and being authentically in love with Jesus and the mission to make disciples.

Over the last four decades, the church has moved from being the center of communities to become a spoke in the wheel of life. Busyness dominates the lives of individuals as they try to accomplish more things from position to power. In fact, one could state that the world never shuts down with the advent of the internet and economic globalization. As a result, the church must now compete with other consumer needs and wants.

Changing the way church is done to become more fluid and less structured allows the church to migrate more readily in an age of consumerism. The missional-incarnational life of the

⁸⁵ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 135.

⁸⁶ Neil Cole and Phil Helfer, *Church Transfusion: Changing Your Church Organically from the Inside Out* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-bass, 2012) p.9–12.

church is to find and develop Christ followers rather than church members. This suggests the need for intentional discipleship which constitutes a paradigm shift from members to disciples.

Systemic Issues in the Small Membership Church

While membership does not seem to be important to the millennials, church membership is biblical. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:12–14:

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.⁸⁷

This suggests each individual is a part of something larger. Each believer is a vital component and necessary for the Gospel to be spread. Paul then follows this with the infamous “Love Chapter” in 1 Corinthians 13, thereby suggesting “love as an important part of biblical church membership.”⁸⁸

The danger of membership comes not from the people but from the corporate church. The push for numerical growth appears to be causing a disconnect, especially in the small membership church. Membership and vitality are not mutually inclusive. A church can be filled with “members” but lack the vitality that allows the church to make disciples. Family dynamics in the small membership church creates a sense of “mine-ness,” prohibiting the urgency of the Great Commission. Individuals become comfortable because the church quickly becomes a family chapel instead of a healthy, vital church.

⁸⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:12–14 (*New International Version*)

⁸⁸ Thom S. Rainer, *I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude That Makes the Difference*, (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), 13.

The systemic issue created by the family dynamics becomes personal, which in return mires small church membership in a cycle of decline. The leadership of the church begins to look for “programmatic change” instead of systemic change.⁸⁹ Programmatic change is seen by the leaders as offering a quick explanation to the decline. The family dynamic prevents the leadership from acknowledging that the reason for decline is housed in the family system denying any responsibility for decline. In the unhealthy church, the leadership begins to look for whom or what to blame. The pastor becomes the main reason to blame for decline. In many churches, this limits the continuity of pastoral leadership, which ultimately prevents the needed changes from taking place in the unhealthy small church.

The dysfunctionality of the family dynamics in the small membership church mimics the dysfunctionality of the families in leadership positions in the church. For example, examining an individual’s personal medical record can determine the individual’s predisposition to a variety of health problems. Likewise, the health of the church can often be determined by the functionality or dysfunctionality of the families that make up the small membership church. Many factors can lead to a church’s unhealthiness. Unhealthy churches cannot produce a good, fruitful ministry. Jesus said in Matthew 7:18, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” These factors include “conflict, inward focus, cultural indifference, poor leadership, lack of vision and purpose, and poor self-esteem.”⁹⁰

Church unhealthiness and decline do not happen overnight. The unhealthy church has been in decline for years. These churches do not recognize the issues until they begin “dying a

⁸⁹ Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues*, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005), 23.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

slow death robbing the next generation of knowing the gospel.”⁹¹ George Barna describes the unhealthy churches as “churches who are in ministry in theory only. In these churches, outreach is non-existent. These churches have effectively completed their life as a church.”⁹² Without change, the membership of these churches will continue to decline and many of these churches will close. Only when the right change is introduced can the churches be revived.

Transformation of the Unhealthy Church

Transformation of the unhealthy church requires work, and like its decline, it will not happen overnight. In a day when postmodern thoughts permeate society, the church suffers from the loss of absolutes in societal thoughts. Postmodern thought is void of truth. Therefore, the church needs to address the issue of theology. In the United Methodist Church today, many groups are attempting to establish credence for what the United Methodist individual will believe. This positioning within the church began in the 1970’s and continues today. The church’s decline can be therefore attributed to the loss of truth in the postmodern society; the church too has been affected by the loss of absolute truth and morals. George Barna states, “The church is affected by the societal changes as people wholeheartedly believe things that are antithetical to what the Bible teaches.”⁹³ Unchallenged, these beliefs begin to mold the church to societal norms instead of being a center of hope to challenge societal norms.

⁹¹ Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 111.

⁹² George Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 22–23.

⁹³ George Barna, *Boiling Point*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), 186.

Most small churches realize the loss of membership exponentially as communities become more entrenched with worldly teachings. It is not the intent of this paper to present a concise systematic approach to Christianity, but when basic essentials are contained in the teachings of the unhealthy church, transformation can occur. Transformation is a process that contains valid truths that need to be reclaimed. The list of essentials illustration can be found in the study of the scriptures. Many different writers and scholars of the New Testament identified these essentials throughout the last 2000 years. The elements are common to followers of Jesus Christ. However, the postmodern understanding of God debates these elements which has led to a breakdown of theology in many churches. The following bullet points represent a correlation of scripture to demonstrate what Christians must believe. These essentials are non-negotiable for the evangelical believer:⁹⁴

- The Bible is fully inspired by God and the definitive authority for salvation (2 Tim. 3:15–17).
- Humanity was created in the image of God in order to be in relationship with God. This relationship was broken as a result of humankind’s disobedience (Gen. 1–3).
- God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to restore the relationship between God and humankind (John 3:16).
- Jesus Christ was born of virgin (Matt. 1:18–25), crucified and died on a cross (Matt. 27:45–50) as the propitiation for humankind’s sin (1John 4:10), and resurrected on the third day (Luke 24:1–7).
- Jesus is the one and only way by which an individual can know God (John 14:6).
- All of humankind is guilty of sin (Rom. 3:23). Humankind must turn to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only way to receive eternal life (Rom. 6:23).
- Jesus is both human and divine. (John 1:1, 14)
- Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Each has a will and can communicate, which demonstrates the personal, yet divine nature of God.

⁹⁴ The list of essentials was put together through a thorough study of the scriptures. Jesus, Paul, and other writers of the New Testament have identified these elements throughout the last 2000 years. These elements are common to followers of Jesus Christ

Christian Doctrine and Theology address each of these essential elements. In forsaking any one of the essentials, Christianity is incomplete. For the small membership church, balancing the church doctrines with society norms requires a movement back to the primacy of scripture.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, places the emphasis on scripture as a “means of grace.” For Wesley, searching the scripture meant doing more than a perfunctory reading.

Wesley places three obligations on an individual to approach the Bible. These obligations include:

1. Reading: Constantly some part every day; regularly, all the Bible in order; carefully, with the Notes; seriously, with prayer before and after; fruitfully, immediately practicing what you learn there.
2. Meditating: at set times
3. Hearing: Every morning; carefully; prayer before and after.⁹⁵

Wesley would arise at 4:30 every morning, go to a room where he had placed a kneeling rail, and begin reading scripture. Reading and studying scripture in this way gave Wesley the impetus for his “how to read scripture” instructions. These instructions included six items used to engage God’s Word. These instructions included:

1. To set apart a little time, if you can every morning and evening for that purpose.
2. At each time, if you have leisure, to read a chapter out of the Old Testament and New Testament. If this could not be done, take a single chapter or a part of one.
3. To read this with a single eye, to know the whole will of God, and a fixed resolution to it. In order to know His will, you should...
4. Have a constant eye to the analogy of faith, the connection and harmony there is between those grand, fundamental doctrines, Original Sin, Justification by Faith, the New Birth, Inward and Outward Holiness.
5. Serious and earnest prayer should be constantly used, before we consult the oracles of God, seeing “scripture can only be understood through the same Spirit it was given.” Our reading should be closed with prayer so that what we read becomes a part of our heart.
6. It might also be of use, if while we read, we were frequently to pause, and examine ourselves by what we read with regard to our hearts and lives. This would furnish us with matter of praise, where we found God had enabled world

⁹⁵ John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occassions: Minutes of Several Conversations with Wesley and Others*, Works Volume 8:355–356.

to us to conform to His blessed will and matter of humiliation and prayer, where we were conscious of having fallen short. And whatever light you then receive, should be used to the uttermost, and that immediately. Let there be no delay. Whatever you resolve, begin to execute the first moment you can. So shall you find this word to be indeed the power of God unto present and eternal salvation.⁹⁶

In the Postmodern United Methodist Church, the primacy of scripture is at the core of the discussions between Conservatives and Progressives currently occurring in the church. These discussions have been occurring for over forty years leading to two factions in the church. The small membership church will be impacted exponentially as many leaders and churches await the outcome. These discussions are a distraction to the churches as membership carries. Membership drops are directly impacted by the decline of healthy activities undertaken in the church.

Moving Toward Health

Smaller churches struggle with their financial resources. These churches typically find it harder to raise money simply because of the number of givers, but this does not mean small churches are unable to provide significant ministries in their communities. Measuring the effectiveness of ministries becomes the driving force behind what ministries are offered. Small membership churches cannot be everything to everybody.

Having too many ministries can lead to unhealthy leadership, which in turn leads to unhealthy churches. Dave Jacobs, a consultant for the small membership church, suggests “identifying what the church does best.”⁹⁷ The small membership church would appear to have a tremendous advantage over the larger church due to the familial characteristic of the church.

⁹⁶ John Wesley, *Notes on the Old Testament: Genesis – Ruth*, 8.

⁹⁷ Dave Jacobs, *Naked Man Running: 100 Ideas That Work in a Small Church*, (Medford, Oregon: Dave Jacobs ISBN 1976178908, 2017), 180.

Members know one another and often have a greater sense of community when operating in a healthy environment, but this may not always be the case. Small membership churches “insist they are friendly” and love everybody.⁹⁸ That is not always the case. A small membership church can often be closed and indifferent to visitors. Change is needed in the way small membership churches treat outsiders, which means they must examine their very nature. Churches that provide healthy environments and flourishing relationships will find it easier to work toward shared goals. George Barna writes the following encouraging words to the small membership church:

Our research throughout the past decade has shown that this emphasis upon relationships has become increasingly important in attracting the unchurched to attend church. . . the church is unique in that it is intended to be a community, not just an aggregation of unrelated people simultaneously seeking their own benefit, but a group of individuals with a common purpose and a set of explicit relational parameters where true relationships are meant to flourish.⁹⁹

The future of the small membership church depends on the presence of genuine relationships. Dennis Bickers writes, “The church can get by for a while. . . but unless the church has a vibrant sense of community, it will become the powerless church of tomorrow.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, moving beyond the dysfunctionality of family systems is imperative to healthy church communities.

For the small membership church, it is not only important to define their strength as a community; they must also attend to the individual leader’s health and strengths. Recognizing that leaders are different and have different strengths will allow for community and relationships

⁹⁸ Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues*, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005), 82.

⁹⁹George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1999), 82.

¹⁰⁰Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues*, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005), 83.

to grow. Growth is not always numerical. Growth can be spiritual. Spiritual growth is the catalyst for numerical growth. God's will for the individual and church "begins with His desire that the leader and church be in a continual state of growth."¹⁰¹ God is more interested in one's becoming than one's doing. The church leadership will "grow out of one's personal development" as one matures in their faith.¹⁰² Dr. Charles Davidson said, "A leader cannot take a congregation into a relationship with Christ that is deeper than the leaders".¹⁰³

Leadership in the faith community is about teaching people in accordance with God's agenda. The task of the leader is not "about accomplishing personal goals. Rather leaders are to support the flock in accomplishing their goals according to God's equipping."¹⁰⁴ Ephesians 4:12 states the leader's task is to "prepare people for works of service." Leadership in the small membership church is unique in that the pastor finds him or herself in a servant leadership role. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, who became a "servant of humanity," the pastor of a small membership church finds him or herself moving away from personal agendas to work within a set of parameters that are often governed by familial connections. This is different from medium and large congregation churches. The pastor leader, who has trouble understanding the concept of family systems, may quickly find him or herself in an unhealthy environment for himself and the church. Small membership churches want to grow, but the methods of the pastor leader and

¹⁰¹ Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues*, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005), 74.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰³ Dr. Charles Davidson, *Lecture Notes*, Leadership 810, Lynchburg, VA, April 4, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Glenn Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 74.

the congregants can be at odds, creating a divide that must be breached before they can move forward.

One such divide is the difference between the clergy and laity ideas of discipleship. In the small membership church specifically, clergy saw themselves as having a strong understanding of discipleship, which they actively taught to the laity. However, the laity responded to the teaching negatively. Experience illustrates a misunderstanding of the difference between evangelism and discipleship, spiritual leadership and secular leadership, in the small membership church.

Spiritual Leadership in the Small Membership Church

Small membership church pastors encounter the “family system” and are hit with the excuse of the “way things have always been done” quickly when they first enter the church. In these two paradigms, the pastor is battling a church bureaucracy that wants to grow but does not want to let go. In many ways, the pastor now must work within a dysfunctional family system that demands control of the church. Many pastors find it hard to bring about change when they enter the church with their “ideas etched in stone and not focused on where God is leading them.”¹⁰⁵ Spiritual leadership demands that God is at the center. It is not about the pastor or the congregation. It is about God.

Spiritual Leadership is biblical leadership. Biblical foundations are imperative to returning authenticity to the process of growing disciples for Jesus Christ. One component of effective spiritual leadership is the maturity of the individual’s leading. According to Ogden, “By

¹⁰⁵ Glenn Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 77.

following the imperative of Scripture, we can work within small discipling units to carefully grow people in the faith...of our age.”¹⁰⁶ Spiritual leadership is empowering.

There is a distinct difference between secular leadership and spiritual leadership when handling a crisis in the church. According to Daman, “Secular leadership emphasizes the individual, which includes talent, ability, personality.”¹⁰⁷ Secular leaders rely on their own qualities to minimize or control a crisis. In contrast, “Spiritual leadership emphasizes God over the individual.”¹⁰⁸ The Holy Spirit and Holy Scriptures are primary to handling the crisis.

John Wesley was devoted to the Holy Scriptures and recognized them as a central part of his faith practice. He would write in his journal, “My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small.”¹⁰⁹ In his popular Sermon 16: *Means of Grace*, Wesley writes, “‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;’ consequently, all Scripture is infallibly true; ‘and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;’ to the end ‘that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’”¹¹⁰ The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22, “Do not quench the Spirit.

¹⁰⁶ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 61.

¹⁰⁷ Glenn Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 70.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 70

¹⁰⁹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, reprinted from the 1872 edition issued by Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London, vol. 1, 2, *Journals*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2007), Journal June 5, 1766.

¹¹⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, (*New International Version*). John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, reprinted from the 1872 edition issued by Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London, vol. 1, 2, *Journals*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2007), Sermon 16 *Means of Grace*.

Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.”¹¹¹ The authority of scripture and the testing of everything to scripture are the basis for Wesleyan and Pauline understandings of spiritual leadership.

Spiritual leadership in the small membership church needs to engage scripture in order for change to occur. Rev. Bob Parks, district superintendent of the Farmville District United Methodist Church, states, “Too many of the small membership churches are focused predominately inward, which inhibits their growth.”¹¹² A predominately inward focus is not biblical and needs to be balanced to include an outward, missional focus as well. Spiritual leadership is not restricted within the church walls. In the Great Commission, Jesus tells His followers to “Go, Tell, Grow.” By empowering individuals biblically, spiritual leadership moves believers toward God’s purpose for their lives.

This is not only a small membership church problem; it is also a Church problem. According to an America Religious Identification Survey, every denomination has lost members in the past years.¹¹³ According to O’Brien, “Conservative estimates indicate that at least 50 percent of church-attending teens will no longer be engaged in a local congregation when they reach their mid-twenties.”¹¹⁴ The membership of many small membership churches in the United Methodist denomination are comprised of boomers (age 60 and over) who have an allegiance to their church. Many families call the small membership church home “becoming comfortable

¹¹¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22, (*New International Version*).

¹¹² Bob Parks, District Superintendent of the Farmville District United Methodist Church, *Charge Conference Presentation*, November 15, 2015.

¹¹³ America Religious Identification Survey of 2008.

¹¹⁴ Brandon J. O’Brien, *The Strategically Small Church: Intimate, Nimble, Authentic, Effective*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2010),122.

with the smaller quaint atmosphere of the church.”¹¹⁵ However, the children of these families have grown and either moved away or found other churches. One should not conclude that simply because a church is small it cannot be healthy or vital in the community. After all, the small early church was very successful when it understood its purpose.

Small membership churches have unique advantages over the large membership church when they understand discipleship. Small membership church pastors and congregations who attend the latest teachings on growing a church will come away discouraged. Most of these conferences never address the uniqueness of the small membership church. Small church pastors are not “asked to speak about how they grew their church by fifty members over a seventeen-year period.”¹¹⁶ Many of these pastors allow disappointment to set in and become discouraged in the process. Discouragement can cause pastors to leave the ministry and turn inward because they are more worried about solvency than they are about making disciples.

According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, “There are 177,000 churches in America with one-hundred or fewer worshippers.”¹¹⁷ Too many have fallen into the bigger, better, and the kingdom of God mentality today. Many churches are trying to be everything to everybody, but they only fail and fall short of making disciples as we are commanded in the Great Commission. In the book, *Deliberate Simplicity*, author Dave Browning argues that smaller is better and easier. The small membership church can be “more conducive for

¹¹⁵ Brandon J. O’Brien, *The Strategically Small Church: Intimate, Nimble, Authentic, Effective*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2010), 15.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

identifying and developing the congregational leadership.”¹¹⁸ Small membership churches that understand and operate out of their uniqueness are more effective with pastoring, evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development. The conceptual framework of the acronym L.E.A.D: L-Love, E-Educate, A-Adapt and D-Duplicate are more easily realized within a small membership church.

In chapter 3, we will dive into the L.E.A.D acronym as well as other qualitative traits of leaders and disciples that can help small membership churches grow in accordance with the Great Commission.

¹¹⁸ Brandon J. O’Brien, *The Strategically Small Church: Intimate, Nimble, Authentic, Effective*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2010), 52.

CHAPTER 3 EVANGELISM

Reaching the World

This project consisted of a qualitative examination of leadership traits, and discipleship qualities designed to promote growth in the small membership church. The Holy Scriptures corroborated the leadership traits identified. This project created a reproducible discipleship plan that can be implemented by small membership church pastors. The primary text for developing the author's theological perspective on discipleship is found in the Gospel of Matthew 28:16–20.

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 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.¹¹⁹

This pericope is commonly known as the Great Commission. “Go and teach all nations” is the assignment that Jesus gives his disciples. It is the same assignment Jesus gives to us today, but it is not being carried out in most small membership churches today. The concept of “making disciples” is so foreign to many small membership churches that generations are missing among the members. No denomination appears exempt from this danger of lost membership and generations.

The United Methodist Church has suffered membership declines for ten successive years. According to the General Commission on Archives and History, the United Methodist Church

¹¹⁹ Matthew 28:16–20, (*New International Version*)

over the ten year period from 2000 - 2010 the church had a net decrease of 731,553 members.¹²⁰ The Bishops and Evangelism Board are frantically trying to solve the problem, but the author believes the General Church leaders are working in the wrong direction. Planting new churches is not the only answer, especially when the church has so many established churches that need re-energized. Lyle Schaller states, “It is easier to start a new church than to change an old one.”¹²¹ For many in leadership, planting new churches is preferred due to the baggage of traditionalism which exists in older churches. Based on the author’s experience and observation, the older churches are having trouble because they are focusing inwardly on self instead of outwardly on others. No one wants to be rejected. Rejection is one of the primary fears that keeps believers from practicing evangelism, and where evangelism is lacking, church membership also tends to be decreasing.

Most members are intimidated by the word “evangelism.” Evangelism takes a person out of their comfort zones. Individuals look at evangelism as a win-lose situation, forgetting that evangelism is instead a two-step process of sowing and reaping. The parable of the sower found in Mark 4:1–9 offers an inside look at the four hearts found in the church:

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water’s edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up,

¹²⁰ General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church. <http://www.gcuh.org/history/united-methodist-membership-statistics>

¹²¹ Lyle Schaller, *Strategies for Change* (Abingdon Press: Nashville. 1993), 109.

grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.” Then Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”¹²²

Billie Friel categorizes the four hearts as the Wayside Heart, the Stony Heart, the Thorny Heart, and the Good Heart.¹²³ The Wayside Heart is the person whose heart has become hardened. Seeds of the Gospel sown on this person will not take hold. The Wayside Heart who hears the Gospel will be easily distracted and the truth won't take root in their hearts. The Stony Heart person is the person who has no spiritual root. Enthusiasm for Christ is short-lived when trials and suffering creep back into their life. This person is characterized by what the author defines as an “attitude of scarcity.” The Thorny Heart is a person who is more occupied with materialism than with Jesus. This person would rather play golf than go to church. This person is living for the moment. Finally, Friel speaks to the Good Heart person. This is the person that all want to meet when they are following the Great Commission. This person is the “wildfire” from the divine spark. Though pastors would all prefer to only encounter people in the “Good Heart” category, pastors cannot pick and choose where seeds are to be sown. All people are commanded to sow the seeds of the Gospel everywhere. Individuals must remember that they are not able to impart salvation. Salvation is from God through Christ. It is the pastor's and the people's responsibility to share the Gospel.

Most individuals want to do the reaping, welcoming members into the Church, and forget about the sowing because they think it is too hard or that they are too busy. Sowing is not as “glamorous” as reaping. Individuals come up with many different excuses, but the fact is that many churches today are more worried about running churches like a business, fundraising, or

¹²² Mark 4:1–9, (*New Interpreter's Bible*).

¹²³ Billie Friel, *Manna From Mark: An Illustrative Pastoral Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (Broadman and Holman Publishers: Nashville, 2004), 36 – 41.

making the building aesthetically pleasing than they are about evangelizing. The lost, the least, and the disenfranchised are not even addressed. Because of this, membership will continue to decline until churches get serious about making disciples for Jesus Christ. We need to realize that God wants to make His children spiritual farmers. The follower of Christ is called, or rather commanded, by Jesus to make disciples of all people. The church must make every effort to reach those who are lost. Carrying out the Great Commission by sowing and reaping which is everyone's concern. The relevant questions churches must answer are: How does the church evangelize? How does the church make disciples? How does the church live out the Great Commission?

The disciples have an assignment from Jesus in the Great Commission text. The church, also, has an assignment from Jesus. Three things about the Great Commission are revealed to the disciples and to the church in the text. The church's response to what is revealed assists the church in carrying out the assignment set before them. The church's response determines their commitment to making disciples.

First, in verse 18, individuals are commanded by the Savior, who has all power in heaven and on earth. The disciples are dealing with something greater than themselves. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."¹²⁴ This is the Good News to share with people. In this statement, disciples recognize that Jesus is the way to God, the source of truth, and the life that continues in heaven. The promise of eternal life is revealed. The dimensions of the Great Commission consist of both earthly and heavenly properties. The church deals with earthly properties through the sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is often in our sharing that Jesus becomes real to people. Each person has his or her own unique testimony God has given him or her to share. As

¹²⁴ John 14:6, (*New International Version*).

disciples share their stories, others find hope of Christ Jesus. They realize their sins are forgiven and the promise of eternal life can be theirs. People who have lived in despair now live in hope; people who have lived with hate now begin to love; people who have lived with fear now live with faith; All because the power of the Great Commission was revealed in Jesus.

Second, in verse 19, the Great Commission reveals a Savior who is for all people. Sadly, this is often where our discipleship efforts break down. Too often, individuals take their model of what a church is from the culture that surrounds them. Persons think of the church as they would the YMCA: they join, pay their dues, and expect a fresh towel, clean bathrooms, a hair dryer and scented soaps in return. Such an inward view of the church leads to a closed church, which is not at all the kingdom model Jesus talks about. The kingdom model is outward, inclusive, welcoming, beckoning, and inviting. In one word, it is open to all who declare Jesus, Savior. It is about serving others, not about being served. This is where the church needs to be reminded of what Jesus' ministry truly looked like. Jesus did not go to those who were well. He sought out those who were lost, hurting, and sick. Today, the church member wants everyone in their church to look, act, and think like they do. This inwardly focused attitude causes many churches to only see membership growth through people changing their church membership in order to feel more "comfortable." John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in him would not perish, but have everlasting life."¹²⁵ In this passage, the most important word is "whosoever." Salvation is for all people. No one has sinned too much; no one is too lost. Salvation is open to all. As the church, disciples must be willing to go to all people: the economically deprived, the socially deprived, those in

¹²⁵ John 3:16, (*New International Version*).

prison, etc. John Wesley said, “The world is my parish.” The modern church should see it that way as well.

But the church cannot stop there. The second part of the verse reveals the call for disciples to teach, educate. Chris Adsit, the director of Disciplemakers International, “observes that the church today is like a ‘mighty river’—a mile wide and an inch deep. The church needs to rethink the discipleship river. The church needs to deepen the shallows and speed up the current. The church must remember that they are now dealing with spiritual infants many times.”¹²⁶ In order to sustain their faith, the people who the disciple shares the Gospel with need to be nurtured, disciplined in order for their relationship with Christ to grow. The late Richard Halverson, the former chaplain of the United States Senate, offers a fresh take on Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples.” Digging into the New Testament Greek language, he discovered that what Jesus was really saying in this verse was, “As you go, make learners everywhere.”¹²⁷

“Don’t make disciples,” Halverson insists. “Make learners.”¹²⁸ Churches should not try to drag people into Sunday school or youth programs or the sanctuary. Don’t try to lure them into church at all. Instead, show them something of the power of Christ in your own life. Monday through Saturday show them some of what you have personally experienced of Jesus and help them to learn about Christ through the joy, hope, and love you experience in your own life. And if your life looks like your ministry or rather, if your life *is* your ministry—you will show all

¹²⁶ Chris Adsit, “Why Should We Make Disciples?” Disciplemakers International, ccci.org/disciplemakers/why.html. Retrieved January 3, 2015.

¹²⁷ Richard C. Halverson, “The Essentials of Discipleship: Make Disciples.” Discipleship Series, gospelcom.net. Retrieved January 3, 2015.

¹²⁸ Ibid., Retrieved January 3, 2015.

kinds of people the power of Christ in your own life. Then, as the people around you are influenced by your faith, they will find their way into a community of believers. It may be at your church or it may be someplace else. Territorial arrogance has no place in evangelism efforts. After all, God's territory includes all places and all people. Disciples have a story that all people need to hear.

The Great Commission reveals a Savior who is always with humanity. It reveals the assurance that Jesus will watch over disciples as they carry out their duties. It reveals the assurance that Jesus will be with His disciples in times of persecution. It reveals the assurance that Jesus is sufficient for all temptations and trials. It reveals the assurance that the power of the Holy Spirit will be with the disciple as they go forth. The Great Commission reveals a message that all people in all places need to hear.

In closing, hear these words from Psalm 126:5–6: Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.¹²⁹ It is easier to do almost anything else in church: it is easier to serve on a committee; it is easier give money; it is easier to busy yourself fretting about the church bake sale or the worship music. But Jesus called us to make disciples. As Christians, disciples have a genuine concern for souls. Discipleship is one of the most rewarding ministries in the church. Winning souls and growing through fellowship brings about present and future joy.¹³⁰ Soul winning is about loving others as God loves us. Through this love, barriers are broken down. Persons are born again. Lives are transformed. And through this true commissioned act of discipleship, church membership numbers will increase.

¹²⁹ Psalm 126:5–6, (*New International Version*).

¹³⁰ Luke 15:10, (*New International Version*).

CHAPTER 4 DISCIPLESHIP

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”¹³¹ This statement immediately places the church in the middle of a dilemma that exists as much today as it did in Bonhoeffer’s day. Many Christians are caught up in making the Word of God fit their personal agendas. Cultural relevance places many who do not give any regard to the teachings of Christ on the front lines. In a culture of “doing what makes me feel good,” obedience to the scripture has been forgotten.

In the church over the years, much emphasis has been placed on what it means to be a disciple, on discipleship, on leadership, and on developing leaders. Some argue that the church has spent too much time trying to define and less time doing anything; these folks argue that this is the main reason for the membership decline in mainline denominations today. Rather than looking into how that focus on definitions may have caused a membership decline, I will instead focus here on the characteristics of a leader, a disciple, leadership, discipleship, and leadership development. Future growth in any church requires an understanding of these areas because they directly contribute to the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:16–20. In scripture, the heart of discipleship and leadership is the engagement of every follower of Christ with through the true purpose of their lives. Cultivating an understanding of the aforementioned areas provides a starting point for our spiritual and church growth.

¹³¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1937, (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 59.

Leadership That Sticks

Bennis states, “The study of leadership raises the fundamental issues that every group, organization, nation, and group of nations has to resolve or at least struggle with: Why do people subordinate themselves? What are the sources of power? How and why do leaders arise? Why do leaders lead? What is the function of the leader?”¹³² Stanley asks similar questions as he begins to formulate his concept of a leader. Many models of leadership have been created over the years in attempt to magically define leadership. According to Gardner, however, “Conventional views of leadership are shallow and set us up for endless disappointment.”¹³³ Conventional leadership views have focused on the individual in charge with little discussion on the relationships created by the interaction between the stakeholders. Let us address the ideas presented in the first nine chapters of Andy Stanley’s book *Next Generation Leader*. Let us also investigate how the interactions between individual stakeholders become the catalyst for change in organizations.

Stanley addresses leadership from the position of what he calls the five C’s: Competence, Courage, Clarity, Coaching, and Character. Stanley believes these are “the irreducible minimum, the essentials for next generation leaders.”¹³⁴ For the purposes of this project, I will address competence, courage, and clarity. These essentials move the leader toward self-awareness. Self-awareness moves the individual into the realm of becoming as opposed to doing. Moving beyond self becomes the leader’s way of operating.

¹³² Warren G. Bennis, “Leadership Theory and Administrative Behavior: The Problem of Authority”, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 4(3), 259–301.

¹³³ John W. Gardner, “The Cry of Leadership”, In *The Leaders Companion: Insights on Leadership Through the Ages*, ed. J. T. Wren (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1995), 5.

¹³⁴ Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 11.

Research and practice are important to an individual's leadership in every situation he or she encounters. Applying research requires an understanding of the past, present, and future of the organization. Knowledge is powerful when used to improve an organization. Expert power requires the individual to be proficient and effective with the tasks one undertakes. Bennis offers, "There's something about being successful that tends to perpetuate itself."¹³⁵ Bennis is speaking about self-fulfilling prophecy. The success of a leader and the organizational success are mutually dependent.

Proficiency and effectiveness require a basic understanding of the individual's contextual strengths and weaknesses. According to Warren Bennis, "Organizations, organizational leadership, and organizational culture will have to be people factories—generating, nourishing, and nurturing terrific talent. They need to be education factories where that talent will be continually going to school. They will have to be led by leaders with enough emotional intelligence and cognitive capacity to be able to hold two divergent ideas in their heads at one time."¹³⁶

In the context of leadership in the church, knowledge relates to personal and spiritual growth. The individual shares and teaches out of his or her own context, which helps people connect. In this context, the purpose of one's leadership is to restore, renew, and transform the vital connections an individual needs in order to sustain and nurture vital relationships. The restoration, renewal, and transformation of relationships occurs when individuals connect with

¹³⁵ Warren G. Bennis, "Viewpoint: Warren Bennis." *BUSINESS: The Ultimate Resource*. (London: A&C Black, *Credo Reference*, 25 June 2010, Web. 25 Jan. 2011).

¹³⁶ Warren G. Bennis, "Viewpoint: Warren Bennis." *BUSINESS: The Ultimate Resource*. (London: A&C Black, *Credo Reference*, 25 June 2010, Web. 25 Jan. 2011).

Jesus as Savior and Lord, individuals connect with one another in Christ-like love, and individuals connect with other believers in Christ-like service.

As people connect with Jesus Christ, they also form relationships with others and together they focus on Christ as the role model. Having Christ as the focal point transforms lives, and individuals grow in their understanding of who they are, which in return will liberate them from worldly measures of success. The difference between what it is to be efficient and what it is to be effective is crucial for the leader to understand. Efficiency is about doing things well, while effectiveness is about doing the *right* things well. As Nelson Searcy says, “The use of an individual’s time begins with God.”¹³⁷

Too many spiritual leaders spend too much time doing the wrong things. In ministry, leaders spend so much time on other’s agendas to the point that they try to do too many things, which eventually leads to the individual ignoring their own spiritual needs and strengths. Stanley refers to this as the “quest for balance.”¹³⁸ When individuals ignore their spiritual needs and do not act out of their spiritual gifts, all areas of their lives and ministry are affected. Blackaby refers to the quest for balance when the leader “subjugates, eliminates, cultivates, delegates, and concentrates.”¹³⁹ Effective leadership requires “a consistent, disciplined, and focused lifestyle of

¹³⁷Nelson Searcy, *The Renegade Pastor: Abandoning Average in Your Life and Ministry*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books Publishing, 2013), 88.

¹³⁸ Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 22–24.

¹³⁹ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda*, (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Company, 2011), 245–255.

personal devotion.”¹⁴⁰ The leader’s ability to usher in change in his or her ministry will depend more on using time effectively rather than performing the task efficiently.

Leadership requires a certain amount of courage to lead in times of change when change is not always popular. Change in religious institutions has fallen prey to greater distrust and skepticism over the years. Henri J. M. Nouwen writes, “One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly give in to the temptation of power...even though they continued to speak in the name of Jesus, who did not cling to his divine power but emptied himself and became as we are.”¹⁴¹ In order for change to occur in the church setting, leaders must have the courage to dream new dreams and develop the strategies that mobilize people. Change does not occur in a vacuum. Change requires the leader and organization to “wrestle with the normative questions of value, purpose, and process.”¹⁴²

Biblical support for change can be found in both the Old and New Testaments. In Genesis 12:1–3 God reveals a new plan for his creation:

Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.¹⁴³

Then in Luke 18:31–34, it is written,

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will

¹⁴⁰ Jeff Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership: Moving Forward Even When It Hurts*, (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2009), 24.

¹⁴¹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 58–59.

¹⁴² Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organizations and the World*, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2009), 17.

¹⁴³ Genesis 12:1–3 (NIV).

be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.” The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.¹⁴⁴

God’s plan is a plan of change in the believer’s and congregation’s lives. God’s plan is perfect, reconciling His Creation through repentance and grace. Individuals must recognize that change begins with God. Change is initiated by God through the movement of the Holy Spirit. Church leaders must have the courage to go where God is leading. God initiates the change and the leader follows through by obedience, which is strengthened in the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Change is not something that simply occurs uninitiated. Resistance to change is usually the response from those the leader is called to lead. Change becomes stagnated for three major reasons: lack of communication, pride, and fear of failure (or uncertainty). All these reasons can be overcome with an intentional process that will minimize their impact on the change process. Change is a process. It takes time for the leader to bring change to fruition. Throughout the change process, the leader must be courageous and authentic, leading others through the unknown.

Clarity begins with vision and an understanding of where the organization currently operates. Stanley states, “Designing and implementing a strategy for change is a waste of time until you have discovered and embraced the current reality.”¹⁴⁵ Too often, organizations fail to look at their past in order to understand their present reality. Losing sight of their present reality

¹⁴⁴ Luke 18:31–34 (NIV).

¹⁴⁵ Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 73.

inhibits their ability to see the future. In fact, losing sight of one's present reality skews the organizations goals and core principles, resulting either in diminished change or ultimate failure.

Fear of uncertainty can paralyze leaders and keep them from making crucial decisions at critical times. Uncertainty should not, however, be a legitimate reason to forgo change. We can overcome fear of uncertainty can by engaging others in the process and searching for consensus. Leadership is about vision that empowers others in the organization. Max De Pree states that "the leader has three tasks to perform: (1) Define reality (2) Become a servant and a debtor to others and (3) Say thank you."¹⁴⁶ A good leader is an individual who allows him or herself to be transformed by the relationships created. Good leaders allow themselves to grow spiritually, personally, and professionally through engaging with others, through personal education, and through culture/tradition.

A good leader does not view uncertainty as a problem but rather as an opportunity for personal growth. A good leader embarks on a journey with others to create a reality where grace abounds as shame and guilt are replaced with restoration and renewal. Repentance moves the individual through the grace experience as relationships are created. Relationships within any organization do not develop without some type of conscious interaction. The interactions between the individuals are often determined by the leader's ability to transfer the organizational vision to others. Clarity is a critical component of team building. Team building is a critical component of building an effective organization.

Building an effective team answers the question of how the necessary task will be accomplished. Team building requires clarity of communication. Clear communications ensure

¹⁴⁶ Max De Pree, *Leadership Is An Art* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1987).

each person on the team is working toward the same outcome. In the church, our mission is defined by the Great Commission: “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.”¹⁴⁷ In the book *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* by John Koessler, discipleship moves through a logical progression of upward (intimacy with God), inward (intimacy in community), and outward (intimacy with others). Koessler states, “Discipleship is not primarily a matter of what we do. It is an outgrowth of what we are.”¹⁴⁸ True discipleship moves us from simply knowing to being to doing.

Leadership follows a different path. Leadership moves the individual from knowing to being the leader that God intended them to be requiring “competence, courage, and clarity.”¹⁴⁹ Practicing leadership in this manner requires consistent self-examination and repentance. Through repentance, leaders come face-to-face with their own humanness while allowing God to move within the relationships created.

Finally, we only need to look to Jesus for what an effective leader would do. Jesus gives us the greatest example of humility in leadership. In Philippians 2:1–4 we read:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value

¹⁴⁷ Matthew 28:16–20 (NIV).

¹⁴⁸ John Koessler, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 12.

¹⁴⁹ Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 11

others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.¹⁵⁰

Jesus modeled humility in His ministry giving the reader an example to follow. Humility keeps the leader Christ centered, allowing God to work through the leader. Dickson defines humility as “the noble choice to forego your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself.”¹⁵¹ In other words, one must Love, Educate, Adapt and Duplicate (L.E.A.D.).

In Ephesians, Paul recognizes the concept of L.E.A.D. He writes, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip [Educate] his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [Love] until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God [Duplicate] and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness [Adapt] of Christ.¹⁵² One component of L.E.A.D. that guides the disciple toward effective discipleship is the maturity of the individual in the discipleship relationship. Growth in Christ requires commitment from the individual. A growing disciple becomes stronger through continuous commitment toward discipleship, which comes from “denying oneself and taking up your cross daily.”¹⁵³ Jesus and Paul worked a discipleship plan, which can be readily adapted in the church and community today.

¹⁵⁰ Philippians 2:1–4 (NIV).

¹⁵¹ John Dickson, *Humilitas: A Lost Key to life, Love, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 24.

¹⁵² Ephesians 4:11–13, (*New International Version*).

¹⁵³ Luke 9:23 (*New International Version*).

The church must return to simplicity in order to effectively make disciples. Larger membership does not always mean better discipleship. Discipleship, for Jesus and Paul, occurred in the context of what the church calls “small groups” today. “Those who know Christ as Savior have entered God’s training program and are currently under the instructional care of the grace of God.”¹⁵⁴ The discipleship relationship requires individuals to engage, connect, and support one another. Discipleship cannot occur in a vacuum. The discipleship relationship needs the tension created by the interaction between individuals.

What Is a Disciple?

Discipleship is one of the most misunderstood church growth concepts in the small membership church. Discipleship gets confused with evangelism in the small membership church, and that confusion results in the lack of spiritual growth for the individuals in the discipleship relationship.

Two myths surround the reasons why discipleship does not result in church growth and spiritual growth in the small membership church. The first occurs when evangelism and discipleship are defined as the same activity. Evangelism and discipleship are mutually inclusive for church and spiritual growth, but they are two different activities that are a part of the Great Commission. The second myth occurs when individuals presume to know the status of another individual’s relationship with God. Too often in the small membership church, members are related by blood, which results in limited conversation around a person’s salvation experience. The lack of conversation results in limited spiritual growth and a misunderstanding of the Great

¹⁵⁴ John Koessler, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 108.

Commission. We will further discuss how discipleship and evangelism work together to build and strengthen disciples for Jesus Christ.

The question many Christians today do not know how to answer is, “What is God’s will for my life?” Many Christians will live their whole life without ever being able to answer this question. In the postmodern church, the reason many fail to ask the question may be a result of the consumeristic prosperity gospel, which tends to dominate the seeker culture to a genuine hostility toward anything and everything Christian in culture today. The church must compete with everything from work schedules to the children’s travel baseball schedule, and followers of Christ encounters many obstacles that they will need to address. Ignoring the distractions will only exasperate the issue for individuals who are poised to truly find the answer to the question. As Dempsey suggests, individuals must go beyond the many distractions and answer the question using scripture as their guide.

Scripture presents a systematic argument for what God wants for our lives. Scripture presents a logical, critical look into what it means to be a disciple. The *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* defines disciple as “someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way.”¹⁵⁵ but this general definition does not take into account any biblical ideas of what it means to be a disciple. For Dempsey, a disciple is a “Christo-centric, Spirit-filled individual who surrenders their will to God’s will living out the Word of God as they carry their cross daily.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Paul Helm, “Disciple” to *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988), 629.

¹⁵⁶ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Discipleship Making Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&h Publishing Group, 2013), 26.

The addition of scriptures to the definition of disciple moves toward a more formal understanding of how the first century church practiced discipleship. Jesus' words in Matthew are one basis for the definition of "disciple." However, Dempsey writes, "Before a church embarks on the process of making disciples, there must be absolute clarity on what a disciple looks like."¹⁵⁷ The disciple of Jesus Christ has three distinct guiding principles, which can be ascertained from ten scriptural passages. These principles include: (1) Sacrificial, (2) Relational, and (3) Transformational. Using these guiding principles, Dempsey defines a disciple as follows: "A disciple is a person who has trusted Christ for salvation and has surrendered completely to Him. He or she is committed to practicing the spiritual disciplines in community and developing to their full potential for Christ and His mission."¹⁵⁸ James Emery White, in his book *Rethinking the Church*, describes a disciple as "one who experiences a life change."¹⁵⁹ In both Dempsey's and White's viewpoint, a change or a transformation takes place in the individual that is predicated by the development of a relationship between the mentor and mentee.

The scriptural foundation for the definition of "disciple" is critical to the understanding of what Jesus meant when he said, "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

¹⁵⁷ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Discipleship Making Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&h Publishing Group, 2013), 26–27.

¹⁵⁸ Dr. Rod Dempsey, "Chapter 6: What Is A Disciple," in *Innovate Church: Innovative Leadership for the Next Generation Church*, ed. Jonathan Falwell (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 98.

¹⁵⁹ John Emery White, *Rethinking the Church: A Challenge to Creative Redesign In An Age of Transition*, 7th ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 53–62.

everything I have commanded you.”¹⁶⁰ Dempsey presents a clear definition that allows us to begin forming our definition of a disciple. While some of the scriptures Dempsey and I use are similar, many other scriptural references are included here to formulate a scriptural basis for the definition of “disciple/discipleship.” The additional scriptural references also add another distinct guiding principle to the process of discipleship. A discussion of the four guiding principles and scriptural references follows.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of discipleship are “intentional, sacrificial, relational, and transformational.”¹⁶¹ The individual really does not need to look further than Matthew 28:16–20 for what it means to participate in disciple making. However, disciple and discipleship have several biblical references to be investigated in the following paragraphs. Beginning with Matthew 28:16–20, the church is given the mandate for being Jesus’ disciple and discipleship. In these verses, the church comes face-to-face with the distinct guiding principles. In Matthew 28:16–20 Jesus states:

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 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.”¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Matthew 28:19–20 (*New International Version*).

¹⁶¹ Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, *The Disciple Maker’s Handbook: 7 Elements of a Discipleship Lifestyle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 63-69.

¹⁶² Matthew 28:16–20, (*New International Version*).

As this verse demonstrates, discipleship is a process that includes intentionality, transformation, sacrifice, and relation.

Intentional

The following scriptures depict the intentionality of discipleship. Discipleship does not occur in a haphazard manner. According to Harrington and Patrick, “Discipleship is deliberate and guided by planning and strategic thinking.”¹⁶³ Jesus said in John 8:31–32, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”¹⁶⁴ The intentional act is to hold to the teaching of Jesus. It is in this deliberate act that truth is found. In Matthew 4:19–20, Jesus says, “‘Come, follow me and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.”¹⁶⁵ Those individuals choosing to be disciples must be intentional about leaving their old lives behind and following Jesus. This deliberate act is also *sacrificial*, another component of true discipleship.

In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul writes, “You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.”¹⁶⁶ This passage of scripture announces the activity of teaching, which is an intentional act as well as an act of cultivating relationship. Discipleship is an active adventure. Discipleship requires a deliberate undertaking to teach Christ crucified, buried, and

¹⁶³ Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, *The Disciple Maker’s Handbook: 7 Elements of a Discipleship Lifestyle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 42

¹⁶⁴ John 8:31–32, (*New International Version*).

¹⁶⁵ Matthew 4:19–21 (*New International Version*).

¹⁶⁶ 2 Timothy 2:2, (*New International Version*).

resurrected. In the passage from 2 Timothy 2:20–21, the disciples cleanse themselves. Through this *intentional* act of cleansing, transformation also takes place. Paul writes, “In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”¹⁶⁷

Sacrificial

It may be difficult to understand how intentional discipleship illustrates sacrificial work, but we can see that as our lives are transformed, our attitudes change. Luke 6:40 states that a disciple is not greater than his teacher, but everyone when fully trained will be like his teacher.¹⁶⁸ This verse speaks to the power of influence by imitation and the realization that a disciple surrenders fully to their teacher and must understand that discipleship is not specifically about the needs of the one person any longer. Discipleship is about *all* people, which makes it both sacrificial and relational. A disciple is only as strong as his or her teacher, and as such the disciple must learn humility. The disciple must sacrifice ego for the sake of relying on God and on other believers. The sacrificial nature of being a disciple also becomes apparent in Luke 9:23. Luke writes, “Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”¹⁶⁹ Likewise, Matthew writes, “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter

¹⁶⁷ 2 Timothy 2:20–21, (*New International Version*).

¹⁶⁸ Luke 6:40, (*New International Version*).

¹⁶⁹ Luke 9:24, (*New International Version*).

more than me is not worthy of me.”¹⁷⁰ Self-denial moves the disciple away from the flesh and into the Spirit. Self-denial is a fundamental aspect of discipleship. It requires obedience.

Bonhoeffer wrote, “Only those who are obedient believe and those who believe are obedient.

Faith is only real in obedience.”¹⁷¹ In Luke 14:25–26, Jesus challenges his disciples to lay aside everything familiar and trust in Him. The disciple/discipleship relationship requires trust and the willingness to let go of the familiar and take on the unknown.

Taking up one’s cross and giving up everything to follow Jesus are two important elements of the sacrificial principle of discipleship. Two final scriptures speak to this: In Matthew 10:38 Jesus says, “Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”¹⁷² Finally, Luke 14:33 states, “In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.”¹⁷³

Transformational

The third characteristic of discipleship is transformation. Forty-three percent of those who responded to the survey for this research project said they had not experienced a transformation taking root in someone else’s life. That is because an individual’s faith will not reach its fullest intrinsic potential without true discipleship. This lack of fruitfulness is akin to a baby being born and left to fend for itself in the world. In John 3:3, Jesus said, “Very truly I tell

¹⁷⁰ Matthew 10:37 (*New International Version*)

¹⁷¹ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press in Alliance with Tyndale House Publishing, 2006), 117.

¹⁷² Matthew 10:38, (*New International Version*).

¹⁷³ Luke 14:33, (*New International Version*).

you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”¹⁷⁴ Discipleship begins when the individual acknowledges his or her need to change, to be transformed. John Wesley would refer to this as “convicting grace.” In 2 Corinthians 7:8–11, Paul wrote:

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.¹⁷⁵

Convicting grace brings about humility as the individual acknowledges that change needs to take place while also encouraging the individual to seek such change. This concept of “convicting grace” is one of Wesley’s lesser known ideas. This is one reason why so many individuals in the Wesleyan tradition small membership church cannot recall ever being disciplined and why so many survey participants could not answer the question, “Does your church have an on-going discipleship program?” confidently.¹⁷⁶ Transformation, therefore, is a product of discipleship, and discipleship begins prior to the occurrence of salvation. Salvation becomes a next step, or intermittent goal, but transformation begins with the acknowledgment that “all have sinned.”¹⁷⁷ The all-encompassing statement is also part of the relational attribute of discipleship. A horizontal relationship cultivated between two individuals culminates in the vertical relationship while the vertical represents the relationship between the individuals and God. The vertical relationship leads to the creation of a new person—a transformed person.

¹⁷⁴ John 3:3, (*New International Version*).

¹⁷⁵ 2 Corinthians 7:8–11, (*New International Version*).

¹⁷⁶ Appendix I

¹⁷⁷ Romans 3:23, (*New International Version*).

True discipleship requires all of the attributes herein discussed. It cannot simply include the relational element. A controversial statement by Scot McKnight illustrates the need for the vertical relationship, the transformational relational aspect of discipleship. McKnight said, “We have too many Christians who have accepted Jesus into their hearts and have been baptized, who have confessed their sins and have joined the church and who are in Bible studies, who are absolutely 100% convinced they are going to heaven, but who are not followers of Jesus.”¹⁷⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:17 reiterates the need for the vertical relationship as well. True transformation—true discipleship—is Christocentric. It understands that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.¹⁷⁹ If anyone is in Christ (Christocentric), he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (transformation).¹⁸⁰

And the reverse is also true. True discipleship requires the horizontal relationship as well as the vertical in individual transformation. Accountability occurs bi-directionally between two individuals as they grow together and love one another. Romans 12:1–2 says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”¹⁸¹ Jim Putman says,

¹⁷⁸ Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, *The Disciple Maker’s Handbook: 7 Elements of a Discipleship Lifestyle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 36.

¹⁷⁹ John 14:6, (*New International Version*).

¹⁸⁰ In this text, the reader realizes that transformation comes from Christ. Transformation is a gift freely given and not something one can earn. This text we find emphasis on the vertical relationship.

¹⁸¹ Romans 12:1–2, (*New International Version*).

“Discipleship, at heart, involves transformation at the deepest levels of understanding, affection, and will by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, and in relationship with the people of God.¹⁸² Transformation is a result of the relationships that occur through the discipleship process. Discipleship is not something that can happen in a vacuum. The disciple cannot simply engage the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and the Father; the disciple must also engage with other believers.

The transformation from non-believer to disciple is dependent upon the grace of God. Grace is what moves the individual toward sanctification. Salvation and sanctification are gifts that occur through transformation, which comes from God through the individual’s relationship with others and their faith relationship in Jesus Christ.

Relational

Throughout the entirety of scripture, it is clear that relationships are an important part of an individual’s journey. Jesus said the greatest commandment is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”¹⁸³ Loving relationships are an important part of the discipleship process. Robert Coleman writes:

Nothing disarms a person like love. Everyone likes to be loved and for someone to express love to them in tangible ways. When you know you are loved, you will listen and open up. It was Christ loving people. His service to them. His ministry to them—healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, delivering those possessed by demons, teaching them about the Kingdom of God—that drew people to Him, and the same is true with our

¹⁸² Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, *The Disciple Maker’s Handbook: 7 Elements of a Discipleship Lifestyle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 41. This quote was taken by the aforementioned authors from Jim Putnam, *The Power of Together*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

¹⁸³ Matthew 22:37–40, (*New International Version*)

ministries. You have an audience with everybody who knows they are loved and knows you care about them. The incarnation is the foundation upon which we must begin to express our life in Christ. It is a beginning place to fulfill the Great Commission, starting with reaching out just as Jesus did in making disciples.”¹⁸⁴

Discipleship is a lifestyle. It begins with the individual’s response to God’s love. It is only by the grace and love of God that salvation is possible. Discipleship relies on the grace of God to sanctify the individual for the purposes to which God has called each one (Love).

Jesus clearly exhibits that love is the ultimate goal in a discipleship relationship.

Throughout Jesus life and ministry, individuals recognize the unconditional (agape) love of Jesus. The cross is the clearest example of the agape love for most individuals. However, Jesus’ entire life reflects the cross. Jesus love is perfect. John 3:16 tells us that Jesus loved so much that He would lay down his life for each person.¹⁸⁵ John 13:34–35 demonstrates the response each disciple should have to Jesus’ love. Jesus says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”¹⁸⁶ Relationship and sacrifice are primary to the disciple’s motives. In Luke, Jesus says, “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?”¹⁸⁷ All of scripture reminds the disciple of the intentionality, relationality,

¹⁸⁴ Robert Coleman and Bobby Harrington, with Josh Patrick, *Revisiting the Master Plan of Evangelism: Why Jesus’ Discipleship Method is Still the Best Today* (Exponential and discipleship.org, 2014). www.discipleship.org.

¹⁸⁵ 1 John 3:16, (*New International Version*).

¹⁸⁶ John 13:34–35, (*New International Version*).

¹⁸⁷ Luke 9:24–25, (*New International Version*).

transformationality, and sacrificiality of the discipleship process. When discipleship include these four elements, we experience multiplication at an exponential pace.

Jesus, the Wesley's and Paul practiced discipleship with duplication as the goal. Jesus intentionally chose the twelve apostles while having a closer relationship with the three. The Wesley's started the Holy Club and developed close relationships with four other individuals. Paul developed and nurtured one-to-one relationships with Barnabas, Timothy and others. All four of the individuals started with small numbers while encouraging duplication. Love, educate, adapt, and duplicate represent the glue of the Wesleyan, Pauline, and Jesus methods of discipleship.

Jesus' discipleship activities were more intimate than they are in discipleship today. Churches today often attempt to get individuals involved in groups in order to find the one who will lead. This process moves from a large group to a small one without duplication. However, in contrast, Jesus paid more attention to the one or two and developed leaders and who duplicated his strategy. From beginning to end, the discipleship process entrusts of the primacy of scripture to guide participants through the process. In Timothy 3:16–17, Paul says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”¹⁸⁸ This has become increasingly more difficult as many post-modern teachers subscribe to orthopraxy instead of orthodoxy. Current research by Ed Hindson, a leading scholar of Old Testament studies and eschatology, defines the following postmodern patterns:

- Secularism = There is no God
- Relativism = There is no truth
- Selfism = I am all that matters

¹⁸⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16–17, (*New International Version*).

- Mysticism = Search for something greater¹⁸⁹

These postmodern patterns today influence the membership of all churches. For the small membership church, these patterns create confusion unless biblical discipleship is introduced.

Confusion is apparent in many articles written today on church leadership. The articles tend to leave out the role of scripture and how they affect leadership. This is quite different from the emphasis on scripture and the proclamation of the Word on leadership and discipleship in the church. Daman writes, “Paul placed in one of his letters to Timothy exclaiming Timothy’s ministry effectiveness would depend on how well he preached and met the spiritual needs of the people.”¹⁹⁰ Meeting the spiritual needs of others depicts love, learning, adaptability and duplication us in the discipleship relationship. The concept of L.E.A.D continues to be an important part of the discipleship process, which is intentional, sacrificial, relational, and transformational.

Love is at the center of discipleship as the disciple moves toward Christ, and love requires humility, as “humility [is] an essential precondition for discipleship.”¹⁹¹ In Philippians 2:1–4 we read:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value

¹⁸⁹ Ed Hindson Lecture, February 28, 2017, PLED Advisory Board, Lynchburg VA.

¹⁹⁰ Glenn Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 172.

¹⁹¹ John Koessler, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 42.

others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.¹⁹²

Jesus modeled humility in His ministry. Modeling Jesus' ministry requires the individual to become dead to sin and alive in Christ. Being alive in Christ is being alive in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity found in 1 Corinthians 4: "This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed."¹⁹³ The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, teaches us the mysteries of God, and abides in each believer.

Discipleship cannot occur outside of a trusting, loving, authentic relationship. Any application of a discipleship plan must begin with the relational characteristic. The size of the church does not matter; any church, regardless of size, can become a place where in which a relationship can thrive, grow, and transform. This transformation has three necessary ingredients. According to Ogden, these ingredients are "transparent trust, truth of God's Word, and mutual accountability."¹⁹⁴ Within these ingredients of transformation can be found the impetus for multiplication and growth. Growing in Christ means growing in love. As disciples grow in love, multiplication occurs. People have an innate need to be loved. Transformational discipleship moves the participant through relationship building, accountability, and authenticity. Together, the participants "build a bridge" in which growth, love, and transformation occurs in Christ.

¹⁹² Philippians 2:1–4, (*New International Version*).

¹⁹³ 1 Corinthians 4:1, (*New International Version*).

¹⁹⁴ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 154–175.

Summary

Discipleship as a lifestyle is not easily understood by the modern church. Too many individuals do not see the need to practice discipleship. They see it as too hard or not a part of who they are. This is the battle that exists for the Christian world today. The church misunderstands true discipleship. For most churches today, “Discipleship has never made it to the heart of the church.”¹⁹⁵

Discipleship is the Great Commission, and it is about an individual’s relationship with Jesus Christ and others. Discipleship is not passive but rather active. Discipleship is obedience to what Christ has commanded in Matthew 28:20. In fact, “Discipleship is God’s primary work.”¹⁹⁶ Christ commands his disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”¹⁹⁷ The discipleship assignment is clear: GO. Discipleship is not a magical formula. It is about a whole-life transformation that helps people become whom God called them to be. Christians are called to be set apart, and that the catalyst for discipleship. As individuals are transformed, the world is transformation. As individuals practice discipleship, they are practicing obedience to God’s Word. Discipleship begins with the individual who commits him or herself to obedience and practice of God’s commandments. Discipleship is fueled by love: love of the individual; love of God; love for others.

¹⁹⁵ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navress, 2006), 24.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25

¹⁹⁷ The Gospel of Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)

Discipleship is not a program. It is not a production line. It is not just for beginners or just for leaders. It is not just for the literate and not just for those who like structure. Discipleship is for all who follow Christ. Discipleship is a lifestyle. Discipleship is the way one practices, shares, and is empowered by the love.

CHAPTER 5 JESUS, JOHN WESLEY, AND THE APOSTLE PAUL

Historians have documented the discipleship works of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, and the Wesley brothers. Each one of these individuals exercised a specific, but similar method of gathering disciples. In the preceding chapters, scriptures presented became the catalyst for their discipleship activities. Now it is time to look deeper into each figure’s method of discipleship to glean information about their transformational leadership and discipleship styles.

Jesus

The Great Commission can be broken down into three distinct activities. The first two deal with evangelism; Jesus tells us to “go”—the first activity—and “make disciples”—the second activity.¹⁹⁸ However, Jesus said also “to teach.”¹⁹⁹ Teaching is discipleship. Jesus was intentional about discipleship. Jesus lived and practiced a model of discipleship that harnessed great power in multiplication by sending out the apostles and other disciples in the Great Commission.

Jesus realized that discipleship was about relationship, intentionality in teaching, adaptability in modeling, and developing others through reproduction. These characteristics therefore define discipleship as a process of taking the time to win, involve, and teach someone

¹⁹⁸ Matthew 28:19, (*New International Version*).

¹⁹⁹ Matthew 28:20, (*New International Version*).

to live for Jesus.²⁰⁰ Jesus' model starts with Him and then multiples out to a large number. Scripture states, "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him."²⁰¹ Jesus presents the Christian with a model for discipleship here. He did not go straight to the church leaders and attempt to identify leaders who would help him gain followers. He picked each individual person and invited them to follow him.

Jesus was clear in his instructions and the expectation to "Come follow."²⁰² For Jesus, discipleship involved creating relationships. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus was unselfish with his time. He took the time to teach and care for his disciples. Through parables, Jesus was able to teach, illustrate, and lead. Throughout this discipleship process, the disciples encounter their own shortcomings and are transformed into leaders of the early church. In addition, Jesus' relationship with the Father was always at the forefront. He recognized that "the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."²⁰³ Jesus was patient; he allowed the disciples to be human. This kind of truly authentic relationship required love. Jesus loved his

²⁰⁰ Using scripture as one's reference one can infer that discipleship is defined in its simplest form as simply winning, involving, and teaching. Evangelism which leads to growth through practice and education.

²⁰¹ Matthew 4:18–20, (*New International Version*).

²⁰² Matthew 4:19, (*New International Version*).

²⁰³ John 5:19, (*New International Version*).

disciples right where they were and as they were. This is how true discipleship works. And finally, Jesus let the disciples go.

The L.E.A.D. model of discipleship provides a perfect framework for the church today. If we follow Jesus' model, smaller is better. Genuine love in relationship is better than disingenuous, large-group, surface-level relationships. Jesus called twelve, but He intentionally chose three (Peter, James, and John) who he spent time teaching and allowed to see into the ministry. In Jesus' prayers, the reader encounters the intentional, relational, sacrificial, and transformational characteristics of Jesus discipleship and ministry. These four identifiers all appear in Jesus' prayer in John 17:6-11:

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.²⁰⁴

In order for discipleship to be effective, it must follow Jesus' example of love, educate, adapt, and duplicate.

Jesus told his disciples to "love your neighbor as yourself"²⁰⁵ in the Great Commandment. Jesus taught through parables to illustrate the Kingdom of God. Jesus adapted to the crowd and surroundings. At one moment Jesus taught from a boat on the Sea of Galilee, and another time Jesus taught in the synagogue at Capernaum. Jesus sent His disciples out "two by

²⁰⁴ John 17:6–11, (*New International Version*)

²⁰⁵ Mark 12:31, (*New International Version*)

two, giving them all authority.”²⁰⁶ Jesus followed the love, educate, adapt, and duplicate model of discipleship by practicing intentional, sacrificial, relational, and transformational encounters with the individuals whom listened and followed His ministry.

John Wesley

There are many Christians who do not know anything about John Wesley. Wesley is known for his work ethic and emphasis on grace. Wesley wrote about, preached about, and taught about grace, and he was one of the most influential theologians in Church history. Wesley was the fifteenth of nineteen children born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley on June 17, 1703 in Epworth, England. Samuel was an Anglican priest and Rector of the church at Epworth. Susanna was the twenty-fifth child of Samuel Annesley, a dissenting minister from the Church of England, born in 1689. Susanna was the driving force behind their children’s educational and religious life. Her influence on John and Charles was distinctly evident in their writings and the way they lived. Growing up, John and his siblings were expected to become proficient in Greek and Latin. Susanna’s daily rigor and the schedule she demanded the children keep influenced and instilled in John a work ethic that became his trademark throughout his life.

In 1709, when John was 5 years old, their rectory home caught fire. John was trapped in a second story window and had to be rescued. This event prompted Susanna to refer to the young John as “a brand plucked from the fire,” which is a reference to Zechariah 3:2.²⁰⁷ Susanna’s and Samuels rearing, along with this life event, created a sense for John’s destiny. Wesley was home-

²⁰⁶ Mark 6:7, (*New International Version*).

²⁰⁷ Charles Wallace Jr., *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.67.

schooled for a number of his early years. At the age of 11, Wesley went to school in London. At the age of 17, Wesley entered Christ Church College in Oxford. He was an exceptional student, gifted in languages, theology, and New Testament. These gifts were recognized by the college, and Wesley was elected a fellow of Lincoln College. This election allowed Wesley to continue his studies while receiving a salary and a room from the school. Wesley taught Greek and New Testament and moderated debates on various issues. These educational experiences molded Wesley's expectations for the future.

In 1729, Wesley joined his younger brother Charles and two fellow students in forming the Holy Club, dedicated to the pursuit of a devout Christian Life. This group of four began to study and hold each other accountable in their daily walk. The intent of the Holy Club was to achieve order and method in prayer life, to scripture study, provide service, and influence school life. During this time, the Holy Club became known as the "Methodists." The early actions of the Holy Club included celebrating Holy Communion weekly, fasting, preaching to the masses, caring for the sick, and sharing the Word of God in prisons.

The club was not well received in all circles of the educational institution. In fact, after the sudden death of one of the members of the Club, they found themselves "being scrutinized and opposed because of their practices."²⁰⁸ As opposition to the group grew, Wesley and his brother Charles left for the Colony of Georgia at the request of their friend, James Oglethorpe. The Colony of Georgia was a major undertaking for Wesley. While in the colony, Wesley underwent what seems to be a "heart transformation." In Georgia, Wesley came face to face with his personal relationship with Christ.

²⁰⁸ Stephen Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography*, (Oxford, England: Lion Books, 2003), p.37.

Wesley returned from the Colony of Georgia an apparent failure, judging only by his ministry in Georgia. But during his journey back to England, Wesley met a group of Moravians. Wesley witnessed the Moravians' humility and servitude to others on the ship. Up to this point, Wesley's life and writings cause him to appear more legalistic and serving God for mostly personal reasons. The Colony of Georgia and the loss of a potential wife seemed to make Wesley look inwardly, but his encounter with the Moravians helped turn his vision outward. Wesley's journal entry on May 24, 1738 records the occurrence:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading [Martin] Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.²⁰⁹

This moment in John Wesley's life was critical to the development of the Methodist movement. Even reading these words without knowing Wesley's past to this point would carry the significance of transformation. In Wesley's words the reader finds a man who encounters the Holy Spirit and learns about true saving grace. This experience had a profound effect on Wesley, and he began teaching and preaching on the means of grace.

Wesley described the means of grace in the aptly titled "Means of Grace," or Sermon 16, as "outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace. I use this expression, means of grace, because I know none better; and because it has been

²⁰⁹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, reprinted from the 1872 edition issued by Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London, vol. 1, 2, *Journals*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2007).

generally used in the Christian church for many ages.”²¹⁰ The movement called Methodism did not really begin to multiply until after Wesley’s “heart-warming” experience.

Wesley was invited to Bristol, England by George Whitefield, one of his friends from the Holy Club days. Soon after Wesley’s arrival, Whitefield left for his own missionary trip to America and helped start Methodism there. Evangelism and Discipleship in the early Methodist movement were mutually inclusive. Throughout England and America, societies, classes, and bands were formed to assist individuals with the practice of their faith. Early Methodists were members of a Society, which was divided into classes for the purpose of forming connectional groups that would help overcome any debt occurred by the Society. The connectionalism of the Methodist society is still in practice today by Annual Conferences throughout the world. The Annual Conferences form a General Conference. Methodist classes became the group where love, education, adaptation, and duplication (L.E.A.D) took place. The classes of the Methodist movement consisted of four to five individuals of the same gender who would come together to share life with one another. Here discipleship took place as the members taught, reproofed, and grew together.

The Apostle Paul

In order to understand the Pauline view of discipleship, the learner needs look no further than the Book of Acts chapter 9 and the Pastoral Epistles. The Book of Acts gives the overview of Paul’s life. The Pastoral Epistles further clarify the events from Acts, but even with all of these Biblical references, Paul’s practice of discipleship is easily predictable and illustrated from

²¹⁰ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Sermon 16 Means of Grace*, Reprinted from the 1872 edition issued by Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London. Vol. 1–14. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, Group, 2007).

his teachings. Paul made his discipleship practice intentional, sacrificial, relational, and transformational.

Paul's ministry can be identified by his passionate preaching on salvation by faith (grace). As a Pharisee, Paul could have stayed with the law (works) but through the moving of the Holy Spirit, Paul realized the grace of Christ. This fact alone can demonstrate the incredible love God has for His creation, but an even grander demonstration of God's love is in Paul's unrelentless proclamation of Jesus Christ. It is in Paul's complete surrender to Jesus Christ that demonstrates how Jesus loves and redeems. Paul's intimate knowledge of Jesus through His ministry of suffering, death, and resurrection makes Paul a great ambassador of the faith for all who would hear. Paul realized Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is the only way to redemption, salvation, and eternal life.

In Acts 9, Paul begins his teaching journey after his conversion on the Damascus Road. Paul's conversion "astonished the Jews as they questioned the origin of this man."²¹¹ During this time, Paul was threatened by the Jews who would not accept him. Barnabas became Paul's first mentor. Barnabas took Paul before the Apostles, who allowed him to stay for a time in Jerusalem. During this time, Paul was speaking with more and more power until, for his safety, he left for Tarsus. Then, in Acts 11, Paul and Barnabas were reunited when Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch. They began to teach a great number of people, and many of those they taught became followers of Christ. Returning to Jerusalem, the men were joined by John Mark.

Paul, John Mark, and Barnabas became traveling partners. They were the first Discipleship Triad of the Pastoral Epistles. The Discipleship Triad or Discipleship Circle is instrumental for understanding discipleship in today's church. Throughout Paul's travels, he

²¹¹ Acts 9:21. (*New International Version*).

connected with several others in discipleship in the areas he traveled. Silas joined Paul when he was traveling to Cilicia to teach and strengthen the churches there. Timothy joined Paul and Silas. Discipleship began to take shape where two to three people connected with one another and joined in the mission to reach the area in which they traveled. This is an important concept for the success of Paul's journeys. Paul could not be everywhere, and he knew that others would need to carry the message of Christ's grace. His travel companions were the disciples he needed.

Throughout his Epistles, Paul gives the church today a model for discipleship. Each Epistle teaches a five-fold model for discipleship. First, Paul makes it clear that all discipleship is Christocentric.²¹² Christ is at the center of all activities. Because of Christ, our discipleship activities should be outward focused. Love, the second step of the model, connects to the first step. Paul writes, "In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."²¹³ Paul's adoption language signifies an intentional and sacrificial responsibility on the parties entering into the relationship. The disciple teaches the student in love as the student develops understanding and wisdom. Paul speaks of giving thanks and praying for wisdom and knowledge.²¹⁴

As the believer grows in wisdom and knowledge, the believer matures in Christ. Paul speaks of maturity in many places throughout his writings, but there is none better known than Galatians 5:22–23 where he outlines the fruits of the Spirit. Maturity in the Spirit is the third trait Paul presents as evidence of discipleship and growth. Growth and maturity are not easy. The

²¹² Colossians 1:28–29, (my paraphrase).

²¹³ Ephesians 1:5–6, (*New International Version*).

²¹⁴ Ephesians 1:17, (*New International Version*).

disciple must constantly engage the Word, pray, and reset personal priorities. Colossians 1:29 reminds us that growth for the disciple consists of “constant struggle and toil.”²¹⁵ A person’s faith grows through the struggles and their walking with others of faith. This struggle takes energy. The energy released by the actions of the disciple and disciple-maker are tiring and can lead to exhaustion, but Paul provides us with the remedy for exhaustion: obedience and focus. Paul endured hard times by focusing on the eternal. He gives a glimpse of his struggle in 2 Corinthians 11:22–28. Shipwrecks, beatings, incarcerations, and being stoned could not stop Paul. Paul teaches the disciple to focus on Christ, to love each other, to grow in wisdom and truth, to be prepared for a struggle, and never to quit. For the disciple, these are traits that transform others through the relationships that are built. Love, educate, adapt, and duplicate (L.E.A.D.) are vital steps to Paul’s ministry in each and every location he serves.

For Paul and Wesley, discipleship provided a way to teach the scripture, tell the story of Jesus, and grow spiritually. They could share Jesus but did not have a formal way of learning a discipleship program. In fact, they only had Jesus as the example for making disciples, and they were successful at organizing and leading movements that grew the church exponentially in their time. Unfortunately, somewhere over the last several hundred years, the church has forgotten how to make disciples.

Summary

For Jesus, Wesley, and Paul, discipleship illustrates a process of growth. The growth of the individual cannot occur in a vacuum. Discipleship is an active process in which salvation is understood and evangelism is the tool. Discipleship is not something anyone can do alone.

²¹⁵ Colossians 1:29. (*New International Version*).

Everybody needs to be in relationship with someone else to help them grow in Christ. Today, the process of discipleship begins with salvation and the recognition that there is more to life than the needs of the self. Salvation requires a curiosity that leads to the acceptance of Jesus Christ. For the Wesley's and Paul, Jesus exhibited the route of discipleship. Through Wesleyan class meetings and Paul's one-on-one teachings, the church grew exponentially. Illustration 10, below, provides a visual for the discipleship process.

Salvation is an intentional process where the individual decides to accept Christ. Once the decision is made, many negative relationships will cease, and activities will change when the individual gives up his or her old way in sacrifice for discipleship. Transformation begins as the individual moves from a sinful nature into a relationship with Jesus. Love is central to this process as discipleship becomes a lifestyle for the new convert.

Transformed relationships are contained in the Great Commandment, which is summed up by the phrase "love as Jesus loved."²¹⁶ Love is necessary for the world to know that individuals are Christ's disciples. Transformed loved leads to transformed habits, which indicates how disciples train.²¹⁷ The practice of spiritual disciplines aligns the disciple's practices with those of Jesus. The practice of spiritual disciplines strengthens the disciple's journey. Transformed habits are the beginning of the disciple's transformed service.²¹⁸ Individuals are called to a life of service others and serving God. Finally, the way a disciple serves allows for transformed influence—leading in the way that Jesus led—with humility, submission, obedience,

²¹⁶ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navress, 2006), 139

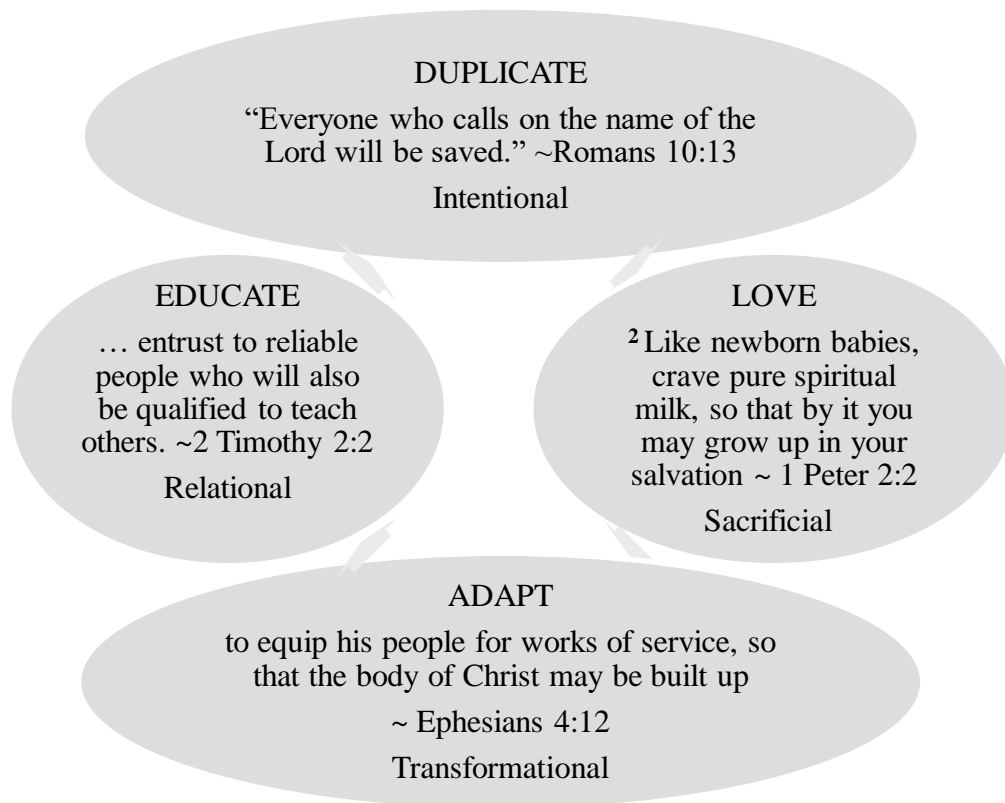
²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 144

suffering, and exaltation.²¹⁹ These five ways of living a life of influence mean the disciple places importance on Jesus, the Savior, on others, and, lastly, on themselves. Arrogance, pride, and selfishness are expunged from the life of the disciple as a life of following Jesus is practiced.

Scripturally, L.E.A.D. is supported by four scriptures which speak to discipleship being sacrificial, intentional, relational and transformational. The scriptures are depicted in Illustration 10 found on the next page.

Illustration 2 Discipleship Process According to Scripture²²⁰



²¹⁹ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navress, 2006), 149

²²⁰ Using the acronym LEAD, scripture is used to identify the process of discipleship as Intentional, Relational, Sacrificial, and Transformational. Each of the four characteristics of discipleship are found in scripture and can be reproduced successfully to provide church growth.

CHAPTER 6 DISCIPLESHIP PLAN FOR TWO SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCHES

The following chapter provides actual discipleship plans that were put together using the two churches the authored pastor. We will be discussing only Salem United Methodist Church (Salem UMC) and Shiloh United Methodist Church (Shiloh UMC), which are located in Mecklenburg County Virginia in the southside of the state. The county borders North Carolina, and the churches are located in a rural agricultural area.

The pastor was appointed to pastor these churches by the Bishop in July 2007. The pastor remained in this appointment for ten years—a tenure that lies outside the Virginia Conference appointment average of 3.4 years. Many pastors prior to this pastor served in the appointment four years, in keeping with the average.

Salem UMC and Shiloh UMC were two of four churches in the North Mecklenburg United Methodist Charge. Salem UMC. The two churches are similar, but they are located in very different places. The economic mix in these two churches is primarily agriculture, with healthcare and technology employing a small number of people. All of the churches in the North Mecklenburg Charge were original members of the Old Brunswick Circuit which is the oldest charge circuit in the United States. One of the churches of the charge is documented in the National Historic Archives where Bishop Francis Asbury convened a General Church Conference (business meeting).

Shiloh UMC is the oldest of the two churches located eight miles from the Town of South Hill. The church was chartered in 1888 in the Northside Community of Mecklenburg County. The church was originally located across from the community general store where the farmers would gather. The congregation of the church was elderly with two young families attending

during the last five years of the pastor's appointment. Many of the individuals in the church were related either directly by birth position or indirectly via marriage.

Salem UMC was chartered in 1893. The church is located 5 miles from the town of Chase City and 6 miles from the county seat of Boydton. Salem UMC is located in the Drapersville community of Mecklenburg County. The community is primarily agricultural. The church is a family church with four families making up sixty-four percent of the church membership when the pastor first arrived at the church.

Finding Direction

Like many small membership churches in the Virginia Conference, the churches are in a rural area. Many of the families grew up in the church and discipleship was not something most members really understood. Both churches are located on Route 47 between South Hill and Chase City, approximately five miles apart. The first step of developing a plan included forming a steering committee in both churches that would help formulate a mission statement and goals for both churches.

Change does not come easily in institutionalized churches. Many rural, small membership churches today may die out before change takes place. Many of these smaller institutionalized churches are too entrenched in ritualism, self-preservation, familial situations, and traditionalism to adapt to the needed changes quickly. Discipleship is therefore not a leading practice because many are not familiar with or comfortable making disciples. In the small membership church, the pastor is responsible for all discipleship activities.

Shiloh United Methodist Church

Shiloh United Methodist Church developed the mission statement: “We Care to Share the Love of Christ in Word and Deed, Song, and Seed.”²²¹ The mission statement assisted the committee formulate a S.W.O.T. (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) Analysis. This analysis was then used to develop and implement strategic goals and directed change.

Strengths

The committee recognized the main strength of the church was hospitality. Shiloh United Methodist Church held many community events, which often drew the same individuals. The events included a monthly movie night, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, and Bible study. Another strength they considered was their leadership, but members of the church typically elected the same individuals to the same office.

Weaknesses

The committee found three areas of weakness. They listed the lack of financial support from the Conference, proximity of other United Methodist Churches, and lack of children in their service as their main weaknesses. The United Methodist system focuses on the connectional priorities of the general church, where each individual church pays apportionments to the General Conference and the Virginia Conference. During the ten years the pastor served this church, the apportionments paid by the church increased by a total of nine percent. The two churches in this study were approximately five miles apart. Mecklenburg County Virginia has

²²¹ The mission statement was developed by the steering committee and then presented to the entire church. The committee wanted to outline the strengths of the church. Notice the one-part missing is the making disciples. The committee did not feel this was necessary.

fifteen individual United Methodist Churches with four churches located within five miles of Shiloh United Methodist Church. One of the largest United Methodist Churches in the county is located six miles from Shiloh United Methodist Church. Finally, Shiloh United Methodist Church only had children or young families as visitors, not members. Sunday school consisted of the Men's class or the Women's class. They did not offer and did not have a plan for children if children attended. Even when grandchildren of the members came to visit, they did not have a place to go other than with the older adults.

Opportunities

The main opportunity the committee saw was to stop focusing on remaining financially solvent as a church. This attitude kept the church focusing inwardly and not looking outwardly. Instead, they wanted to decide who they wanted to target and develop a plan to reach the community.

Threats

The committee established their list of threats to include the number of other churches in a twenty-mile radius and their church lacking younger families. The number of churches was a real threat, but the lack of young families was a threat which could be addressed with change.

Salem United Methodist Church

When the pastor arrived at Salem United Methodist Church in 2007, it consisted of four families and some non-family members. Developing a steering committee was not something the church felt was necessary at the beginning, but the church slowly agreed to appoint a steering committee. The committee presented to the church the mission statement: "Making Disciples for

Jesus Christ by Sharing God's Love and Experiencing God's Grace."²²² The S.W.O.T Analysis for Salem United Methodist Church was similar to that of Shiloh UMC.

Strengths

Salem UMC consisted of four close families who had ancestral ties to the church. The families had members of every living generation, which was not the case at Shiloh UMC. Leadership was a strength as leaders were strong-willed and determined. Salem United Methodist Church did many things in the community of Drapersville and worked closely with two Baptist churches in the area.

Weakness

Evangelism and discipleship were not seen as the primary actions of the church. The myth that "everyone goes to church" was prevalent among the members. Discipleship was not needed because all were family. The church did not recognize that they were focusing inward.

Opportunities

The opportunities for Salem United Methodist Church included reaching the lost, sharing the Gospel at all events, moving beyond the four walls of the church, and loving unconditionally. According to demographics contrived by census data and used by the General United Methodist Church, many people in the community did not attend any church at all. Members needed to

²²² This mission statement did include making disciples and how it was to be attained. The issue came with moving beyond being a family chapel by stressing individual discipleship. Small membership churches typically fail to recognize the need for evangelism and discipleship. We are all family is the mantra.

begin incorporating the Gospel into the community events they held and participated. They needed to look beyond their family “cliques” and love others.

Threats

The main threat identified by the committee was the attitude of the general church toward the Word of God. The committee felt that their belief system and the general church belief system contradicted one another and that, therefore, getting new people would be impossible. The proximity of other churches was mentioned as well, but it was identified as something that could be more easily overcome.

Developing the Plan

The first step to developing the plan included setting goals for the short- and long-term. Both of the churches in the study were reluctant to set goals at first. However, the Virginia Conference set five areas which were to be reported weekly. The churches realized the need to set goals that correlated to the five areas the conference dictated. These “S.M.A.R.T” goals threatened the leadership of the churches at first. In conversations with the church leaders, the pastor recognized a territorial arrogance of the leadership. Their questioning centered upon the fear of being told what to do by an outside body (District or Conference). Many individuals were afraid of losing their asset which by polity are owned by the General Church. The churches were reluctant to report any information. In addition, misinformation about how individual church apportionments are calculated kept the churches from moving forward with goals and plans.

Apportionments are budget items set by the Conference and District that the local church supports. However, the local church membership has no input into the amounts charged.

Apportionments fund ministries in the general church, which may or may not be supported by

the local church. Even if they are not supported, the charges must be paid by the local church. Many individuals incorrectly evaluated the five areas measured by the Conference as an attempt to raise their apportionments. Refusing to set goals or reach these goals became the norm. For the pastor, however, these goals measured the effectiveness of the church's and pastor's ministry. The goals dictated by the Conference had to be reported weekly, monthly, and yearly.

In the fourth year of the pastor's ministry, the churches did establish a list of goals that looked to the future of the church. Salem United Methodist Church established committees to deal with Membership, Missions, Spiritual Growth, and Outreach. Shiloh United Methodist was still reluctant to set goals at this time. For the Salem United Methodist Church, the goals established were as follows: 1. Make New Disciples, 2. Grow in Faith Through Small Groups, 3. Missions Outreach, and 4. Giving to Missions. Shiloh United Methodist Church would likewise adopt the same goals two years later—in pastor's sixth year of ministry there.

The first goal of making new disciples involved developing or continuing programs in the community centered around the church calendar. Advent, Lent, Easter, and Homecoming programs were developed to reach out to the community. One issue encountered was the unwillingness of the churches to work together. The churches continued to be in competition. Salem United Methodist Church started a new mover program, which targeted individuals within a ten-mile radius of the church who had recently moved to the area. The radius encroached upon the territory of Shiloh UMC creating a disagreement between the churches. Postcards and invitations were sent to all new residents in the area. Telephone calls to inactive members and visits were a priority by the nurture committee. Invitations to special programs were sent to all area churches, regardless of denomination, in the community.

The second goal of Growing in Faith Through Small Groups did not take on a discipleship priority. The small groups were focused inward to groups that already existed. The church leadership at both churches placed discipleship on the shoulders of the pastor during the pastor's first eight years of ministry. While the church members grew spiritually, they did not share effectively as a group. The churches' inward focus proved detrimental to the overall effectiveness of the discipleship plan.

The pastor arranged for the churches to participate in many local mission projects. Each program had a varying degree of success at the local level. Both churches participated in Salvation Army bell ringing and in hurricane relief efforts. Projects that prompted individuals to participate instead of just giving money began to see some success in year seven of the pastor's tenure.

Finally, giving financially to missions became a way for the churches to help out the marginalized in our community and world. Both churches accepted their mission's apportionment, paying 100 percent of their obligation. The church supported other special local, district, and conference projects through giving and volunteering. This change of attitude did not occur until year seven.

The discipleship plan follows the Love, Educate, Adapt, Duplicate model discussed throughout this project. Love is achieved by loving the people who are present and those who become disenfranchised for a variety of reasons. Educate is simply educating the people building relationships within the church body. Adapt is achieved by focusing on the similarities and building upon the differences between the two churches. Finally, duplication occurs when the preceding attributes are successfully navigated and growth, numerically and spiritually, occur.

For Shiloh United Methodist Church and Salem United Methodist Church, the plan to Love, Educate, Adapt, and Duplicate resulted in the churches growing and continuing to grow even after the pastor moved to another location. The following tables illustrate the success of the individual church plans. By focusing on weekly average attendance, the church grew in love for one another. By focusing on professions of faith, the church began to look outwardly. By focusing on numbers of small groups, the church increased opportunities for members and non-members to grow spiritually. By focusing on members in mission and dollars spent in missions, the church began to live out the Great Commission to go and tell others about Christ.

Table 1: Goals Performance Chart and Graphs for Shiloh United Methodist Church²²³

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Avg. Wkly. Attd	29	36	31	35	47	35	37	34	38	38
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Professions of Faith	0	0	1	7	2	1	4	4	2	4
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Small Groups	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Members in Mission	7	14	14	15	16	10	13	20	24	21
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
\$ Given to Missions	11158	11940	9967	7751	11342	8122	7400	7537	7550	9870

Shiloh United Methodist Church worked their program and realized growth in every year. In year four of the pastor’s time there, the church realized an increase in weekly attendance which was a result in reaching out to members who had stopped coming over the years and seven

²²³ End of Year Reports given at the church Charge Conference and submitted to the Conference Comptroller. All reports appear in the Journal presented at Annual Conference.

professions of faith. Also, during this time, many visitors who never became members started attending. However, in 2012 the average weekly attendance decreased due to 8 members passing away and four members going into residential care facilities. Small groups never increased or decreased during the period of this study. The number of members in missions did increase as the church began focusing on community needs. The church adopted a local elementary school and began having programs which promoted congregational support. As the number of missions programs increased, giving dollars to missions increased. With the exception of year 2012, Shiloh experienced growth every year.

Table 2: Goals Performance Charts and Graphs for Salem United Methodist Church²²⁴

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Avg. Wkly. Attd	31	34	35	41	42	47	46	48	51	53
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Professions of Faith	0	2	7	1	2	4	5	4	5	2
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Small Groups	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Members in Mission	10	17	17	23	26	25	27	31	30	29
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
\$ Given to Missions	9437	10106	10000	13225	13221	14197	14301	14362	15297	15123

Salem United Methodist Church followed the program developed by the leaders and realized growth every year. Most of the growth came about by reaching out to members who had

²²⁴ End of Year Reports given at the church Charge Conference and submitted to the Conference Comptroller. All reports are appeared in the Journal presented at Annual Conference.

become inactive over the years. Professions of faith accounted for growth as well. It should be noted that average weekly attendance grew every year except 2012 – 2013. The congregation experienced five deaths during this year. Salem United Methodist Church adopted two elementary schools in the county and began volunteering and donating items such as coats, socks, underwear, and other needs to the schools to help students who could not afford items. Salem United Methodist Church held a Vacation Bible School, Fall Harvest, and Community Stew every year to invite the community to the church.

Each of these aforementioned tables depicts the five area matrices which are measured by the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church. At both churches the Average Weekly Attendance, Members in Mission, and Dollars Given to Missions increased yearly with a large increase during the fourth year of the pastor's leadership. Continuity of leadership, along with an effective plan, lead to growth numerically, financially, and spiritually at the churches.

Continuity of leadership and extended training of the members in discipleship proved to be beneficial to the churches. Too often the individual's salvation is taken for granted. Without discernment, too many are not sure of their own salvation. Developing a program where Love, Education, Adaptability, and Duplication are the four pillars allows for better discernment of the discipleship process as being intentional, sacrificial, relational, and transformational. When all four pillars are met the church exemplifies the 2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!²²⁵

²²⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:17, (*New International Version*).

Issues and Conclusions

While the churches in this study experienced growth numerically and spiritually, the growth was hindered by a lack of buy-in by the congregational leadership. The attitude that the pastor is responsible for evangelism and discipleship remained prevalent in both churches. These churches are not alone in the United States. According to a recent study, “fewer than five percent of the churches have a reproducing disciple-making culture.”²²⁶ The lack of a disciple-making attitude in the church. In the small membership church which tends to be pastor driven, this attitude exacerbates the issue of church growth.

Glenn Daman believes that “the church should return to the old paradigm where the pastor becomes the spiritual and visionary leader.”²²⁷ In the small membership church, it is easy for the pastor to make ministry too complex as they try to do too much. For the small membership church pastor, “it is easy to become methodological junkies who are always in search of a new method for success.”²²⁸ Evangelism and discipleship are two different activities performed by the pastor in the small membership church. While evangelism is necessary for individuals to perform as Jesus commanded, it is discipleship of individuals which promotes growth numerically and spiritually.

²²⁶ Grey Matter Research, “National Study on Disciple Making in USA Churches,” Discipleship.org (Discipleship.org / Exponential, February 19, 2020), <https://discipleship.org/national-study-on-disciple-making-in-usa-churches/>, 3.

²²⁷ Glenn Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 30-32.

²²⁸ Ibid., 37

The simplicity of the L.E.A.D. program of discipleship offers pastors and churches a way to follow the Great Commission and Great Commandment. Furthermore the L.E.A.D program is biblical with four scriptures supporting the method. The scriptures are

- L = Love - Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation ~ 1 Peter 2:2
- E = Educate - And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. ~ 2 Timothy 2:2
- A = Adapt - 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 ~ Ephesians 4:11-12
- D = Duplicate - “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ~ Romans 10:13

Finally, the discipleship program follows the four pillars of:

- Intentional – Discipleship is not passive. Discipleship requires action
- Relational – Discipleship cannot happen in a vacuum. Discipleship requires developing relationships with another person
- Sacrificial – Discipleship is not about “me”. Discipleship is about God and His nature. Discipleship is about letting go of the flesh and putting on the Spirit
- Transformation – Discipleship’s goal is to offer the avenue through the Holy Spirit to become a new creation

The church must get back to the basics of church growth. Individuals who practice discipleship should work on cultivating the leadership traits and qualities exhibited by Jesus and practiced by the Apostle Paul and John Wesley. Jesus came for all people. By following the plan outlined in the project, the small membership church can follow the Great Commission and light the way for a new generation of believers.

Recommendations for Further Research

This section contains recommendations for further research in the future. One disconcerting finding involved the level of knowledge church laity and clergy had when it came to the difference between evangelism and discipleship. The scope of the project was limited to

United Methodist Churches but clearly in the authors conversations with other clergy, identical issues exist. A recent study illustrates that “less than five percent of churches in the United States have a reproducing disciple making culture.”²²⁹ In the small membership church study, duplication was the one objective which the proposed program did not successfully accomplish.

Three reasons were identified as the primary detractors from developing a successful L.E.A.D. discipleship program and require further quantitative research. The three reasons are as follows:

1. Lack of clergy and laity understanding of the differences between evangelism and discipleship. A clear understanding of discipleship differed between the two groups. Many of the individuals focused on evangelism and discipleship was never addressed. In fact, “while eighty four percent of the pastors who reported at least one new commitment, only half (forty-two percent)of the pastors reported church growth.”²³⁰ A lack of common definitions for common terms exists.²³¹
2. Continuity of Leadership in the United Methodist Church for pastors. The United Methodist Church uses the itinerant system for pastors. Pastors are appointed and sent to serve by the Bishop. Pastors serve at the pleasure of the Bishop with moves in the system occurring approximately every four years.²³² The continuity of leadership may be an issue in other denominations.
3. Further investigation and understanding of the Family Systems Theory and the effects of family systems on the small membership church. Peter Steinke wrote, “There are no shortcuts in managing emotional processes, particularly the painful ones.”²³³

²²⁹ Grey Matter Research, “National Study on Disciple Making in USA Churches,” Discipleship.org (Discipleship.org / Exponential, February 19, 2020), <https://discipleship.org/national-study-on-disciple-making-in-usa-churches/>, 3.

²³⁰ Ibid., 8.

²³¹ Ibid., 15

²³² The itinerant system is the historical system used for appointing pastors. Indicates that an ordained elder, associate member, or full-time local pastor will agree to serve where the bishop appoints them. This system of appointments is referred to as itinerancy.

²³³ Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*, (Durham, NC: Alban Institute, 1993), 100.

Further study in these three areas will give the reader a better understanding of what is needed to make discipleship reproducible. The keys to effective discipleship occurs when leaders “focus on equipping and coaching others using simple, effective, and reproducible models.”²³⁴ While the L.E.A.D. model defined in this project was simple and effective for the pastor, it lacked reproducibility because the success of the program depended solely on the pastor and not equipping the saints.

²³⁴ Grey Matter Research, “National Study on Disciple Making in USA Churches,” Discipleship.org (Discipleship.org / Exponential, February 19, 2020), <https://discipleship.org/national-study-on-disciple-making-in-usa-churches/>, 17.

APPENDIX 1 SURVEY AND SURVEY RESULTS

Default Report***Informed Consent - Copy***

September 13th 2018, 11:17 am MDT

Q1 - The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 10/6/2016 to -- Protocol # 2648.100616

CONSENT FORM

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: EQUIPPING SMALL CHURCHES TO MAKE DISCIPLES BY INTEGRATING PAULINE AND WESLEYAN PRINCIPALS

Ronald Kent Wise

Liberty University

Liberty University School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study to identify discipleship trends in our churches with the final product being the development of a discipleship plan which can be implemented in churches of any size. You were selected as a possible participant because you are involved with the United Methodist Church in Virginia as either clergy or laity. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Ronald Kent Wise, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study will be to use qualitative research to address Wesleyan and Pauline Transformational Leadership, and how to apply the principles to equip churches to make disciples for Jesus Christ. The principles addressed by the project are (1) evangelism/assimilation, (2) stewardship, (3) spiritual formation, and (4) leadership development. In today's politically correct culture, the persecution of the Christian worldview occurs in communities, politics, and the church. Transformational leadership introduces biblical principles in conjunction with time-tested leadership principles to promote and strengthen individual and corporate growth. Individual and corporate growth transforms lives of individuals as relationships and stories are shared. As transformation takes place, the individual's spirituality strengthens, lives are changed, and disciples made. A qualitative examination of leadership traits and qualities designed to promote growth will be identified. The Holy Scriptures will corroborate the leadership traits identified using different Biblical leaders and the Fruit of the Holy Spirit. This goal of this research is to create a duplicatable discipleship plan which can be implemented by churches of any size.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

Complete and submit an anonymous online survey at the following link: (add link here).

This should take approximately 15 minutes. Submit your anonymous survey. You are finished. Thank you for completing.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, no more than you would encounter in everyday life. There are not significant benefits to participating in this study. The main benefit will be the development of a discipleship plan which can be used by churches of any size.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- The survey will be anonymous. No personal indicators will be collected.
- Data will be kept on a data stick in a personal safe used for sensitive documents along with a copy of the final project for the period of three years.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting your survey without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is R. Kent Wise. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at kentwise@vaumc.org or 434-774-5746 (cell). You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Charlie Davidson, at cdavidson@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study. (NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 10/6/2016 to -- Protocol # 2648.100616

Q1a. – I Consent to the Study

#	Answer	%	Count
1	I consent, begin the study	100.00%	54
2	I do not consent, I do not wish to participate	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	54

Q1b. - I attend a United Methodist Church

#	Answer	%	Count
1	yes	90.74%	49
2	no	3.70%	2
3	sometimes	5.56%	3
	Total	100%	54

Q2 - My position in the church is

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Clergy	57.41%	31
2	Laity	42.59%	23
	Total	100%	54

Q3 - My church size is

#	Answer	%	Count
1	0 – 150 Small Church	53.70%	29
2	151–400 Medium Size Church	35.19%	19
3	401 + Large Church	11.11%	6
	Total	100%	54

Q4 - I am in a Leadership Position

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	87.27%	48
2	No	12.73%	7
	Total	100%	55

Q5 - Rate the following statements

#	Question	Always Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Always Agree	Total
1	I am mentoring others to help them grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ	0.00% 0	2.00% 1	4.00% 2	44.00% 22	50.00% 25	50
2	The practice of my discipleship is relational	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.00% 1	36.00% 18	62.00% 31	50
3	I believe God has a purpose for my life	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10.00% 5	90.00% 45	50
4	I am confident that I can communicate my faith to a non-believer	0.00% 0	8.16% 4	4.08% 2	36.73% 18	51.02% 25	49
5	I understand the call of Jesus is to be disciples, not just believers	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.00% 4	92.00% 46	50
6	Growing disciples requires that I pray and worship, fellowship with other believers, and be active in	0.00% 0	2.00% 1	4.00% 2	8.00% 4	86.00% 43	50

	mission, service, and ministry											
7	My church has the primary objective of making disciples written into their mission statement	4.08%	2	14.29%	7	6.12%	3	24.49%	12	51.02%	25	49
8	My church's leadership is committed to making disciples	2.08%	1	16.67%	8	14.58%	7	45.83%	22	20.83%	10	48
9	My church's leadership is committed to equipping me and others for the purpose of making disciples	4.00%	2	14.00%	7	10.00%	5	50.00%	25	22.00%	11	50
10	My church emphasizes that every believer be involved in the ministries of the church. There are no pew sitters.	8.00%	4	30.00%	15	22.00%	11	32.00%	16	8.00%	4	50
11	My church offers discipleship training for all members	16.00%	8	12.00%	6	20.00%	10	34.00%	17	18.00%	9	50
12	I believe effective discipleship happens in a group 3 - 5 people	0.00%	0	8.16%	4	22.45%	11	44.90%	22	24.49%	12	49
13	Small groups are an extension of training for disciples	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	2.04%	1	28.57%	14	69.39%	34	49
14	I would like to have formal discipleship training	4.00%	2	2.00%	1	28.00%	14	22.00%	11	44.00%	22	50

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