

Liberty University School of Divinity

**DEVELOPING AN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE MAKING STRATEGY FOR FATHERS
TO LEAD THEIR FAMILIES IN SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION.**

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ABSTRACT: DEVELOPING AN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE MAKING STRATEGY FOR FATHERS TO LEAD THEIR FAMILIES IN SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION.

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Do current student ministries produce disciples that can stand the test of the current culture? Has creating a separate ministry worked against God's plan for making disciples? Statistics from across the Church would suggest the American Church is in decline.¹ Within the Southern Baptist Convention there has been a continual decline in baptisms over the past few years.² This project will seek to determine if there is a correlation between how student ministries are led in the modern church to how effectively the church has been in making disciples. With research and data collected from current and former student ministries, Data will be presented to study the long-lasting effects student ministries have had on reaching the lost and making disciples with and without parental support.

Does the demand to produce numbers hurt student ministry and keep them from fulfilling the Great Commission. This research and data will be used to encourage and provide a return to the basics in making disciples in the local church through the family of God. Michael Kibbe shares "this is the first key to this phase of research; you need to have something to contribute to the discussion"³

¹ Barna, George. "State of the Church 2016" Barna.com <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/> (accessed November 24th, 2020).

² Pipes, Carol. "Southern Baptists report more churches in 2016; baptisms, membership decline". Lifeway.com. <http://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2017/06/08/southern-baptists-report-more-churches-in-2016-baptisms-membership-decline/> (accessed November 11th, 2017).

³ Kibbe, Michael. From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research. IVP Academic, an Imprint of Intervarsity Press, 2016. P.77.

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Chapter One

Thesis Project Introduction

Years ago, as a new student pastor, the author was part of a support group for parents whose children had died. God used this time to convict the author of the need in reaching youth for Christ, the author was confronted with the harsh reality of how many young people were dying without a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. God used this conviction to call the author into student ministry, where the author would spend the next fifteen years trying to reach as many students as possible. The only problem was this author did not understand discipleship and that more students would be reached if there was a strategy to disciple youth.

There was and still is a great need in reaching youth, but in the author's haste to reach as many students as quickly as possible, the author missed the mark to go and make disciples that in turn could reproduce. This new conviction of making disciples set out for this author to train up men and women and especially parents, to teach and train their children. Through planting two churches with the chief aim to make disciples that would make disciples and raise up a generation of future church leaders and church planters, the author has slowly seen the fruit that comes from pouring into a few men and fathers at a time that in turn disciple their kids.

By investing in men, this author is convinced the current model of student ministry is lacking in its approach of partnering and training parents to do the work God has ordained parents to do. Making disciples starting in the home is the primary task of moms and dads. This paper will examine the data and, with research, show a better way to make disciples one person at a time.

Problem Statement

The American Church is in decline in almost every aspect. Fewer baptisms, reduced church attendance, and fewer Christians having a Biblical Worldview would conclude something is incorrect. The author will examine current student ministry models to become better equipped to make disciples that make disciples. The author will be using the data collected to help prepare for re-planting a church in 2021 to be more effective stewards of the mission God has called each believer to go and make disciples. By examining what has been done in the past and what God is calling the church to do currently. The author will interview those in current small group ministries and then measure the growth experienced in specific spiritual formation areas.

Purpose Statement

To get people saved has the church created a shortcut to the Great Commission. In this author's experience from twelve years in student ministry and twelve years in church planting, it is believed the church has missed the mark. This thesis project will propose a return to the basics of making disciples found in the Great Commission to reach people with the gospel that will go and do likewise. After spending twelve years using all means possible to reach people, this author is afraid the mark was missed from the most basic example we have from our Savior Jesus Christ. Discipleship is messy and takes time. "Read the Gospels. Jesus didn't draw large crowds for the sake of counting heads or logging attendance."⁴ For the church to truly fulfill the Great Commission, it will require a return to the methods Jesus used to change the world.

⁴ Gallaty, Robby, *Rediscovering discipleship: making Jesus final words our first work*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 19.

Statement of Limitations

This study will show if a return to the fundamental methods of disciple-making Jesus provided will help turn the church back to reproducing churches. The church in America has been declining; could it be because she has failed to take the road less traveled in doing ministry the way Jesus did? This study will help provide data that will help future churches use the best means possible to make disciples that will make disciples. The limitations will not be designed to measure the size of churches but rather the overall health of a local church in reproducing. By examining student ministries as a sub-set within the church in this study, the author will determine if student ministry is simply a product of current church trends or if there are underlying principles that will not apply to be effective disciple-makers? By using surveys and questionnaires, this study will seek to find answers to best help church plants and student ministries in making disciples that make disciples. Can church plants that effectively reach and disciple parents who will disciple their children prove that student ministries have missed a principle? This researcher understands that student ministries and churches can effectively reach and make disciples, but most do not. This project's research will show why so many youths are not being discipled, and worst, ultimately leave the church.

Statement of Delimitations

This study will not examine older members but focus on parents of youth and younger children to examine the effectiveness of parents disciplining their children. By examining parents and students, the research will determine which student ministries are most effective and how the study can apply this to church plants.

Theological Basis

Christians are commanded to go into all the world and make disciples. This research will determine how effective local student ministries have been at fulfilling the Great Commission. The study will use 2 Timothy 2:2 as a basis to gauge if discipleship is multi-generational or are ministries content on generating numbers that have no lasting fruit. 2 Timothy 2:2 states, "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." (ESV) The theory is investing in mothers and fathers to disciple their children is the most effective means to fulfilling what Jesus commanded each believer to do. The research will use the data to help church planters grow healthy, reproducing churches.

Statement of Methodology

This thesis will attempt to show the most effective way to create a disciple-making culture in new and old churches is by examining the efforts of making disciples in modern student ministry. It will list the pros and cons of student ministries that included parents in the disciple-making process instead of those primarily absent of investing in parents as much as the students. This study will present multiple reasons why making disciples in student ministries by training parents is the most effective means for churches to follow with all families.

The numbers that are rarely reported in student ministry are where students are after ten years. Baptism and attendance are reported regularly, but what about the long-term fruit of fulfilling the great commission?

This project is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter Two: A Hands-on approach will be used as the writer shares his own experience starting a student ministry from scratch and what it looked like ten years later and planting

multiply churches with the intent to be a multiplying church. Part of the experience will examine students that had parents involved in discipleship compared to those that did not.

Chapter Three: Six Timeless Reasons will list six principles that pastors should consider when starting new churches or transitioning to established churches that will equip and empower families to make disciples. With so many teenagers walking away from churches before they graduate, the writer will seek to discover the overlapping principles that need to be changed. Some results will be based on personal experience, and some of the reasons will be based on surveys sent to former students. These reasons will serve as a guide to help pastors in the future with a healthy starting point.

Chapter Four: Philosophy of Ministry is a practical chapter to help pastors understand guiding principles that lead to healthy families and thus healthy churches. The philosophy of ministry should be guided by biblical truths and have stood the test of time. The philosophy will be rooted deep in the scriptures like 2 Timothy 2:2 states: "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." This is a four-generation approach to discipleship.

Chapter Five: Conclusion will summarize the data collected, provide solutions, and offer practical advice to pastors seeking to start healthy churches that make disciples and strengthen families. The prescribed process may be too slow and demanding for many churches, but for those willing to take the risk of hard work and walking with families, the results will be a model that will reproduce healthy churches and families.

Review of Literature

Discipleship literature in the past few years has been endless. If you look around at the books and articles written, you may surmise making disciples in the local church is increasing in

most areas. However, when examined further, we see the church in America falling further behind and losing ground. The resources listed will help demonstrate why and how we need to make disciples, starting in the home.

Books

Real-life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples by Jim Putman shares how Real-Life Ministries make disciple-makers through small groups. The book helps answer the question: How do we create Churches that succeed? Jim Putman shares that creating a discipling culture focuses on developing leaders who mentor and invest in others. *Real-Life* is an example of a church impacting its community and the world by reproducing disciples, small groups, and churches. “Tragically, most believers do not know or do not accept that we are God’s Plan A for reaching the world and that there is no Plan B.”⁵ Discipleship needs to be intentional and relational.

Saturate: Being Disciples of Jesus in the Everyday Stuff of Life by Jeff Vanderstelt. In *Saturate*, Jeff Vanderstelt shares how we are called to be the church and not just attend church. This book shares how the gospel should saturate all we do, and living on mission means looking to make disciples as part of who we are, not just a church program. This work shares how we need to look to Jesus for the example we should follow. As we study the life of Jesus, we see what making disciples in everyday life look like. “Most American Christians still believe they have to bring their friends to hear their pastor teach the Bible and proclaim the Gospel.”⁶ This work will show how making disciples is the essential work new churches should engage in.

Church 3.0 Upgrades for the Future of the Church by Neil Cole shares how the church

⁵ Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO. NavPress, 2010), 22.

⁶ Jeff Vanderstelt, *Saturate Being Disciples of Jesus in the Everyday stuff of Life* (Wheaton, Illinois. Crossway, 2015), 89.

needs an upgrade. Church 2.0 happened around 300 AD, and ever since, the church has been using the same operating system. Neil Cole suggests it's time for a change in how we do church. The modern church must be about sending, not just receiving people. A new operating system focuses on an organic movement separated by walls and age; instead, it is about a spiritual family growing together. “We have forgotten that much of the Christian life is caught by example rather than taught by fill in the blank, pop-up, coloring books. It is a real blessing for kids to see their parents worship God.”⁷ This book helps show what happens when the family and the church work together to help in spiritual transformation with children by focusing on relationships, where the church is no longer an event but a family that we are a part of.

The Disciple-Making Church by Bill Hull supports the thesis by showing how the Apostle Paul planted churches by training leaders (Elders) to lead the local congregations by reaching out and making disciples. Bill Hull shares, “I believe Paul’s convictions and strategy reached their apex here and that the Ephesian Church provides the contemporary congregation with the best scriptural model.”⁸ The model we witness in the Ephesian Church is one of reproduction that transcends time and culture.

Discipleship that Fits by Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom helps answer the how in discipleship. By learning and applying the principles shared in this book, we know how to make better disciples that make disciples. “Being a disciple means that I model my life around that of my master. I take note of how he lives, what he says, how he says it.”⁹ This book helps show how you need to know your people to create a disciple-making strategy that works most effectively.

⁷ Neil Cole, *Church 3.0 Upgrade for the future of the Church* (San Francisco, Ca. Josey Bass 2010), 214.

⁸ Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Church*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books 2010), 155.

⁹ Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, *Discipleship that Fits* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2016), 21.

Through personal relationships, we best understand the people God has entrusted to our care.

Multiply - Disciples Making Disciples by Francis Chan supports the thesis suggested in this paper that the most effective means to making disciples is in the context of family. *Multiply* shares timeless principles of how to become a disciple-maker. Each chapter builds on the next in showing what a disciple needs to know to be healthy and reproduce. “Making disciples is far more than a program. It is the mission of our lives. It defines us. A disciple is a disciple maker.”¹⁰ Francis Chan shares the essential Biblical truths that any disciple-maker needs to reproduce; this will be important in presenting the argument of this thesis in making effective disciples.

Transforming Discipleship Making Disciples a Few at a Time by Greg Ogden shares how investing in a few people leads to multiplication. “A multiplier is a disciple who is training his spiritual children to reproduce themselves.”¹¹ Greg Ogden shares how Jesus not only invested in a few, but he empowered them so that they would go and do likewise. This thesis project suggests investing in a few men who will lead their children will ultimately lead to disciple and multiplying generations. This is a multi-generation approach that will have an eternal perspective, as 2 Timothy 2:2 suggests.

Transformational Discipleship – How People Really Grow by Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation point out that everyone is a disciple. The real question is who you are a disciple of? Everyone copies and emulates someone, or something so how do Christians make disciples that look like Jesus? *Transformational Discipleship* will help support the thesis about

¹⁰ Francis Chan, *Multiply Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, Co. David C. Cook 2012), 31.

¹¹ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, Ill. Intervarsity Press), 137.

making disciples and planting churches. “Leaders must view discipleship through the lens of the gospel and help their people constantly preach the gospel to themselves.”¹²

Disciple-Making Is by Dave Earley, and Rod Dempsey is a classroom in a book. With practical steps for building churches through healthy disciple-making. The book starts with the basics of what a disciple is and builds through models and discipleship methods. Both Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey know through their own experience how to plant a reproducible church and make disciples. “As new believers mature spiritually, they should grow to the point where they reproduce new spiritual babies.”¹³ This work is a vital resource to planting healthy churches that plant healthy churches.

The Trellis and the Vine by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne make sure we know apart from Christ; we are incapable of true life. Just as Jesus shares in John 15, apart from Him, we can do nothing. Jesus is the key to making disciples by abiding in Him. “Thus, the goal of Christian ministry is quite simple, and in a sense measurable: are we making and nurturing genuine disciples of Christ?”¹⁴

Church Planting is for: Wimps – How God Uses Messed-up People to Plant Ordinary Churches That Do Extraordinary Things by Mike McKinley is a hands-on manual for anyone that dares to step out and try something extraordinary for God. Church planting is hard work and requires getting messy. Church planting is about developing relationships and spending time with the sheep so you can lead them beside still water and walk with them through the ups and

¹² Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship* (Nashville Tenn. B&H Pub. 2012), 67

¹³ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is* (Nashville Tenn. B&H Pub. 2013), 17.

¹⁴ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis, and the Vine* (Kingsford, Australia. Matthias Media 2009), 14.

downs of life. Mike McKinley shares through personal experience what it takes to plant churches.

Rediscovering Discipleship – Making Jesus Final Words our First Work by Robby Gallaty starts and ends with a recalling of the basics and the way Jesus made disciples. *Rediscovering Discipleship* is a catalyst that helps strengthen the thesis that students are best disciplined by parents, and if you want to plant effective churches that reproduce, then make disciples. “Discipleship is intentionally equipping believers with the Word of God through accountable relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit to replicate faithful followers of Christ.”¹⁵

The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer is a classic work that transcends all time and culture. Bonhoeffer teaches the actual cost of being a disciple and what it takes to make disciples. Bonhoeffer leads by example more than anything else to see a movement of God that impacts and changes culture. “It was his brotherly love of his fellow-men which also caused Bonhoeffer to believe that it was not enough to follow Christ by preaching, teaching, and writing. No, he was in deadly earnest when he called for Christian’s action and self-sacrifice.”¹⁶ *The Cost of Discipleship* is the model for teaching and making disciples at any time.

The Reformed Pastor by Richard Baxter is the classic that defines classics. Richard Baxter exemplified what it meant to train fathers to lead and discipline their families. The role of a pastor was to care for and nurture the flock God had appointed to them. “We must have a special eye upon families, to see that they are well ordered, and the duties of each relation

¹⁵ Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI Zondervan 2015), 155.

¹⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY Touchstone 1937), 23.

performed.”¹⁷ Richard Baxter believed as the father went, so went the family. This thesis shows that we must invest in fathers who invest in their families to be effective church planters.

Discipling by Mark Dever is part of the 9Marks Building Healthy Churches series. Dever reminds Christians that making disciples is not optional for the Christian but is mandated by Jesus. This mandate should come as a seek to follow the example Jesus set before us. Dever has lived this principle out in his own life by personally discipling many, including twelve men each year at Capitol Hill Baptist Church. Dever raises men and sends them out better than almost anyone in the past fifty years. His heart for disciple-making is second to none. “Discipling involves transmitting the knowledge of God and his Word through every moment of life.”¹⁸

The Navigator Dawson Troutman by Robert Foster is the story of Dawson Troutman, the founder of the Navigators. The Lord radically changed Dawson Troutman, and he desired to see men and women, mainly military men, reached and discipled. Dawson Troutman committed his life to make disciples by investing in a handful of men at a time. His formula was if one person reached one person and discipled them for six months so that after six months the two would then go out and do likewise that after a year you would have four people, after two years sixteen people and so on and so on it would ultimately change the world. Dawson Troutman started this in San Diego with a group of naval men that would later be in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked. Many of these men would later become navigators across the world, making disciples. Dawson's life mission was to see people come to faith in Christ and then make disciples. He didn't believe you had to go worldwide to be a missionary but start right where God had placed you. Dawson had little patience for Christians that were not making disciples. Dawson would

¹⁷ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Lexington Ky. Read a Classic 2010), 56.

¹⁸ Mark Dever, *Discipling How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton Ill. Crossway 2016), 28.

say, “one reason for spiritual sterility was lack of communion with the living God.”¹⁹ The book has been vital to this writer in demonstrating the power of effective disciple-making.

Tactics by Gregory Koukl is a book about how to share your faith more effectively. Since disciple-making and personal evangelism go hand in hand, this work is a great reminder to continually share our faith and the tactics we need to employ to be effective soul winners. Koukl suggests every Christian can become more effective in developing day-to-day conversations that lead to Gospel opportunities in a winsome and persuasive manner. Knowing to share your faith effectively is critical in having more people to personally disciple. These same people can then, in turn, learn to share their faith more effectively and then make disciples. Koukl details how having a game plan is vital to the success of a mission. Whether we are sharing the gospel or making disciples in the local church, having a game plan to access how we are continually doing is essential. Without a game plan, how will we know how effective we are? Koukl shares that “Tactics is the art of arranging”²⁰ and helps us to have an orderly approach to evangelism and discipleship.

A Church In The House by Matthew Henry is a classic written by the puritan pastor Matthew Henry who pastored in the 1600s. This work reminds the reader that men are ultimately responsible for raising their children and household in the faith as a Christian father. “You must also catechize your children and household. Let them learn some good catechism by heart, and keep it in remembrance; and by familiar discourse with them help them to understand it, as they become capable.”²¹ Henry's premise is that every Christian house is a church, and the teaching

¹⁹ Robert Foster, *The Navigator Dawson Troutman* (Colorado Springs CO. NavPress 2012), 125.

²⁰ Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids MI. Zondervan 2019), 33.

²¹ Matthew Henry, *A Church In The House* (Columbia SC. Gideon House 2015), 7-8.

and training of the Lord should be of utmost importance in the home. Henry took exception by meeting with his congregates to make sure they catechized their family in the house.

Zealous 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generation by David Michael is a practical hands-on tool for parents and the church to come together to reach and raise up the next generation in the church. Statistics show we are losing a generation that is in the church to the world. Michael states we need to be zealous to stop this vicious trend. Michael contends it will take a partnership between parents and the church to work together to reverse this. “A reversal in this disturbing trend will require utter dependence on the grace of God and both church and home picking up the mantle of responsibility they share for the discipleship of their children.”²² For this to come, we must become passionate about reaching those God has entrusted to our care and be intentional about teaching and raising up the next generation in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

The Godly Home by Richard Baxter gives clear job descriptions to fathers, mothers, and children in the home to reflect the family of God. On a day when we see the demise of the nuclear family, *The Godly Home* is a stark reminder of God's original intentions. The Christian home needs a reformation, and this work will help return families to the way God has intended. The Puritan Richard Baxter thought the house was, in fact, a little church. This work has some practices that may be outdated but overall will give clear guidance to the family wishing to serve the Lord in how God has ordained the house and the family. *The Godly Home* offers husbands, wives, and children with specific ways they can fulfill how to live as Christians. This starts with families learning to worship God together and concludes with the roles and responsibilities God has laid out for the family. “It is the will of God that the rulers of families should teach those

²² David Michael, *Zealous* (Minneapolis MN. Truth 2020), 37.

who are under them the doctrines of salvation; that is, the doctrine of God concerning salvation and the terms on which it is to be had.”²³

Nine Marks of a Healthy Church by Mark Dever is a blueprint to help churches develop healthy habits that lead to a healthy church. Just as people need yearly checkups to access their overall health, churches need regular checkups to access their overall health. Dever has written a checkup manual to help churches determine if it is making disciples that reproduce. Dever looks at both the ecclesiology and theology behind healthy churches and helps lay forth benchmarks for churches for growth. Healthy churches grow just as healthy marriages grow through reproduction. “The New Testament idea of growth involves not just more people, but people who are growing up, maturing, and deepening in the faith.”²⁴ All of the nine marks are important to the overall health by building on each other to go and make disciples. “For the spiritual health of the individual Christian, for the good of other Christians, for the health of the church as a whole, for the good of our witness to non-Christians, and for the glory of God, each one of these marks has a contribution to make”²⁵

Conversion and Discipleship by Bill Hull provide keen insights into what biblical conversion and discipleship look like. If people do not know what a healthy conversion is, how will they make disciples. This work helps teach that we cannot have an actual conversion without genuine repentance, and because the church has drifted away from calling people to repentance, we see fewer genuine converts. This, in turn, is why we have little discipleship occurring. How can we make disciples without true Christians? Bill Hull has committed his life to teaching and

²³ Richard Baxter, *The Godly Home* (Wheaton ILL. Crossway 2010), 71.

²⁴ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton Ill. Crossway 2013), 213.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 216.

make disciples. While no book is perfect or has all the answers, Bill Hull reminds us that to make disciples, and we must start with true conversion. Genuine repentance includes both an emotional component and a corresponding decision of the will to make an about-face turn in the right direction and to change behavior.²⁶ Biblical conversion converges the heart and mind in genuine repentance and trust by faith in Jesus Christ. “The gift of salvation is not just something nice that God does for us, a good deed to help us out. God doesn’t want to earn a merit badge. No, he has a purpose for what he does. We are saved to participate in God’s plan for the world.”²⁷

Family Shepherd by Voddie Baucham is a compelling call to men to lead in their homes. Voddie presents a clear vision as the Apostle Paul states, “to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.”²⁸ Men need to be equipped and empowered to go lead. Men need marching orders and to seeing the battle raging for their family’s heart and mind. “The head of the family as Charles Hodge stated, should be able to read the Scriptures as well as to lead in prayer... All persons subject to the wrath or care of the Church should be required to maintain in their households this stated worship of God... A man’s responsibility to his children, as well as to God, binds him to make his house a Bethel; if not a Bethel it will be a dwelling place of evil spirits.”²⁹ As the family goes, so goes the nation; Voddie would say as the father goes, so goes the family. This resource is a convenient tool for all fathers who want to lead well and train their children to love the Lord and walk in His likeness.

²⁶ Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship* (Grand Rapids MI. Zondervan 2016), 73.

²⁷ Ibid, 85.

²⁸ Ephesians 4:12.

²⁹ Voddie Baucham, *Family Shepherds* (Wheaton Ill. Crossway 2011), 18.

When the Church Was a Family by Joseph H. Hellerman brings the reader back to the days of Jesus and the importance of family. The family was central to every area of life and community in the New Testament. Joseph Hellerman shows what the church is lacking today when it comes to experiencing biblical community. “Jesus and His followers took their culture’s strong-group approach to family life, appropriated it as the preeminent social model for their local Christian communities, and lived with one another like Mediterranean brothers and sisters. And the early Christians turned the world upside down.”³⁰ Making disciples like the early church will require a return to family-centric ministry where the church and the family worked hand in hand.

The Imperfect Disciple by Jared Wilson lets the reader know it's ok not to be ok. Discipleship is messy because people are messy, and when you get close to messy people, you get messy too. Being a follower of Christ is a lifelong pursuit that has many hills and valleys. Jared Wilson shares how God's grace saves us, and God's grace sustains us. To be successful in making disciples takes proximity. That means expecting to get messy as you walk with men and fathers as they learn to navigate leading their family and making disciples. “We live in a world that’s desperate for the real Jesus. Not some synthetic version of him. The real Jesus and what he really said and really did.”³¹

Disciple by Bill Clem reminds the reader what being a disciple is all about. How can we make disciples when so many fail to understand what it is to be a disciple? Being a disciple is about pursuing and being pursued. Bill Clem clarifies that our identity is in Christ, and unless Christ is present and active in our life, we will never be what God has called us to be. We

³⁰ Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family* (Nashville Tenn. Broadman and Holman 2009), 229.

³¹ Jared Wilson, *The Imperfect Disciple* (Grand Rapids MI. Baker 2017), 44.

reproduce what we are. If we are passionately pursuing Jesus and making Him known, then it will be replicated into the lives of those around us. A disciple is a simple, practical tool to help anyone desiring a greater walk with the Lord to not only survive but thrive. “Jesus the God-man is the only person who has ever perfectly imaged God as both God and man, and yet he chose not to go it alone. Instead, he invites imperfect disciples to walk with him.”³² Being a disciple is to be confirmed in the image of Christ. The reader of *Disciple* will discover that we are not making disciples that look like people but rather look like Jesus.

How to Build a Healthy Church by Mark Dever & Paul Alexander is a breath of fresh air. Dever and Alexander call the reader back to the most basic and foundational aspect of a healthy church, the Word of God. The authors remind the reader the Bible is the handbook on building healthy churches. Instead of a constant barrage of new ideas and strategies, what about a simple return to the basics. Using the Word of God to build up disciples seems like a revolutionary idea in an age of microwave Christianity. “One of the most biblical and valuable uses of your time as a pastor will be to cultivate personal discipleship relationships, in which you regularly meet with a few people one-on-one to do them good spirituality.”³³ Readers will be reminded that discipleship is part of a healthy church when individuals are being transformed through the Word of God in the Spirit of God. “God’s Word has always been his chosen instrument to create, convict, convert, and confirm his people.”³⁴

Discipleship: Helping Other Christians Grow by Allen Hadidian is a call to making disciples that stick. Jesus mandated discipleship to His disciples to carry out and continue after

³² Bill Clem, *Disciple: Getting Your Identity from Jesus* (Wheaton ILL. Crossway 2011), 49.

³³ Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *How to Build a Healthy Church* (Wheaton Ill. Crossway 2021), 46.

³⁴ Ibid, 41.

he departed. “One cannot examine the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ without seeing the emphasis He placed on discipling.”³⁵ There must be a clear pathway to making disciples reach the next generation or any generation effectively. Hadidian has written a great resource that has already stood the test of time in a time of catchy disciple-making that renders only information overload rather than Gospel transformation. Discipleship is about pouring your life into that of another. “It is imperative, therefore, that you be a model who is worthy of being followed by new believers. Until those you disciple is able to follow the Lord directly, you are their picture of what Christ, and the Christian life are like. What you are will be reproduced in them.”³⁶

It Starts at Home by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope was written for every Christian family. Bruner and Stroope remind the reader, “the home is the primary context of our spiritual formation – for better or worse.”³⁷ Until the church starts to call families to create God-honoring homes, we will continue to get the same results with young people leaving the church. The church and home must come together and work toward a common goal of creating discipling environments in the home, with the church providing the support and willingness to walk alongside. John Kennedy once stated, ask not what your country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country. The church needs men and women to stop asking what the church can do for them rather than ask what they can do for the church. *It Starts at Home* shows it takes intentionality from the family. “Spiritual formation begins at home, but it does not end there. The home cannot be the church any more than the church can be the home. Christianity is a communal faith.”³⁸ The reader will quickly learn there is a vital connection between the church

³⁵ Allen Hadidian, *Discipleship: Helping Other Christians Grow* (Chicago Ill. Moody 1987) 11.

³⁶ Ibid, 49.

³⁷ Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home* (Chicago Ill. Moody 2010), 11.

³⁸ Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home* (Chicago Ill. Moody 2010), 33.

and home, and everyone must work together to turn the tide.

Partnering with Parents by Jim Burns & Mike Devries will better guide the reader to understand family ministry in the twenty-first century. Jim Burns is a veteran youth leader who desires to see not only young people reached but also families to be the backbone of the student's life when it comes to raising disciples. *Partnering with Parents* is nothing new but rather a return to Deuteronomy 6:4-9. After years in the trenches, Jim Burns still believes the most influential person in a young person's life is their family. Current trends in youth ministry have been program-driven with similar short-term success but little lifelong transformation. Burns and Devries write, "long after students stop attending youth groups, they are still connected to their families. Although there are wonderful adult conversations and a growing movement of reaching students from non-Christian homes, by far the most influential people in a young person's spiritual life are his or her parents."³⁹ God's design all along has been parents teaching and raising up their children to know the Lord.

The Cost by Stephen Lawson returns the reader to Jesus' own words that to follow Him requires a cost. Cheap discipleship is no discipleship at all. Lawson reminds the reader that anything worthwhile comes with a cost. Following Christ comes with the ultimate price, our very life. Churches today are not teaching the cost of being a Christian. This is turn, is why we have so many weak Christians that never reproduce. "Salvation is offered to us as a free gift from God. But receiving it always comes at a high price. There are no exceptions to this truth."⁴⁰ Just as parents and especially fathers are vital in raising up young men to consider the cost before they buy or build anything, parents and fathers need to share with the children regularly the cost

³⁹ Jim Burns and Mile Devries, *Partnering with Parents* (Ventura CA. Gospel Light 2003), 13.

⁴⁰ Stephen Lawson, *The Cost* (Scotland UK Christian Focus 2017), 77-78.

of being a Christ-follower and then helping to prepare them. *The Cost* is a timely reminder that anything building project usually costs more than you expected, and walking faithfully with Christ comes with a lifetime of cost. Still, nothing on earth can ever compare to the benefits being a child of God brings.

Spiritual Leadership by J. Oswald Sanders is a classic on developing biblical leadership. Leadership development and disciple-making must go hand in hand. Sanders writes, “real leaders are in short supply. Constantly people and groups search for them. A question echoes in every corner of the church – Who will lead?”⁴¹ *Spiritual Leadership* shows the reader that making disciples takes time. Current student ministries live in the present and need to produce numbers rather than consider the long-term consequences of not making disciples but converts. Leaders must be molded over time and learn to lead from those in leadership. The first place the reader sees this is in the order of the home. God ordained the family to be the crucible of learning and for fathers and mothers to lead and model effective leadership and responsibility in the home that can then be lived out in the world.

The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman has been reprinted over thirty times showing its great importance in Christian literature. Coleman's classic will both inspire and implore the reader to follow in the master's footsteps in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. Coleman states, “Jesus intended for the disciples to produce his likeness in and through the church being gathered out of the world. Thus, his ministry in the Spirit would be duplicated many-fold by his ministry in the lives of his disciples. Through them and others like them it would continue to expand in an ever-enlarging circumference until the multitudes might know in

⁴¹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago Ill. Moody 2007), 17.

a similar way the opportunity which they had known with the Master.”⁴² Evangelism and discipleship must work together, and to see student ministries and churches make disciples, the church must get a heart for the lost and reach them, and teach them to obey all Jesus commanded.

Deep Discipleship by J. T. English is a compelling call to walk with Jesus more profoundly and more intimately. English calls the reader to consider how Jesus called twelve men to leave all and follow him. In a day where whatever is popular and flashy wins over good ole personal investment and simply disciple-making, *Deep Discipleship* will challenge the reader to forsake the easy and go for the hard-lasting way in which Jesus made disciples that would change the world. Too many churches have fallen for the microwave disciple rather than the crockpot disciple. “Knowing how to raise the bar, whom to raise the bar for, and when to raise the bar are essential elements of deep discipleship in the local church.”⁴³ This writer believes at the core of disciple-making in the youth will be a call to go deeper and farther with those discipling them and a clear and compelling call to follow Jesus.

Welcoming the Future Church by JP Pokluda shares how the church needs to engage young adults if they see them become vital partners in Gospel ministry. Pokluda points out how to find young leaders and then equip them for ministry and release them to do ministry. The young adults out there want to serve but have ideas that may stretch some in the church. *Welcoming the Future Church* is designed for those serious about reaching young adults and getting out of the comfort zone many churches have established. It will take deep relationships and opportunities for service to reach and keep young adults, but it is all worth it. “You don’t

⁴² Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids MI. Baker 1993), 97.

⁴³ J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship* (Nashville TN. Broadman & Holman 2020), 133.

have to be hip and cool, wear skinny jeans, be tatted up, have a trendy hairstyle, or garner a million Instagram followers for young adults to listen to you. You just need to be you, toiling with them for the sake of the gospel and teaching them the Scriptures, and they will listen.”⁴⁴

A Parent Privilege by Steve Wright shares how the church needs to point parents to the joyous privilege they have in shaping their sons and daughters by pointing them to Christ. Christian parents are called to model the gospel by demonstrating and talking about God's grace. Steve Wright encourages parents not to take lightly the influence they have over their kids. “The parents’ role is to be daily mentors to their children, always pointing their children to the Savior with the words they say and the life they lead.”⁴⁵ Parents need to teach with grace and truth to their children. Encouraging parents and partnering with them to raise a generation that will walk faithfully with the Lord all their days should be the objective of every church.

Family Driven Faith by Voddie Baucham is a prophetic word for anyone that wants to honor God through their family. Biblical teaching and helping cultivate sound doctrine and theology in the youth seems like a lot. Not according to Voddie Baucham. *Family Driven Faith* shares how hungry the young people in the home and church are for the deeper truths grounded in the faith. The youth of the church are being sent out into the world unprepared and ill-equipped for they are facing today. “If we are to experience multigenerational faithfulness we must come to a place where we throw off the shackles of our culture and live in the fullness that is found only in Christ. We must be people who live the Word in our homes.”⁴⁶ They say home is where the heart is; reasonably, Voddie Baucham believes it is where the heart is cultivated to

⁴⁴ Jonathan JP Pokluda, *Welcoming the Future Church* (Grand Rapids MI. Baker Books 2020), 20.

⁴⁵ Steve Wright, *A Parent Privilege* (Wake Forest NC. InQuest 2008), 84.

⁴⁶ Voddie Baucham (Wheaton IL. Crossway 2007), 112.

live a life for God. Parents have a unique and short window to influence the spiritual direction of their children. The time is now.

Jonathan Edwards a Christian Life by Dane Ortlund shares the life of Jonathan Edwards, one of the foremost American pastors ever. Dane Ortlund shares Edwards's deep convictions when raising children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Edwards loves the Lord, His Word, and his family. Edwards took to heart to be fruitful and multiply as he and his wife had eleven children. Edwards believed it essential to invest in your children and teach them the truths of God's Word.

Scripture

The primary scripture passage that will be used to support the research is 2 Timothy 2:2. Paul writes to Timothy and reminds him “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrusted to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”⁴⁷ Making disciples is not always glamorous. It can be messy and exhaustive. Making disciples requires time and energy and requires a long view of ministry. It does not happen overnight. If we genuinely want to see lives changed, then it will happen one person at a time over some time. The beauty is in the journey as we witness the Spirit of God start to transform lives and mold us into the image of Christ.

In the book of Jeremiah, we read “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? Declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so you are in my hand, O house of Israel.”⁴⁸ In the process of discipleship, we are molded as we grow in Christ. This is called spiritual transformation and takes place as time is spent in spiritual disciplines. As we

⁴⁷ 2 Timothy 2:2 (ESV).

⁴⁸ Jeremiah 18:6 (ESV).

walk with the Lord and follow him, we start to become like Him. Imitation is the greatest form of flattery, so the more we begin to look like Christ, the more we are ready to reproduce our lives into others. Just as Adam started from dust and God formed him and breathed life into Adam, we who were once spiritually dead have new life breathed into us by the Spirit of God and are slowly formed into the image of Christ. This process is called sanctification.

The idea that we are called and wanted by Christ is found in the Gospel of Mark “And he went up on the mountain and called those whom he desired, and they came to him.”⁴⁹ Being a disciple starts with God calling us to Himself and desiring personal relationships with him. From that point forward, we are called to follow Christ and to become more like him.

Jesus started making disciples when He called the first disciples in the Gospel of Matthew. “And he said to them. Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”⁵⁰ After God initiates salvation, the rest of our life is being formed into his image. Jesus was the teacher and led the twelve disciples for three years as they witnessed and learned to live like Jesus. This thesis will show how making disciples in students will require investing in parents and fathers. This is the healthy approach to growing the church.

Jesus' last words to His disciples are the first words for each believer to follow. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read “and Jesus came to them and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 obey all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”⁵¹ The

⁴⁹ Mark 3:13 (ESV).

⁵⁰ Matthew 4:19 (ESV).

⁵¹ Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV).

great commission is a command to go into the world and live so that others are drawn to Christ in us. This verse is the backbone of making disciples that make disciples. This thesis is about discipleship, and the great commission is what we must return to if we are to make disciples and plant churches that plant churches.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians “since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole it is bearing fruit and growing – as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant.”⁵² Discipleship is following the leader. Epaphras was a man of God who led by example, and Paul uses his faithfulness in walking with the Lord as an example for us to emulate. Making disciples means following someone and learning from them so you can live like them. Fathers must invest in their families to grow; they will emulate what they have learned from their fathers. Every church planter should learn from Epaphras if they want to make disciples and plant churches.

Every believer is a disciple and needs someone to disciple and pour their life into. Elijah was a prophet of God that was called to speak to the children of Israel. Elijah's apprentice was Elisha, and we read in 2 Kings the passing of the mantle from Elijah to Elisha.

2 Kings 2:1-12

2 Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² And Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So, they went down to Bethel. ³ And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that

⁵² Colossians 1:4-7 (ESV).

today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he said, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.”

⁴ Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So, they came to Jericho. ⁵ The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.”

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So, the two of them went on. ⁷ Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸ Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.” ¹⁰ And he said, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.” ¹¹ And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² And Elisha saw it and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

This is a reminder that disciples are passing on the mantle from one person to another. A disciple follows their leader until the time is right for them to take on the mantle and continue to find their student. This is reproduction and is critical in the life of the disciple. David Nelms of The Timothy Initiative states: “If we are not making disciples that make disciples then we are not making disciples.” Disciple-making is a continual process that requires one disciple to pass along their life, and the next generation will continue to do the same.

Jesus shares in the Gospel of Matthew ‘A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.’⁵³ A healthy husband and wife will reproduce children that will look like them and act

⁵³ Matthew 10:24-25 (ESV).

like their parents in many ways. We are called as believers to reproduce spiritual children that will, in turn, do the same. In the book, *It Starts at Home* by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope; we read that as many as half the children growing up in the church will walk away from the church before they graduate.⁵⁴ The problem with many student ministries is we measure success in the number of kids reached. Parents struggling to lead their children then look for bigger, better churches and youth ministries to train their children. “Concerned, I urgently look for another solution. Fearing my children will wither and die unless I find a more effective means of imparting strong faith, I grab a bigger, more contemporary – looking watering can – one with cutting edge music and a cool – looking student pastor – hoping it will more effectively reach my kids.”⁵⁵

The Apostle Paul writes to the church at Ephesus “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning. By craftiness in deceitful schemes.”⁵⁶ The pastor's work is to equip other believers in the ministry, so they take their rightful place as part of the body of Christ. Training fathers to equip and empower their children in the ministry allows youth to use

⁵⁴ Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home* (Chicago, Ill. Moody Pub. 2010), 23.

⁵⁵ Ibid 23.

⁵⁶ Ephesians 4:11-14 (ESV).

the spiritual gifts God has granted them for the Kingdom of God. This is an important part of discipleship, using your gifts and talents for God's glory and His good.⁵⁷

The disciple Peter wrote in his epistle “you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” To make disciples, the church must be a spiritual family that builds up the family and pouring into her to build up. Discipleship is helping others grow and bear fruit that leads to spiritual multiplication.

Jesus gives us a great example of what a disciple will look like and how we are to grow in the Gospel of John.

John 15:1-11

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

A disciple is only effective if they are connected to Christ and led by the Spirit of God. A disciple must stay connected to Christ as they pour into others to become a disciple-maker. To be effective disciple-makers, we must pour into families that will become one of the most effective means to lead churches. The ultimate place this must start is in the home. God reminds the

⁵⁷ 2 Peter 2:5 (ESV).

children of Israel, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”⁵⁸

Moses reminded the children of Israel in God's word of the extreme importance of the home in nurturing the children in the Word of God. The parents, especially the father, are expected to teach his children the word and constantly remind the children of the importance of scripture. The home was to be saturated in the word and have it placed in obvious places to be an ever remind of God's faithfulness in delivering His children from bondage. This reminder would be followed within a few generations what would happen when they no longer followed God's word. “And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.”⁵⁹ It only took a few generations for the children of Israel to turn from God and back into bondage. The disciple should have a constant remind in front of them they are only a generation away from losing a generation. It is an ever-present battle between God's army and the forces of evil for the hearts and minds of the next generation.

The Apostle Paul warned the church at Ephesus to be prepared at all times for the battlefield.

⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (ESV).

⁵⁹ Judges 2:10 (ESV).

Ephesians 6:10-18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

For the church to be most effective in reaching the next generation and to make disciples, she must prepare the youth for battle. The problem in modern evangelicalism is there are few seasoned veterans anymore to prepare the young for battle. This will require diligence and determination if the church is to thwart the schemes of the devil. Paul reminds the church of Ephesus that their battle is not against flesh and blood but the devil's schemes. Peter writes to the church, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."⁶⁰ Fathers must rise up to protect their families by teaching them the Word of God and praying over, and for the families, God has entrusted to their care.

Strong families make for a strong church. Jesus gave the church a critical component in this. "So, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered

⁶⁰ 1st Peter 5:8-9 (ESV).

him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”⁶¹ Abiding in Christ is the only way the family and the church will make lasting disciples. This will take intentionality and teaching the family a daily part of the day. Churches must reinforce what is being taught in the home and come alongside the fathers and mothers to encourage and help equip them.

All disciple-making in the family must be done in love. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.”⁶² The world is watching the church and Christians to see if what they say measures up to how they live. Jesus reminds the reader that people will see through the façade quickly to see if the church is truly loving towards all people. The church is simply a microcosm of the church. What is seen in the family will be displayed in the church. Fathers and mothers must set the example as they run the race set before them. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”⁶³ Parents must teach their children that this race is a cross-country race with

⁶¹ John 8:31-38 (ESV).

⁶² John 13:34-35 (ESV).

⁶³ Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV).

hills and valleys and rough terrain at times. This is all part of the discipleship process in preparing the next generation to run the race God has set before them. Parents and the church cannot run the race for them but must prepare them for their race.

Moses prepared Joshua for the race God was setting before Joshua and had these words for Joshua “Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”⁶⁴ Disciple-making is investing in another and then releasing them to go out and do likewise. Moses trained Joshua to take the lead by pouring into him for years and preparing him to go then and lead.

The Apostle Paul spent years pouring his life into the lives of others. In Paul’s letter to Titus, he writes “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.”⁶⁵ This model of older men and older women teaching younger men

⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 31:7-8 (ESV).

⁶⁵ Titus 2:1-8 (ESV).

and women is the model that the church needs to see more of to turn the tide in reaching and making disciples amongst the youth in the church.

Chapter Two

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

A Hands-on approach

When the writer started in student ministry over twenty years ago, the main discussion was reaching students with the gospel. In other words, to get them saved. The idea of discipleship in the church this author was on staff at and the churches this author was around had little mention of discipleship outside of a Sunday evening training at the church that was poorly attended by all. All this author knew was to share the gospel and compel young people to respond. Outreach opportunities were created whenever and wherever it was possible. A Wednesday night outreach night was started with the sole purpose of reaching students. The early going was slow for this author as relationships were built and connections were made. Slowly the word got out, and students started to attend and slowly invited friends. Mission trips and summer camps were planned, and we attended evangelistic outreach events like scare mare and judgment house.

Over the first few years, students were giving their lives to Christ, and the baptism waters were regularly being filled. Within the first three years, this author felt led to start campus ministry to reach students where they were. After going before the school leadership and getting approval to be on campus, this author regularly visited the students during lunch at middle and high school campuses. In a short time, many students expressed an interest in coming to the Wednesday night outreach event. Much time and money were invested in making Wednesday night as big as possible, from guest speakers to live worship and crazy games. Whatever it took to reach students was the motto.

From the humble beginnings of one student at the Wednesday night outreach, the church began to see fifty to sixty students each week. The church body was on board, so this author traveled to Springdale, Arkansas, to visit First Baptist Springdale and look at their student ministry called 24/7 student ministries. First, Springdale was led by Ronnie Floyd, a gifted preacher with an evangelistic spirit. The church had grown exponentially under Dr. Floyd, and the student ministry was no exception. The student ministry was led by Alex Himaya and had grown to reach thousands of students. This author was able to take a team and learn how they bussed in students from across the area and led a dynamic Wednesday night outreach. This excited the author and the team as work began to implement bussing in students from local schools on Wednesday nights. A few months later, the church purchased the first school bus that would be used to pick up students after school on Wednesdays. Over the next few years, this author would witness the church purchasing two additional buses for three buses and the church van used to pick up students at four area middle schools and high schools.

During this time, the church had converted an old house and property across the street from the church into a youth house, complete with basketball and volleyball courts outside. The property and the use of buses enabled the student ministry to grow to over two hundred students in a church that ran three hundred. The Wednesday night outreach was by all accounts a success as many students were reached and baptized. This author wanted to see more students reach and traveled to Church on the Move with a team to 180 student ministries in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This church had its separate student ministry and dozens of busses it used to reach students. Seeing this was exciting and further strengthened this author's resolve to reach every student possible. While all this looked great from the outside, the author soon discovered that more and more energy was needed week in and week out to keep students coming and growing continually.

Over the next few years, the author was introduced to the Jesus Focused Youth Ministry pioneered by Barry St. Clair and Reach-Out Solutions of Atlanta, Georgia. Upon learning more, this author and two additional leaders decided to attend a forum in Atlanta to see what this new approach to student ministry was all about. After attending the forum and being introduced to making disciples by reaching leaders who would reach students and disciple small groups of them. This was, at the time for this author, a radical approach to ministry that would require abandoning most of the outreach efforts that had been going on for over six years. This was both a humbling and yet exciting time in student ministry. This author's biggest question was why the numbers would fall off once making disciples that would stand the test of time became the precedent for the student ministry.

After learning the strategies that Jesus had used to call twelve men to come to follow him, who would, in turn, go out and reach others, this author soon started to look for a group of leaders that would learn this strategy and commit to making disciples, not just reaching students. Overall, students being reached for the gospel was still the ultimate objective, but how they were reached would radically change and cause some head-scratching along the way. Implementation of this new strategy would take longer than this author realized it would, and getting buy-in from enough leaders would take time. Everyone at the church had been excited about having one of the largest student ministries in the area, and bringing that to a halt did not go over well with everyone. After all, where would the numbers come from if the student ministry no longer was bussing in over one hundred fifty students each week but instead started to invest in a few leaders that would then go out and invest in a few students?

During this time, the author was also introduced to a parachurch ministry called Word of Life and the local Word of Life missionary. This author has made the shift to discipling students

who would reach out to other students rather than just creating large outreach events or a big Wednesday night outreach needed some additional help. Word of Life helped provide a disciple-making curriculum that leaders could use to walk alongside the students in reading and memorizing scripture. This new curriculum would prove very helpful for this author as new leaders were being trained, and now students would be in small discipling groups. Even though this was still just a step toward disciple-making, a feeling of success was starting to be seen. This approach was soon followed with the understanding a critical piece was still lacking. How would parents be trained and called upon to lead and make disciples in the home?

The author invited Barry St. Clair to travel from Atlanta to Glen Allen, Virginia, to host a training event and share with the church what it would look like to create a student ministry that partnered with parents in the discipleship process with their students. This weekend would take place in the fall of year nine of this author's student ministry after eight years of first reaching as many students as possible to shifting to making disciples during the prior year and a half. With the training weekend approaching as many parents as possible and potential youth leaders were invited and multiple other churches in the area to learn what it would take and what it would look like to walk with parents in partnering in student ministry. Barry St. Clair is a fifty-year veteran of student ministry, having served as the Southern Baptist first student strategist for the Home mission board.

The training event was a success. Several parents and leaders attended and learned how to come alongside their students and the parents to be the primary disciple-makers in their lives. This added with the author's new understanding of what true biblical disciple-making looked like would lead to a whole church approach to reaching, training up, and empowering parents to take the lead in the home with the church's partnership in training their children. The Lord would use

this as a catalyst moment to prepare and call this author into church planting. After a year of leading this new initiative in the church, the author, in partnership with the state convention the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV), would set out to plant a church in Mechanicsville, Virginia, using many of the tool's learning in the last few years in reaching leaders and parents to make disciples of children and youth in the home in partnership with the church.

In January of 2009, in partnership with the SBCV, this writer planned a church with a leadership team of twenty people. This writer had moved to the Mechanicsville area a few years earlier and the need for disciple-making churches in a fast-growing area of Hanover County. In the early year of the church, it was decided to have small groups gather in homes throughout the community led by those committed to making disciples. In the first year, the author and another church leader flew to Post Falls, Idaho, to attend a Real-Life Ministries conference on reaching a community through disciple-making. Real-Life Ministries was pastored by Jim Putman, the author of *Church is a Team Sport*. Real-Life was in a small town but had reached thousands through simple disciple-making that was centered around multiplication. This author had started to learn more about reproducing disciples in student ministry but did not have a clear picture of how to do it in the life of a church. Having just planted CenterPoint Church, it was a great time to start on the right foot but create a church built on reproducing groups led by producing leaders.

After learning the Real-Life process came down to simple biblical principles; it seemed to this writer the new church would be well on its way. Unfortunately, this author overlooked some vitally important information that would have to be learned through the school of hard knocks. This writer would return from Real-Life ready to charge hell with a water pistol. Within

a few months of introducing small reproducing groups, a feeling was already settling in the whole leadership was not fully bought in. Everyone involved was amazing, God-loving people, but being a new church had attracted many people that had been hurt at other churches and were not ready to lead or reproduce. This reality set in quickly that even in a new church, making disciples was falling into the same old comfort traps. People gravitated to comfort and complacency. No matter how much the author tried and modeled what these new reproducing groups would look like, people soon realized that they liked the relationships they had established and were not interested in multiplying and making new disciples.

The writer would battle this over the coming years with some success and some failures along the way. Those that embraced healthy reproduction were on board, and those that liked their groups did not. To not cause conflict, this writer left matters as they were, and the church grew but not to the potential she had. Understanding more needed to raise multipliers, the author decided to bring in Barry St. Clair, who had introduced the author to the Jesus Focused Youth Ministry years before, to speak and challenge the men. With the help of Barry and lots of prayer, the men were gathered to be challenged to make disciples in small men's groups of three. It was determined that the men would meet Tuesday mornings at 7:00 am at Chick-fil-A and get in groups of three to challenge each other and hold each other accountable in making disciples.

This would lead to several men catching the vision and learning to be disciple-makers in the home and at church. As various men would catch the vision, the church started to see more families changed and more students and children discipled. This would lead the author to a renewed vision and excitement in making disciples. One of the early visions of CenterPoint Church would be she would be a church-planting church. This principle is that if we made disciples, then those raised up would plant new churches. This author had a vision of how the

church would be sending churches to areas around Richmond to start new works. Unbeknown to this author was the Lord was about to force the hand of this author and test this author to the sincerity of planting new churches.

After nine years of planting CenterPoint and finally seeing the vision take root to make disciples, this author and family were moved south of the city of Richmond. Initially still leading CenterPoint, this author sensed God was leading the church to plant a new work. Not realizing for a few months that this author was the one the Lord would lead to plant out of CenterPoint a new work in Midlothian, Virginia. Under the partnership of the SBCV, this author would again set out to plant a new church that would be fully committed to making disciples and investing in men to lead their families and make disciples in the home. During the startup stage for the new church, this author was introduced to the area Navigator's ministry and its area missionary. While meeting with the navigator missionary, this author learned even more that you reproduce what you are. In other words, what this author was reproducing into the lives of other men was not reproducible.

The navigator missionary and this author met weekly to learn and be better prepared in discipling men. Dawson Troutman founded the navigator's ministry in the 1930s to reach men and multiple them. Dawson had the vision to reach naval men, and as they were sent off on ships around the world, the men that had been won to Christ and disciplined would then reach men on board the naval ships and disciple them. In 1935 the Navigator's Ministry would officially start with six men under the influence of Dawson Troutman would change the world. These six men would lead many men to faith in Christ and disciple them to go and do the same. Many of those men would end up in Pearl Harbor on that fateful day in 1941.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Jim Downing, *The Other Side of Infamy* (Colorado Springs CO. Navpress 2016).

Having a better grasp on discipling men led the leadership team from the new church plant Resonate Church to meet with the navigator missionary each week to learn how to better reproduce our life into the lives of others in making disciples. This has been the backbone of the new plant for the past few years as the church has embraced a disciple-making approach by reaching men and equipping them to be the spiritual leaders of the home. Over the past twenty-plus years, this author's personal experience has led the author to be more intentional and strategic in discipleship that reproduces men and fathers in the most important task of raising up the next generation to know the Lord, Love, and serve the Lord.

In this author's experience, to have long-term success in ministry, whether it is student ministry, planting new churches, or transitioning established churches, it has to start with reaching and training up men to lead in the home spiritually. After many years of serving in student ministry and planting churches, this author has seen the effects of simply reaching students and not making disciples. This author has gone back to find many of the students reached in the early years of ministry are no longer in the church, many having no outward evidence of a relationship with Christ. This author sent out a questionnaire to determine who and by what means were they discipled and how many how reproduced by making disciples themselves.

With over a decade of experience in student ministry and over a decade of experience planting a church; it has been determined that the most effective means to create a disciple-making culture and to fulfill the Great Commission is by investing in a few men at a time, teaching them the Word of God and what it means to follow Christ. Jesus modeled this approach multiple times in Scripture. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read, “And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by

themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.”⁶⁷

In the Gospel of Mark, we read “And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James”⁶⁸ Again in the Gospel of Mark, we read “And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.”⁶⁹ We see this pattern and model set forth by the Savior many times as an example to follow. After many failed attempts, this author has learned the most effective means of making reproducing disciples is to follow the way of the Master. This author is excited about the opportunity as the church plant the author is leading will be merging with the author's home church, where the author will be the lead pastor and lead her to be a disciple-making and church planting church to the glory of God.

⁶⁷ Matthew 17:1-2 (ESV).

⁶⁸ Mark 5:37 (ESV).

⁶⁹ Mark 14:33 (ESV).

Chapter Three

Six Timeless Reasons

The Biblical Reason in the Old Testament

From the very beginning God has given us the family unit. In Genesis we read “Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”⁷⁰

God has created the family as His means of sharing His story. Adam and Eve were responsible for being fruitful and multiply. This was God's created order so that the family would grow and then reproduce as well. Unfortunately, the enemy set out to destroy this plan right away by tempting Eve. Once Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord God, sin entered the world, and the family has been under attack ever since. The enemy hates God's order and seeks to destroy

⁷⁰ Genesis 2:18-23 (ESV).

everything God has created. We see this throughout history as the family has been continually under siege.

Satan flipped the scripture on Adam and Eve in the garden by asking “Did God actually say?”⁷¹ Questioning God's Word has been the enemy's plan from the beginning, as we have witnessed marriage, life, and gender all questioned ever since. The Word of God is clear in the roles we see throughout the Old Testament. God called the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to follow the Lord and lead their families. Because sin was in man's heart, each one would lead flawed lives that impact their families. However, the grace of God was stronger, and God's plan would always go forth despite man and the enemies' best efforts to change and end it.

The Children of Israel were God's chosen people who were to be separated from the world in which they lived. They were to live in such a manner that when other people would see them, they would know they were God's chosen. The life in which they lived was to be devoted to God and following His statutes and laws. These laws were never meant to harm them but were designed to protect them and show God's love for them. The laws were given so that God's children would know how to live a God-honoring life that was to be consecrated to Him. In Deuteronomy, it is stated, “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.”⁷²

⁷¹ Genesis 3:1 (ESV).

⁷² Deuteronomy 4:1-2 (ESV).

God was to lead His children as He blessed them with a land of abundance if they would simply be faithful and obey Him. The parents were told to teach their children that they may know the wonder of the Lord God and follow Him all their days “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’”⁷³

Moses wrote Deuteronomy as a reminder to the children of Israel as they entered the Holy land that God was given them to continue to walk with the Lord and His ways. God knew they would wander and follow their own devices, so He continually sent leaders and prophets to call the people back to Himself. God is a loving father that cares more for His children than anyone could ever imagine. Jeremiah reminds the people:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord.

“For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all

⁷³ Deuteronomy 4:9-10.

the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.”⁷⁴

God always had a plan, and a purpose for His children, and even when they disobeyed and sin entered the camp, God was always drawing them back to Himself. Ted Tripp writes, “Any student of the Old Testament knows God was concerned about Israel’s susceptibility to influence from the people of Canaan. He commanded Israel to drive the nations out, to show no mercy. God knew that if the people of Canaan lived alongside Israel, they would go astray.”⁷⁵ God alone has set the standard by which fathers are to lead their families and given everyone in all times a guidebook if they would simply follow it. The Word of God is that guidebook and has everything everyone will ever need to lead their family well.

God has placed a high calling on the family and especially fathers. King David was said to be a man after God's own heart. David loved the Lord and followed Him faithfully for much of his life. However, one area David struggled in was as a father. David was a sinful man like everyone and understood his help comes from the Lord. First Kings show David's human failures as a father in two of his sons. “Then Nathan said to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, “Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king and David our lord does not know it? ¹² Now therefore come, let me give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. ¹³ Go in at once to King David, and say to him, ‘Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying, “Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne”?’ Why then is Adonijah king?”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Jeremiah 29:4-14 (ESV).

⁷⁵ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen PA Shepherd Press 1995), 44-45.

⁷⁶ 1st Kings 1:11-13 (ESV).

David's failure as a father almost destroyed the kingdom. David had not done as the Lord had command and spoken in the Proverbs "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it."⁷⁷ God has given men and especially fathers very specific roles and responsibilities in the training and correction of children. In the Old Testament, we see time and time again throughout the Kings of Israel the failure of fathers in investing and disciplining their sons. Occasionally a good king will be found, but for every good king, there were multiple failures.

The history of the Kings of Israel is one of extreme ups and downs. King Josiah was an exceptional King whose father, King Amon, and grandfather, King Manasseh, was anything but. "Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, as Manasseh his father had done. He walked in all the way in which his father walked and served the idols that his father served and worshiped them. He abandoned the Lord, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord."⁷⁸ Having a Godly father is so vital in the life of a child, as we see throughout Scripture. Occasionally someone will break a cycle, but it is only by the grace of God one does so.

Even in the life of King Josiah it was the finding and following of the Word of God that turned the Kingdom around. "Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. And the king went up to the house of the Lord, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had

⁷⁷ Proverbs 22:6 (ESV).

⁷⁸ 2 Kings 21:19-22 (ESV).

been found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.”⁷⁹

Unfortunately, much like King David, Josiah had not disciplined his sons well. “And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's place. Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.”⁸⁰ The importance of good fatherly leadership in the home cannot be understated. Throughout the Old Testament, we see countless stories of real men under the authority of God that failed miserably. Some raised up sons that did well, and, in every case, it started with faithfulness to the Lord and His Word.

⁷⁹ 2 Kings 23:1-3 (ESV).

⁸⁰ 2 Kings 23:30-32 (ESV).

The Biblical Reason in the New Testament

In the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, we read a genealogy of Jesus Christ. This list is full of men, some good, some not so good that we're all used by God in the kingly lineage of the Lord. The New Testament is littered with how disciple-making is to occur. From the Gospel accounts to the Acts of Apostles, Paul, Peter, and John's letters, we see a continual line of faithful disciple-making. John the Baptist sets the tone in the New Testament with disciples that followed him throughout the area as he preached a message of repentance. Many of these men would later follow Jesus as He would call them to abandon all and follow Him. "While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him."⁸¹

In the times of the New Testament, a Jewish Rabbi would start teaching, and people would gather, and from that crowd or community, a few men would ask the Rabbi to teach them or disciple them. The word disciple simply means "one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another"⁸² In Christianity, it is the one who follows the teaching of Christ and then goes and teaches others. "Jesus went against the typical pattern of his fellow rabbis by selecting his own disciples himself, rather than waiting for a line of would-be students to form... He is the first rabbi in history to go after his own followers."⁸³ This was a radical shift in its time as Jesus was setting an example for each of his followers to follow.

⁸¹ Matthew 4:18-20 (ESV).

⁸² Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "disciple," accessed September 12, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disciple>.

⁸³ Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan 2015), 35.

Jesus would call twelve men to leave all and follow him. “And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him”⁸⁴ Then again “As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.⁸⁵ This will be played out time and again until the twelve were assembled to follow Jesus. “^{In} these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”⁸⁶

For the next three years, Jesus would demonstrate and live out in front of these men what it was to be a Christ-follower. Jesus set the example for the church throughout the ages until today to follow in His footsteps. Jesus used a four-step process to train the disciples. First, Jesus would minister to the people as the disciples would watch. The sermon on the mount is an example of Jesus' early ministry as he would lead and set the pace for how disciples are to lead. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus “immediately left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and

⁸⁴ Matthew 4:21-22 (ESV).

⁸⁵ Matthew 9:9 (ESV).

⁸⁶ Luke 9:12-16 (ESV).

immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.”⁸⁷

Secondly, Jesus would allow the disciples to minister with him. Jesus will start to let the disciples be part of the mission when He feeds the five thousand. Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So, the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also, the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.”⁸⁸ The disciples were no longer onlookers but were participants in the work.

Thirdly Jesus would allow the disciples to take what they had learned from Jesus and put it to practice as Jesus helped. “And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So, I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.”⁸⁹ The disciples being unable to heal the boy asked Jesus why they could not perform the miracle. “And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Mark 1:29-31 (ESV).

⁸⁸ John 6:10-11 (ESV).

⁸⁹ Mark 9:15-19 (ESV).

⁹⁰ Mark 9:28-29 (ESV).

Lastly, Jesus stood back and watched as the disciples ministered to the people. In Luke's Gospel, it states, "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"⁹¹ Learning to follow Jesus as a disciple requires intentionality and being with him. Disciples are not made from a distance, and teaching alone will not produce reproducing disciples. A disciple must also learn from watching and observing, and being out in the world. The mission of Jesus is one of sending "Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."⁹² As a disciple this author is sent like every Christian to fulfill the mission "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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."⁹³

In the book of Acts Jesus tells his followers "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."⁹⁴ Jesus knows His disciples cannot follow faithfully without the help and empowerment of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit will now be with all his followers as they seek to follow Jesus and make disciples. When Jesus ascends to Heaven, Peter, and John step up as leaders amongst the original disciples. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came

⁹¹ Luke 10:17 (ESV).

⁹² John 20:21 (ESV).

⁹³ Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV).

⁹⁴ Acts 1:8 (ESV).

upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”⁹⁵

To be a disciple requires the inner power and work of the Holy Spirit. For parents to lead their children, the Holy Spirit will need to be alive and well within them. One reason so few reproduce their life into the lives of others is the Spirit of God has been repressed. Christians are called to walk in the spirit daily and to deny themselves. This requires discipline and effort in the believer if they are going to be effective disciple-makers. The Apostle Paul demonstrates disciple-making throughout his missionary journeys. Paul invested his life in many others. One, in particular, was a young man named Timothy. “Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So, the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Acts 2:42-47 (ESV).

⁹⁶ Acts 16:1-5 (ESV).

Timothy would disciple others and lead the Church at Ephesus for years after Paul had established the church there. Paul spent over three years in Ephesus, starting and training up the new believers in the region. After rioting and persecution came, Paul decided to move on; “After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.”⁹⁷ Paul continued to make disciples and strengthen the early disciples to continue in the faith and train others.

Paul’s Epistles were written to strengthen, correct and challenge the new believers: “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.”⁹⁸ Paul would encourage the believers to “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”⁹⁹ Paul was a disciple of the Lord Jesus and wanted others to be also. His letters were a great resource in the ongoing work of planting churches and making disciples.

The Apostle Paul knew he would be accountable for what he did with all God had given him. His chief aim was to glorify God through his life and those he led. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”¹⁰⁰ Even though Paul never had children he considered Timothy his son “To

⁹⁷ Acts 20:1-2 (ESV).

⁹⁸ Colossians 1:3-6 (ESV).

⁹⁹ 1st Corinthians 11:1 (ESV).

¹⁰⁰ 2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV).

Timothy, my true child in the faith.”¹⁰¹ Paul modeled what is it for fathers to disciple their sons and daughters.

The Apostle John likewise wrote to the early church as a loving father would to his children. “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.”¹⁰² Peter and John had first-hand experience walking with Jesus what it was to make disciples. Peter and John's epistles are written to the early church to stay strong in the faith and continue pursuing Christ in all things. According to the Apostle John, the true disciple was this “And by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”¹⁰³

To make disciples, this author recommends a return to the way Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John made disciples, investing in a few men at a time. This is a slow, methodical approach similar to planting deep into the soil where the roots are strong. Without deep roots, the ways of the world will come and choke people out. Jesus took time and made sure the men he called were planted deep and prepared.

¹⁰¹ 1st Timothy 1:2 (ESV).

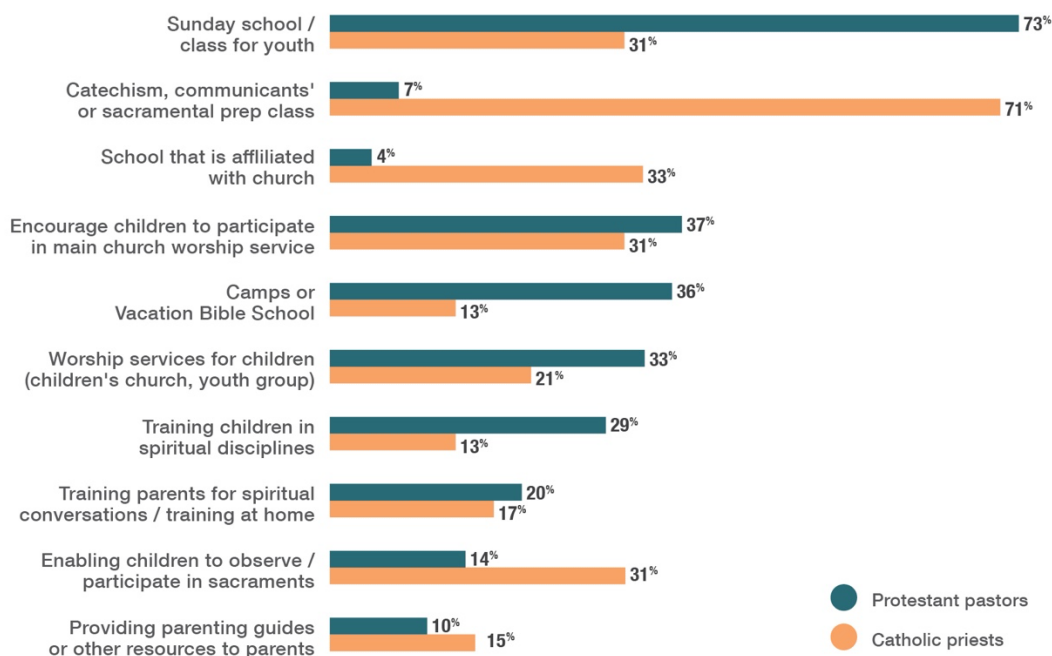
¹⁰² 1st John 2:1 (ESV).

¹⁰³ 1st John 2:3-6 (ESV).

HOW CHURCHES PRIORITIZE SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Barna

When it comes to children's spiritual formation, what are the priorities of your church? What are the 3 main ways you do this?



104

n=650 Protestant pastors and Catholic priests | October 5 - November 27, 2018

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Figure 1.1 How Churches Prioritize Spiritual Formation

¹⁰⁴ Barna Group, "Who Is Responsible for Children's Faith Formation?," Barna Group, March 19, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/children-faith-formation/>.

The Family Reason

The family has always been and will always be God's design for raising up the next generation. Both the Old and the New Testaments show the importance of disciple-making and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the family. Throughout history, the family has served as the first church. In fact, up until the fourth century, you did not hear about large gatherings in a building to have a church service. “Before Constantine’s rise to power, Christian worship was relatively informal. Believers met in homes, enjoying what they called love feasts, the ancient equivalent of a potluck banquet. After a meal, they sang hymns, read scripture, discussed theology, and shared communion.”¹⁰⁵ The scriptures refer to Christians as brothers and sisters in the family of God.

For good or bad, this family is the mechanism God has chosen to reproduce His image in. Every person is made in the image of God, and because every person is made in His image, the family should represent God's family. The church throughout the New Testament is referred to as the bride of Christ. Jesus is the head of the church “For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.”¹⁰⁶ God has, in His infinite wisdom, created order and roles within the family. Fathers are to lead and love their families as Christ loves the Church. The family is a microcosm of the church. So goes the family, so goes the church.

When the family and the church are working together in harmony, it's a beautiful picture of the body of Christ. Likewise, when the family and the church do not work together, it creates friction and strife. “For the early Christians the church was a family, and since family was the

¹⁰⁵ Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide* (Grand Rapids MI. Zondervan 2012), 61.

¹⁰⁶ Ephesians 5:23 (ESV).

primary group of people in Mediterranean antiquity, the church represented the primary focus of group loyalty and solidarity for a Christian in the first century.”¹⁰⁷ Even in non-Christian contexts, there are still, in many cases, strong families. The family is the strongest dynamic there is. That can be both good and bad. When a husband loves his wife well and leads and loves the family, the percentages rise as the children fall into bad behavior. Josh McDowell has conducted extensive research about the importance of fathers and concluded in his study "that youth who are 'very close to their parents are:

- “more likely to feel ‘very satisfied’ with their life”
- “more likely to abstain from sexual intercourse”
- “more likely to espouse biblical standards of truth and morality”
- “more likely to attend church”
- “more likely to read their Bible consistently”
- “more likely to pray daily”¹⁰⁸

After the school shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, a study determined the relationship between good to great fathers and poor to fair fathers. This author agrees that a father's relationship is one if not the most important in a child's life. The National Fatherhood Initiative has many startling statistics “There is a father absence crisis in America, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 18.3 million children, 1 in 4, live without a biological, step, or adoptive father in the home. Consequently, there is a father factor in nearly all social ills facing America today.”¹⁰⁹ The role of families and, most importantly, fathers are critical to the well-being of children. This author suggests if the statistics are this high in the secular world, how much more important is it for Christian men to step and lead their families spiritually onto the battlefield.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family* (Nashville TN, Broadman & Holman 2009), 55.

¹⁰⁸ Josh D. McDowell, *The Father Connection* (Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 6.

¹⁰⁹ National Fatherhood Initiative®, “Father Absence Statistics,” Father Absence Statistics, 2020, <https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic>.

Parents by proximity and relationship have the greatest means to invest in their children. “Who are the nearest unbelievers or young believers to Christian parents? Typically, they are our own children. And so, parents are called to actively engage in their children’s spiritual transformation not in spite of, but precisely because of the deeper kinship that is available through the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁰ The world has witnessed the roles fathers so often play in investing their time, talent and treasure into their children through the sports they play. This author is a fan of many sports, and as a father, this author also invested time, talent, and treasure into the children to help them grow and develop in their field.

What would happen if fathers were to take this same initiative in their child's spiritual development by investing time, talent, and treasure into their kids. This author believes a revival would sweep across the nation like never before.

For that to happen, men in the church must be challenged and encouraged to move. The scripture is evident in the working of the enemy to destroy the home and families. Paul shares with the church at Ephesus, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”¹¹¹

The chart below shows the importance of fathers in their children's lives and the positive and negative effects a father can and will have. Fathers are by God's design to imitate our heavenly Father and provide teaching and guiding children.

¹¹⁰ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis IN. Wesleyan House 2011), 79.

¹¹¹ Ephesians 6:4 (ESV).

THE FATHER ABSENCE CRISIS IN AMERICA

There is a crisis in America. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 18.3 million children, 1 in 4, live without a biological, step, or adoptive father in the home. Consequently, there is a “father factor” in nearly all of the societal ills facing America today. Research shows when a child is raised in a father-absent home, he or she is affected in the following ways...

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). Living arrangements of children under 18 years old: 1960 to present. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.



18.3

MILLION CHILDREN WITHOUT THEIR BIOLOGICAL FATHER AT HOME

National Fatherhood Initiative®

Visit

store.fatherhood.org/new-father-facts-8-download/
for more facts on father absence

¹¹² Figure 1.2 The Father Absence Crisis in America

¹¹² National Fatherhood Initiative®, “Father Absence Statistics,” Father Absence Statistics, 2020, <https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic>.

“As fathers, we need to be involved in our children’s lives not just when it’s convenient or easy, and not just when they’re doing well—but when it’s difficult and thankless, and they’re struggling. That is when they need us most.”¹¹³ This author has challenged men in the church to lead and has started small discipleship groups with three to four men to encourage and equip men to lead well in the home. Apart from the grace of God, this is the church's hope to strengthen and reach families across the land. Richard Baxter, the puritan pastor, placed great importance on visiting with every family and father every year to challenge and call men to lead. “I beseech you, therefore, if you desire the reformation and welfare of your people, do all you can to promote family religion.”¹¹⁴ Baxter would visit the homes, ask if the fathers were praying with their families, and collect information to serve those families better. He would visit them when they would least expect it to observe their everyday practices.

“According to 72.2 % of the U.S. population, fatherlessness is the most significant family or social problem facing America.”¹¹⁵ This author believes it starts with the church returning to her origins and raising men to be faithful to God, their wife, and family. When fathers do this, the church will be changed.

¹¹³ Barack Obama (interview), “We Need Fathers to Step Up”, Parade Magazine, June 16, 2011, <http://parade.com/104895/presidentbarackobama/barack-obama-we-need-fathers-to- step-up/>.

¹¹⁴ Richard Baxter *The Reformed Pastor* (Read a Classic) 56.

¹¹⁵ National Center for Fathering, *Fathering in America Poll*, January 1999 <https://fathers.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/1999-NCF-Poll-Fathering-in-America.pdf>.

The Partnership Reason

It stands to reason that two are better than one. The author of Ecclesiastes states, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”¹¹⁶ This author had seen both the church and the home working together and the church and home competing against each other. The Rethink group years ago came out with a strategy called orange. Their mission statement reads, “We Believe That Two Combined Influences Make A Greater Impact Than Just Two Individual Influences and that No one has more potential to influence a kid than a parent.”¹¹⁷

The philosophy behind Rethink is to connect the home and the church intentionally. This approach is one of the most influential theories this author has seen. It will not change everything overnight but over time. Creating a holistic approach that looks at the family unit as a whole and working to partner parents with the church is how to get families, particularly dads, back to discipling their kids. “With all the time, money, and energy poured into teens, why are we not getting a better return for our investment.”¹¹⁸ Steve Wright suggests four areas the church needs to rethink in partnering with parents. Are we striving for?

- Separation from parents or partnership with parents?
- Student ministry or student development?

¹¹⁶ Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (ESV).

¹¹⁷ Orange, “*Orange Curriculum and Ministry Strategy for Kids and Students*,” accessed September 20, 2021, <https://thinkorange.com>.

¹¹⁸ Steve Wright, *Rethink: Decide for Yourself, Is Student Ministry Working* (Wake Forest N.C. InQuest 2007), 22.

- Cultural relevance or biblical faithfulness?
- Internalized ministries or championing the church?¹¹⁹

How the church answers these questions will determine what the actual objectives are in the church. To create a healthy partnership, the church must connect with the parents to create a pathway or a roadmap with milestones along the way. Without milestones, there will be no gauge to determine how the church and parents are doing. Milestones will be set up in advance in a partnership to help guide and direct both parties. These milestones should include an evaluation to see how things are going and ongoing encouragement to keep on fighting for the hearts and minds of students. “The truth is most Christian parents want to see their children walking in the fullness of Christ, which is why they bring their children to you and me each week. We have the same goal, and it is time we join forces to accomplish it.”¹²⁰

Partnership means both parties are committed to working together for the betterment of each other. Steve Wright suggests these five areas:

- Creating family worship time
- Taking a family mission trip
- Journaling with and to your children
- Creating opportunities for parents and youth together at church
- Praying daily with and for your children¹²¹

Partnering with parents will create added strength. The enemy seeks to take away the next generation and will do all he can to keep the church from affecting the next generation.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 46.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 157.

¹²¹ Ibid, 163.

Jesus states in the Gospel of Luke, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”¹²² When the family and the church are praying together, the bond is three-fold. In a Christian marriage, when a husband and wife are praying together in the Lord, it is a three-fold bond that the enemy cannot break. The same goes when parents and the church are committed to praying together for each other and with each other.

Reggie Joiner is the founder of Rethink which has created the orange strategy of connecting parents and the church. Reggie states “most parents have a sense that their relationships with their own children are very important. We are aware that we are stewards of influence during the most formative years of someone’s life. For good or bad, you will influence your children. This is a responsibility parents carry in a way that no other being on the planet will or should.”¹²³

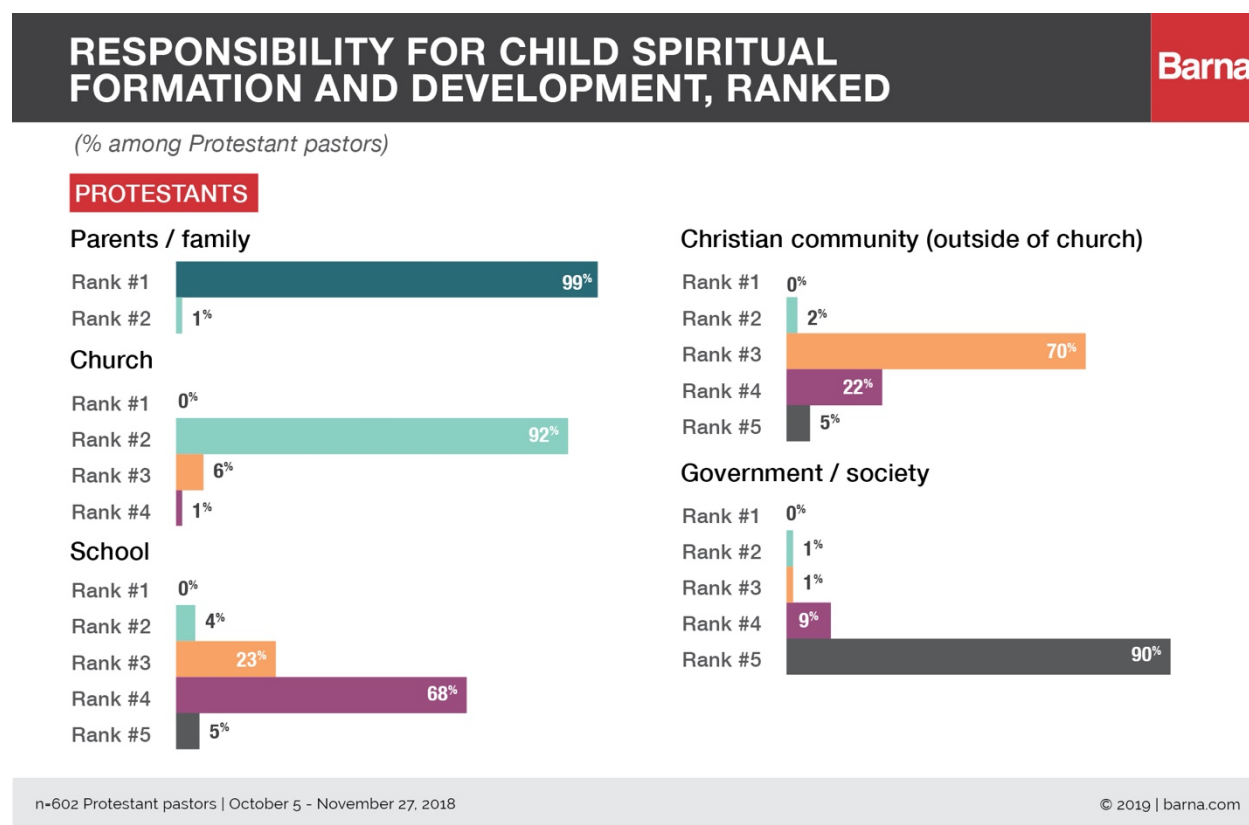
A few years ago, the Barna Group released a study about parents and pastors partnering in Gen Z discipleship. The research shows, “More than nine out of 10 engaged Christian parents (those who identify as Christian, regularly attend church and have orthodox beliefs) say it is important that their child “is equipped to explain the Christian faith” and is “engaged in service”—likely as elements of the overall goal of strong adult faith.”¹²⁴ To have churches that

¹²² Luke 22:31-34 (ESV).

¹²³ Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof, *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity* (Colorado Springs CO. 2010), 27.

¹²⁴ Barna Group, “Parents and Pastors: Partners in Gen Z Discipleship,” Barna Group, July 17, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/parents-and-pastors-partners-in-gen-z-discipleship/>.

will continue to be effective and vibrant will require a continued and better partnership with the family.



¹²⁵ Figure 1.3 Responsibility for Child Spiritual Formation and Development, Ranked

The chart above shows the results of a survey by the Barna Group on whose responsibility it is for the spiritual transformation of children. Over 99% of pastors agreed the parents are the ones primarily responsible. The church and other Christian influences ranked high as well. Ultimately how goes the Christian home, how goes the Church.

¹²⁵ Barna Group, “Who Is Responsible for Children's Faith Formation?,” Barna Group, March 19, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/children-faith-formation/>.

The Reproducing Reason

Churches must go back to the Great Commission to reach future generations. Only when the church and families reconnect and reignite a passion for the hearts and souls of the next generation will the culture start to be changed by the church. Most everyone agrees if parents cease to reproduce physically, then families will no longer exist. Moms and dads must be obedient to the Lord's commands to go and be fruitful. This same principle applies spiritually as well. Every Christian is called to reproduce their life into others. This starts in the home and then goes out from there to others.

Church Project is a church in Houston, Texas, that has made this the central principle to their church from the onset. Church project has worked to keep things simple and strategic. The mission of the Church Project is threefold:

- Sunday gatherings for the whole corporate body
- House churches for dozens to gather intimately
- Ministry opportunities to serve one another and the city¹²⁶

Scripture shows a great model in reproduction called the parable of the talents.

The Parable of the Talents

¹⁴ “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward,

¹²⁶ Jason Sheppard, *Church Project* (Houston TX. Lucid 2017), 14.

saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’²⁶ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.’²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’¹²⁷

This Scripture demonstrates what it is Jesus has called the Church and each Christian to do. This author has experienced both extremes of this parable played out. For some, they have taken what the Lord has given them and used it to advance the kingdom. Whatever time, talents, or treasure the Lord has provided, they have given back to the Lord by investing in the Kingdom of God. In other cases, men and women have taken the same time, talent, and treasures and keep them for themselves rather than investing in the kingdom. Jesus commanded each Christian to go and make disciples. This is the Great Commission, not the great suggestion.

Church Project has taken this command to heart and witnessed God do supernatural work in the church. Church Project currently has hundreds of house churches across the country and even around the world. Church Project has invested over fifty percent of its budget in the area and global ministries. By partnering with like-minded, Kingdom ministries Church Project has not had to re-create the wheel but instead can invest more time, talent, and treasure into the

¹²⁷ Matthew 25:14-30 (ESV).

kingdom. Church Project has planted dozens of churches in the country and more globally. Each church has built in-house churches that met to carry out Acts 2.¹²⁸

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”¹²⁹

The model for Church Project is thoroughly biblical and easily reproduced. They train up pastors/elders in each house church that serve the house church and the community. The majority of these men are lay pastors/elders. This is modeled after Acts 20:

“Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.^[c] ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by^[d] the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Jason Sheppard, *Church Project* (Houston TX. Lucid 2017), 15-18.

¹²⁹ Acts 2:42-47 (ESV).

¹³⁰ Acts 20:17-24 (ESV).

The men who lead the house churches invest in future house church pastors/elders to reproduce in due time as they reach out into the community. The house churches are throughout the community, so they are reaching those that live nearby. These house churches then gather weekly for corporate worship. As clusters of house churches grow in areas of the communities, a new church plant will be birthed with a number of the house churches and the pastors/elders in those house churches. This is a simple yet incredibly successful model. No wonder when you consider it is based on the New Testament Church.

The House Church in China is another reproducing model that has been growing and reproducing for years. With the onset of the Chinese revolution in 1949, the People's Republic of China was birthed under Mao Zedong. With the communist takeover, the church was forced underground or close. Instead of retreating, Chinese leaders such as Watchman Nee and others would advance the Gospel by training men and women to be disciple-makers in small house churches. The house churches were challenging for the government to keep track of and were easily reproduced without needed buildings and full-time ministers. The Christians in China took to heart the priesthood of the believers and thus set out to fulfill the Great Commission. Much can be learned in reproducing and making disciples from the house church movement in China that is still growing and reaching people today. “The responsibility of Christians is consequentially just this: to present their spirits to God as vessels and to consign to death everything pertaining to themselves. Should they neither block their spirit nor attempt to give to others what they have in and of themselves, God can use His children greatly as channels of life for the salvation of sinners and the upbuilding of the saints.”¹³¹

¹³¹ Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man* (New York N.Y. Christian Publishers 1968), 46-48.

Whether the house church in China, Texas, or your backyard, the principle of making disciples is the same. The house must become a focal point for the church to see a movement in communities across America and around the globe. The puritan Matthew Henry stated in the sixteen hundred, “The labor of ministers in instructing youth, and feeding the lambs of the flock, proves to many labor in vain, because heads of families do not do their duty in preparing them for public instruction, and examining their improvement by it. As mothers are children’s best nurses, so parents are or should be the best teachers.”¹³²

Spiritual reproduction starts with prayer, and Dawson Troutman, the founder of the Navigators, knew this well. Dawson Troutman was influenced by E. M. Bounds *Power Through Prayer* in which is written, “Men are God’s method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men, What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, no new organization or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use – men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men – men of prayer.”¹³³ The Apostle Paul knew what it was to reproduce his life into the lives of other men. This is the trust of Second Timothy “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”¹³⁴ All God is looking for is a few good men that will lay down their nets and follow him.

¹³² Matthew Henry, *A Church in the House* (Columbia SC. Gideon House 2015), 8.

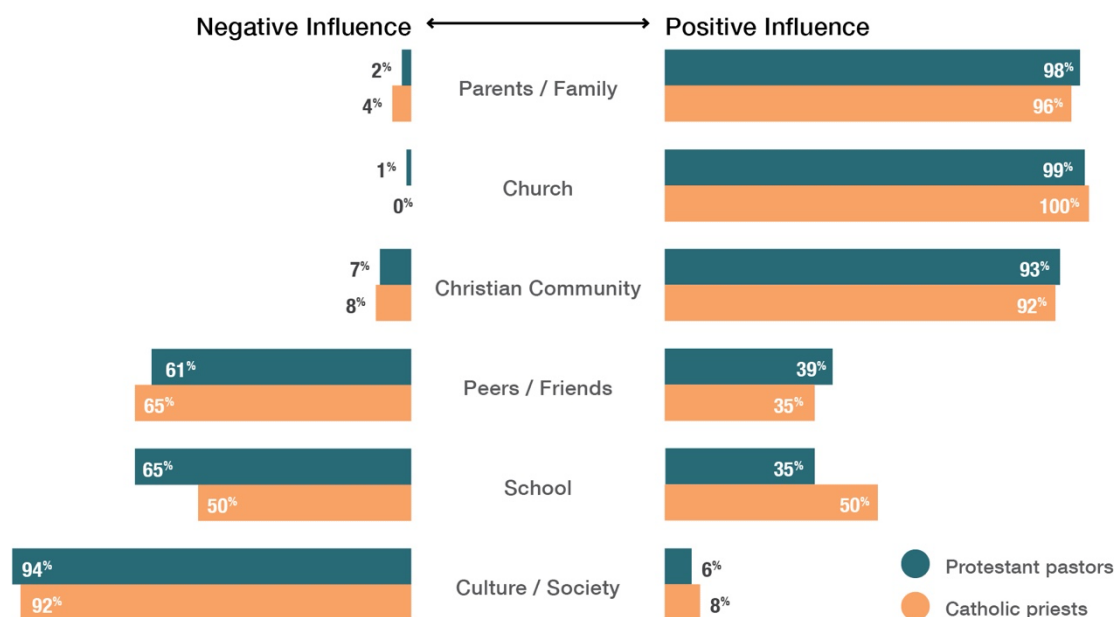
¹³³ Robert Foster, *The Navigator Dawson Troutman* (Colorado Springs CO. NavPress 2012), 47.

¹³⁴ 2nd Timothy 2:2 (ESV).

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ON A CHILD'S SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Barna

Would you describe these influences as positive or negative to a child's spiritual formation and development?



n=650 Protestant pastors and Catholic priests | October 5 - November 27, 2018

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¹³⁵ Figure 1.4 Positive and Negative Influences on a Child's Spiritual Formation

The chart above from a Barna research shows how family and church positively affect children while schools, peers, and culture negatively impact children. Parents are still the most influential people in training up children to follow Christ and make Him known.

¹³⁵ Barna Group, "Who Is Responsible for Children's Faith Formation?" Barna Group, March 19, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/children-faith-formation/>.

The Future of the Church Reason

The Church of Jesus Christ has and always will exist until Jesus determines otherwise. Jesus states in the Gospel of Matthew, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”¹³⁶ Jesus is the one who builds His Church but invites his followers in on the journey. However, for individual churches to continue impacting the communities, they will require reaching out and raising up the next generation. This author does not believe the youth are the future church, but they are today's church. With that said, it will return to the past for churches to continue to reach people in the future. A concerted effort of local churches and pastors to intentionally make disciples that will weather the trials and temptations the enemy and this world will throw at them will mean a deeper level than the surface Christianity being taught in many circles.

That is why parents and especially fathers are such an essential piece to the future of the Church. Christian parents must start taking the Great Commission more seriously and invest in their children so they can develop a biblical worldview that will prepare them for what they are and will face in the future. The Church has sat back on the defensive for quite a while, and it's time to take up the offensive. The Church must train parents to disciple and walk together to turn the tide. The church has seen what happens when a global pandemic hits and shuts down many churches in the past year. How well the Church learns from this will significantly determine how well she will survive in the future. The Gospel is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The message of the Cross never changes but to be relevant and seeker-friendly, the Church has abandoned what built many churches.

¹³⁶ Matthew 16:18 (ESV).

The Church does not entertain or make people feel comfortable, she needs to stand out as a city on a hill. Jesus told His followers “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”¹³⁷ Jesus reminds His followers they are the salt of the world. Salt is a preservative that, when applied as a believer, will fight moral decay but standing on and in the Word of God. God's Word is the standard by which Christians are to live and move and breathe. Without salt, the world will decay and rot.

Furthermore, Christians are called to be the light. The slightest glimmer of light in a pitch-black room will light the way. To be the light, Christians must be willing to take the Gospel to the dark places and shine our light so that people will hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. The future Church will be dependent on generations of believers living their lives as salt and light. This will mean a greater dependency on the Word of God and children being taught biblical truths in the home from loving parents modeling what it means to be a Christ Follower.

Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin write “Family discipleship is leading your home by doing whatever you can whenever you can to help your family become friends and followers of Jesus Christ. Christians not only ought to disciple, but they must disciple if they are to truly follow Christ. This is the quintessential role of every Christian parent.”¹³⁸ The future of the church is making disciples that make disciples and so on. Churches can use programs and events,

¹³⁷ Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV).

¹³⁸ Matt Chandler & Adam Griffin, *Family Discipleship* (Wheaton ILL. Crossway 2020), 30.

but they are not God's primary means to build His Church. Good ole fashion relationships centered around His Word and His ways are still the most effective way to reach and equip the Church. Every year whatever sport you follow, teams start the year in some type of training camp. Training camp is where groups gather and practice the fundamentals. They re-learn the essential foundation tools that will be needed for the season.

Charles Spurgeon the Prince of Preachers once said “Let no Christian parents fall into the delusion that the Sunday school is intended to ease them of their personal duties. The first and most natural condition of things is for the Christian parents to train up their own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”¹³⁹ The future Church must come back to God’s design “In God’s good design, parents are given the closet proximity and greatest influence in the lives of their children. Parents have the incredible privilege of helping their children discover the world and teaching them to know, love, trust, and obey the one who made them. God commands parents to actively and earnestly shape the character of their children¹⁴⁰ and help form their faith.”

In a recent George Barna report titled *Gen Z The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivation Shaping the Next Generation*, the report shows the Church's trajectory in reaching Gen Z, defined as those born after 1996. This generation is far less likely to attend church or have any biblical worldview. Barna states, “it is not breaking news that the influence of Christianity in the United States is waning. Historical Barna data show that rates of church attendance, religious affiliation, belief in God, prayer and Bible reading have been dropping for decades.

¹³⁹ Ibid 46.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid 51.

Consequently,¹⁴¹ the role of religion in public life has also diminished, and the Church no longer holds the cultural authority it wielded in times past.”

Dorothy is not in Kansas anymore. As classified as Gen Z, the current generation will require more time and explanation than prior generations when sharing the Gospel. Practically speaking, the church will have to move more towards Acts 17 rather than Acts 2. In Acts 2, Peter stands up and proclaims Christ to a God-fearing Jewish audience. By Acts 17, Paul is at Mars Hill and is speaking to the philosophers and spiritual seekers, appealing to their spirituality. Gen Z may be spiritual, but most are not Christian and have not grown up in homes with a biblical worldview. In *Meet Generation Z*, James Emery White states, “the heart of any evangelistic process is going to have to major in explanation. Everything must be explained, from music to messages, symbols to ritual, because so little is understood.”¹⁴² Future disciple-making efforts will be more question-and-answer driven and take much longer and require greater patience.

¹⁴¹ George Barna, *Gen Z The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivation Shaping the Next Generation* (Carol Stream Ill/ Tyndale 2018), 25.

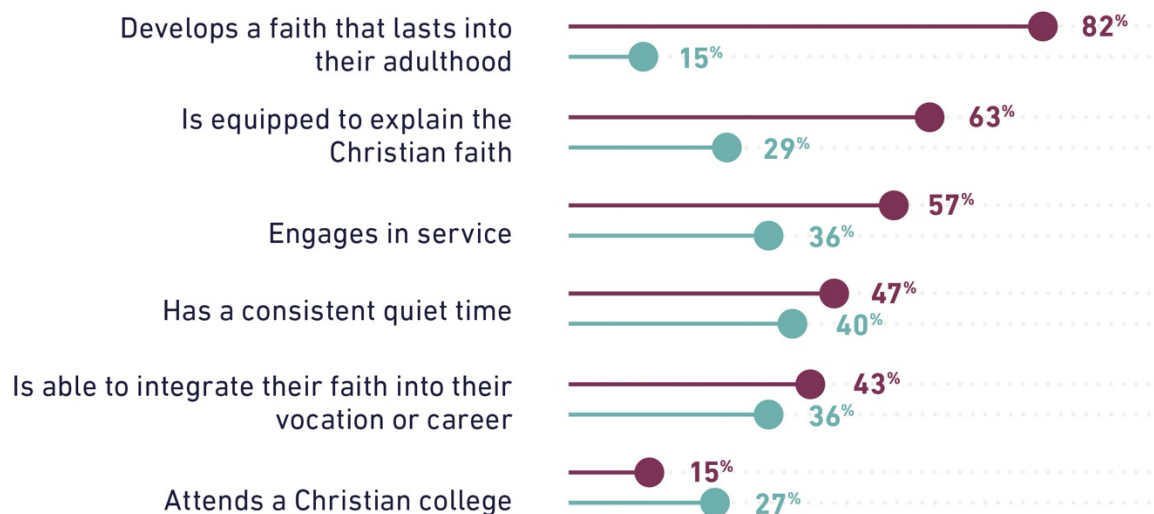
¹⁴² James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z* (Grand Rapids MI. 2017), 110.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO YOU THAT YOUR TEEN...?

Barna

% among engaged Christian parents

● Very important
● Somewhat important



U.S. engaged Christian parents, *n*=403, Nov. 8–16, 2016.

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¹⁴³ Figure 1.5 How Important is it to you that your Teen...?

¹⁴³ Barna Group, “Parents and Pastors: Partners in Gen Z Discipleship,” Barna Group, July 17, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/parents-and-pastors-partners-in-gen-z-discipleship/>.

Chapter Four

Philosophy of Ministry

While culture is changing at an alarming rate, the one constant is still the Word of God. Even as culture is shaping countless young people and families alike, there is still hope. The basic fundamental philosophy of ministry still works. That is simply to do what Jesus did! As the current culture, even within the Church, tries to change and impress the next generation, the church must not lose sight of the inner working of the Spirit of God. Christian parents' power is not their own but rather the Spirit of God working in and through them. To see the Church return to her glory will not require cute, clever new ideas or programs. It will however need time and intentionality.

A return to the basics is what is most needed. Bryan Loritts writes “several decades into pastoral ministry, in which I’ve logged thousands of hours trying to help people sort through their lives, has only strengthened my conviction that Dad is the most powerful three-letter word in the English language.¹⁴⁴ This author is convicted of new strategies, and new studies are not what is needed to turn hearts and minds. The prophet Malachi was speaking to the people about the coming of the Lord when he stated, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Bryan Loritts, *The Dad Difference: The 4 Most Important Gifts You Can Give to Your Kids* (Chicago ILL. 2020), 13.

¹⁴⁵ Malachi 4:5-6 (ESV).

Men in the Church, in particular fathers, must get on their knees and repent for abdicating their God-given roles and responsibilities that God has established from the foundation of time. Only when Churches start to call upon men to step up and step out will the Church see the youth and children become all that God has for them. Eugene Peterson wrote In his classic work *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* a riveting quote from Friedrich Nietzsche “the essential thing in heaven and earth is that there should be long obedience in the same direction, thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living.”¹⁴⁶ Eugene Peterson believed this what discipleship should look like, long obedience. Jesus told His disciples they were to teach others to observe all that He had commanded. They were to be obedient to the Word of God.

This is still true today and will be true until Jesus returns. The author of Hebrews reminds the believer “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.”¹⁴⁷ A genuine return to teaching the scriptures and spending time together in God's Word will win the hearts and minds of children. Next to the preaching of God's Word, Churches must invest in men and particularly fathers the most important mission they should have.

The Apostle Paul demonstrated this throughout his ministry as he invested in the men traveling with him throughout his missionary journeys and to Rome. When Paul wrote his last letter to his beloved son in the faith, he had seen the full effects of disciple-making. When Paul

¹⁴⁶ Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove ILL. IVP Books 2000), 13.

¹⁴⁷ Hebrews 13:7-9 (ESV).

penned the lines “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”¹⁴⁸ Paul knew Timothy, Luke, Titus, and many others would continue to multiply their life into other men that would fulfill Second Timothy 2:2.

This author has collected data from former students presented in Appendix A that shows the importance of personal investment. The data was sent to over twenty-five former students in multiple churches, a student ministry at a traditional church and a church plant just starting. Fifteen students responded to the questionnaire regarding discipleship. The overwhelming data shows the impact of someone making a personal investment in the life of another. However, the information also reveals the lack of fathers leading their children in spiritual formation. Out of the fifteen responses, only two had fathers that were involved in discipling and investing spiritually. Many had mothers that did an excellent job or another caring adult like a youth leader, etc.

The question about the involvement of fathers was both disheartening and quite telling.

- Negligible.
- None
- My father is not Christian, but he's been an incredible mentor and foundation for our family.
- not too involved.
- My father was not involved in discipling me or my family.
- Very involved
- Very involved
- seldom
- He brought me to church, and that was about it.
- He did not play a role in discipleship. (Not involved)
- My father was very involved.

¹⁴⁸ 2 Timothy 2:2 (ESV).

- Little
- Very involved; My father was constantly discipling my family and I through every season of life.
- Not involved at all
- He was busy, but still made time to disciple me and my siblings.

Only four of the fifteen responses mention their father being involved. In many cases, the father was not involved at all. This author believes that if we are to reach the next generation and keep them involved and growing in the local church, church leaders must make a herculean effort to invest in men. This author proposes a multiple-faceted approach. First, church leadership will intentionally seek out men the way Jesus sought out the twelve disciples. This will mean getting out in the fields. Jesus states in the Gospel of Matthew, “And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”¹⁴⁹

There is no shortage of men in the world, but the church has to go beyond the church's walls to engage these men and share with them the truths of the Gospel. Jesus states to pray to the Lord of the harvest. This will start with greater and more fervent prayer both by church leaders and the body as a whole. When prayer takes place, it enters into a sacred partnership with the Father. No one can do this alone; it will require a pouring out of the Spirit of God into families and men. Once a foundation of prayer has been established, the church must be mobilized, particularly the men in the church. The men must be trained and equipped to go out

¹⁴⁹ Matthew 9:35-38 (ESV).

and seek those other men in need of a relationship with Christ. Many of these men are standing on the sidelines or sitting in the stands at sporting events for their children and provide many points of contact if men are willing to engage them in conversation.

This will not be easy, and there will be resistance. The enemy has had his way for far too long in many of the men's lives we are mentioning and will not go quietly into the night. The enemy will fight. Paul states in Romans “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned — for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.”¹⁵⁰ The enemy will tempt men to let the world teach their children. Many are asleep at the wheel as the car is spinning out of control with the children in the back.

Once men are identified, they must be engaged. This is not hitting them over the head with a Bible but finding common interests and connecting on more than a service level. A recent Barna research entitled *Five Essentials to Engage Today's Men* reveals “a clear connection between men’s ministries and their overall satisfaction with life, from their marriage to their children to their work-life balance.”¹⁵¹ Having discussions with men about life in general and inviting them to lunch or coffee to further the discussion is vital to entering their world. Once relationships are started then having a pathway or a game plan is critical. This will involve both larger gatherings and smaller groups.

¹⁵⁰ Romans 5:12-14 (ESV).

¹⁵¹ Barna Journal, *Five Essentials to Engage Today's Men* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group 2020), 29.

Large gatherings are simply gateways to get the men engaged and connected in the life of the church. Getting men to a church will be difficult; creating outreach events that center on men will be necessary. Car shows, sporting opportunities, skeet shooting, wild game nights are just a few ideas to invite men to non-threatening events that will allow other men to get to know and engage the men. As part of a pathway, these gateway events should also lead to the next step: inviting men to a smaller group that might meet on a weekday or Saturday morning every other week to start equipping men and train them in fatherhood. This is a slow process but one that will yield fruit if it is stuck. Jesus spent three years with twelve men to pour His life into theirs and model and demonstrate what to walk with God.

The small groups will include a bible study that should teach from Scripture what Biblical masculinity looks like. These studies may not be super deep, but the idea is to get men engaged and on a pathway that will lead them to Christ and to become a disciple that makes disciples. Robby Gallaty in *Replicate* shares findings that Lifeway research conducted over ten years regarding discipleship:

- Discipleship is intentional
- Groups matter. A lot
- Reading the Bible matters more than anything else
- The discipline of Bible engagement impacts every other discipline
- There is a deep connection between discipleship and evangelism¹⁵²

These findings combined with this author's research show a direct correlation between men leading their families and the long-term spiritual health of youth and, subsequently, their own

¹⁵² Robby Gallaty and Chris Swain, *Replicate: How to Create a Culture of Disciple-Making Right Where You Are* (Chicago IL. Moody Press 2020), 60-61.

families. The chart below indicates youth pastor's greatest struggle is parents not prioritizing their teen's spiritual growth.



¹⁵³ Figure 1.6 Youth Pastor's Biggest Struggles in Ministry

¹⁵³ Barna Group, "Parents and Pastors: Partners in Gen Z Discipleship," Barna Group, July 17, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/parents-and-pastors-partners-in-gen-z-discipleship/>.

Once men are engaged in a smaller group, the pathway should lead to a small discipleship group. There is no magic timetable to this, but the men should be encouraged to take the next step at each phase. Consider a football team; each team has fans who watch their favorite team and cheer them on or criticize their decisions. These are those men in the community that the men in the church seek out. Once men are engaged in the community, the first step is to invite them to a live game where they sit in the stands and see and hear their team up close and personal. Typically, once a fan has engaged on this level with the team, they are more open to meeting the team and getting more invested. These are the men the church invites to big game events like a car show, fishing, camping, or skeet shooting.

If the fan is getting invested, the next step for the fan is to join the practice squad. These players are on the team but not yet in a game. In the church, you invite the men to a smaller group setting bible study where deeper conversations are happening, and men are learning more about the team and the Church. After players have gotten on the practice team, they will develop a greater hunger for the game and work to get on the fifty-two-man roster so that they can play on Sunday. This is where the rubber meets the road. The men at this point are invited into a small discipleship group where they are not only on the team and in the game on Sunday, but they now have part of the responsibility for the outcome of the game. They are now fully engaged and shedding blood and sweat.

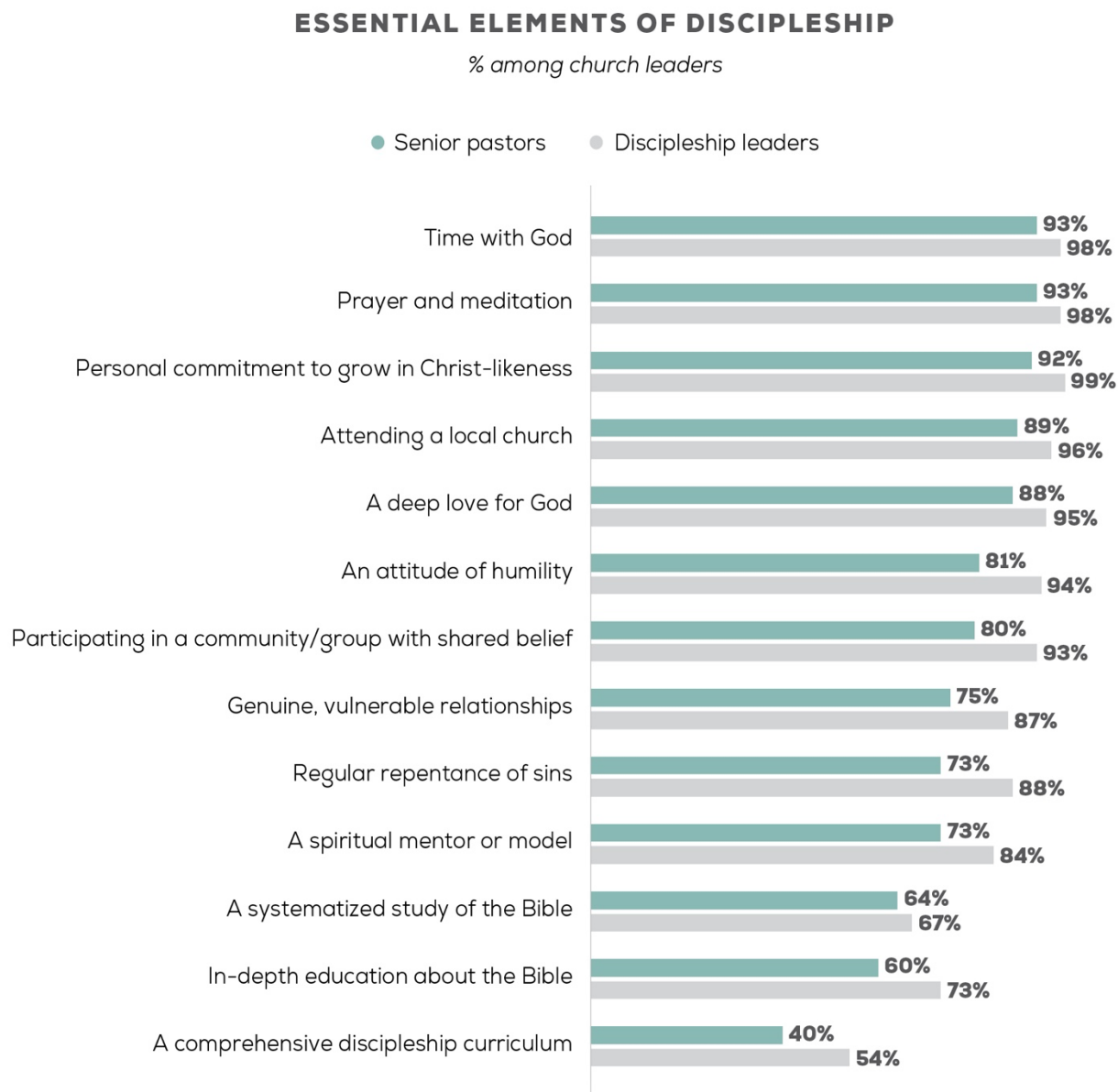
This group of three men meets weekly or every other week to check-in and make sure they are ready for the game. Have they read the playbook that week and memorized the plays; do they know their blocking assignments, so they are not blind-sided? These men are learning spiritual disciplines like scripture reading, scripture memorization, holding each other accountable, and praying for each other. As these small groups of men continue to grow, they are

given assignments to go out and start the process over again, initiating conversations with men in the community and inviting them to opportunities to get engaged. The ultimate objective is to get as many men as possible in the game and share life on life.

This then becomes a reproducing model that affects not only the men but their families. As the men learn what it means to be a disciple and then go out and make disciples, they learn the first line of battle is in the home. This will never be one hundred percent perfect because of sinful, fallible men, including this author. However, if the church is to see a return of children being trained up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, it has to start by reaching men that are discipled and then lead their families.

Developing a pathway is crucial to have a system to gauge where the men are in their walk and mile markers along the way. Mile markers are used for driving to know where you are and how far you've been and how far you still have to go. In the Christian life, these mile markers are moments in time in the life of the Christian, coming to Christ, getting married, having a family, and raising a family in the Lord. At each mile marker, the Christian can gauge where he is and where he is headed. Just like driving, sometimes you get turned around or even lost, so the mile markers keep you on the right path and moving in the right direction.

There are essential elements in spiritual formation that Christians need to self-evaluate continually to see where they are. The chart below shows what church leaders view as the most critical elements of discipleship. Time alone with God, prayer, meditation, and personal commitment to Christ ranked the highest. These areas would be a primary aspect of small discipling groups where men would be challenged and encouraged in their time with God, prayer, and growing in Christ.



¹⁵⁴ Figure 1.7 Essential Elements of Discipleship

¹⁵⁴ Barna Group, “New Research on the State of Discipleship,” Barna Group, December 1, 2015, <https://www.barna.com/research/new-research-on-the-state-of-discipleship/>.

This author is implementing each of the practices discussed in the hope the tide will turn, and the next generation will be disciplined with a partnership of the church and home. Once the men in the church are challenged and equipped to lead in their homes and the community, the Church will start to see revival. God is still in the life-changing business, and He is still at work in hearts and homes. Jim Putman is the Pastor of Real-Life Ministries in Post Falls, Idaho. He has written a book entitled *Church is a Team Sport*, where he shares the story of Real-Life Ministries. The church was intentionally built by making disciples and focusing on raising up men.

Part of discipleship is leadership development. Jim Putman talks about the early years of growth in Real-Life and how he told the people “we can either spend our money and time creating a show in order to keep these people entertained, or we can attempt things we have never done here before. I reminded them that our success had not come because of a show; we had never had the right equipment of a full-time worship person. It had come because God blessed us in our obedience to His Word, just as He promised. From church discipline to shepherding His sheep, to raising up new leaders to pastor others, we had purposed to follow Christ example.”¹⁵⁵

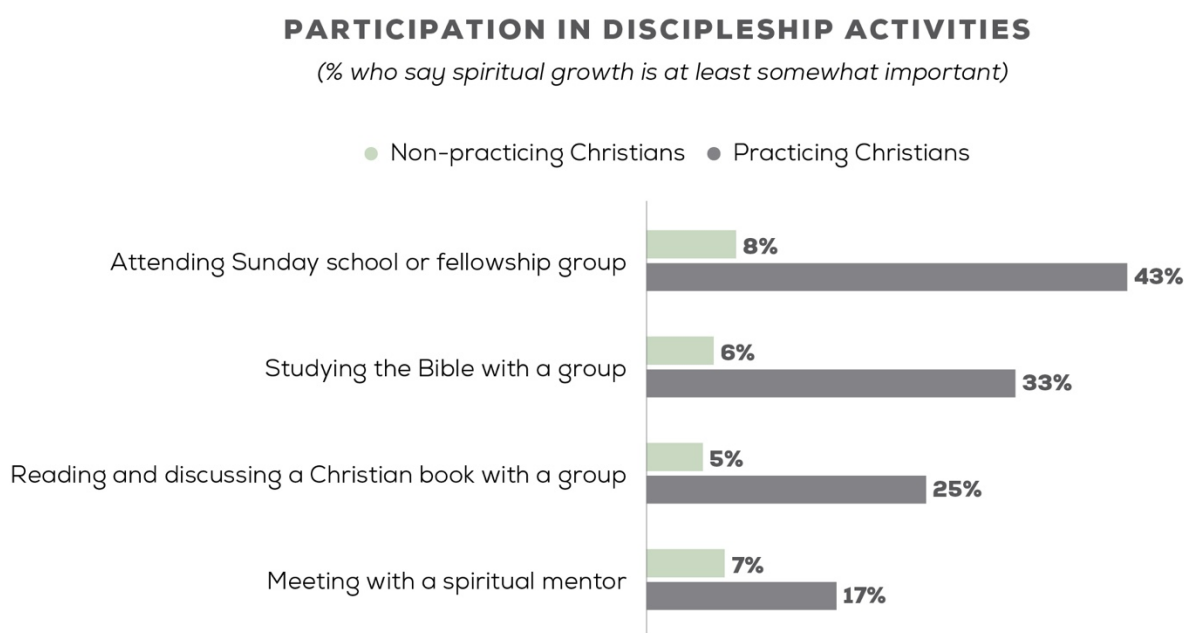
The process is to take the men that respond and have them reproduce into the lives of others, so it continues to replicate. Larry Osbourne states “small groups will change your church. It releases people and unchains ministry. It empowers lay leaders by offering many more platforms for significant hands-on ministry.”¹⁵⁶ The importance of reproduction cannot be stressed enough. This author would even go so far as to say if what we are doing is not ultimately

¹⁵⁵ Jim Putman, *Church is a Team Sport* (Grand Rapids MI. 2008), 32.

¹⁵⁶ Larry Osbourne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids MI. 2008), 53.

leading to reproduction, then we are not obedient. It is difficult and will take time, but healthy men will produce healthy families who will produce healthy churches over the years.

This author suggests the most effective student ministries have parents involved, and the church is a partner in the disciple-making process. Voddie Baucham, years ago, suggested the most important ministry area in the church was men's ministry. His premise was how the father goes, so goes everything else. “It is fathers – not youth ministers, children’s ministers, or preschool ministers (none of which find warrant for their existence in the pages of Scripture) – who are charged with the duty of discipling the next generation.”¹⁵⁷



¹⁵⁸ Figure 1.8 Participation in Discipleship Activities

¹⁵⁷ Voddie Baucham, *Family Shepherds* (Wheaton ILL. Crossway), 35-36.

¹⁵⁸ Barna Group, “New Research on the State of Discipleship,” Barna Group, December 1, 2015, <https://www.barna.com/research/new-research-on-the-state-of-discipleship/>.

Spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines are needed to become spiritually fit; just as an athlete has to practice routinely and develop healthy habits, so do most Christians if we are to reproduce lasting fruit. “Godliness is neither quickly nor easily attained. Jerry Bridges suggest the pursuit of godliness requires sustained vigorous effort. It allows for no laziness, no half-hearted commitment. In short, it demands the highest priority in a Christians life.”¹⁵⁹ The Apostle Paul admonishes the Corinthians “For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.”¹⁶⁰

Paul lays forth a biblical philosophy in imitating how he has lived his life and invested in others like Timothy, his faithful child. Paul knew he could do it all on his own but needed trusted brothers and sisters to walk alongside that would learn from him and go and do likewise. Paul calls himself a father to the Corinthian Church and remembers how he taught the church and poured his life into the lives of so many others. Fathers are critical to the church and the advancement of the Gospel into future generations. “Moses made it clear that multigenerational faithfulness is an all-day, everyday process. We must teach our children at all times. Moreover, we are always to teach according to the commandments of God.”¹⁶¹

Men need other men that are willing to go into battle with them. The military has units composed of a small team that trains together and knows each other's weaknesses and strengths. When the Church invests in men and commits resources, time, and money to strengthen them,

¹⁵⁹ Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (Nashville TENN. Broadman & Holman 2013), 53.

¹⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 4:15-17 (ESV).

¹⁶¹ Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith* (Wheaton, ILL Crossway 2007), 107.

the family wins, and so will the Church. Once men are engaged in making disciples, it will become contagious, and as Dawson Troutman lays out in *Born to Reproduce*, “But when you get yourself a man, you have more than doubled your ministry – in fact, you have more than doubled your ministry. Do you know why? When you teach your man, he sees how it is done and he imitates you.”¹⁶²

Men need a good challenge. One that will inspire them to think beyond themselves. Men, by nature, are fighters, and they must be taught that they are in a spiritual battle for the hearts and minds of their children and grandchildren. Men are hungry for the truth, but far too often, that is being filled up with snacks rather than the meat of God's Word and His truth. This hunger will come from a deeper longing for God and more of Him. Barna's research concludes, “According to pastors, the most critical elements of discipleship are matters of the heart rather than of structure. Aside from prayer and time with God, the top three spiritual disciplines pastors believe are essential to discipleship are “personal commitment to grow in Christlikeness” (94%), “attending a local church” (91%) and “a deep love for God” (90%).”¹⁶³

Challenging men to invest in their kids will be the single greatest tool and resource student ministries could dream of. Student ministries have been stand-alone ministries for far too long, where the goal is to get kids saved while keeping them safe and entertained. All the Church has gotten in many cases are inflated numbers of adults for bought fire insurance. To impact the youth, student and men's ministries must partner to get men and dads involved. Moms have responded over the years, but it's time for the dads to step up.

¹⁶² Dawson Troutman, *Born to Reproduce* (Colorado Springs CO. 2008), 31.

¹⁶³ Barna Group, “New Research on the State of Discipleship,” Barna Group, December 1, 2015, <https://www.barna.com/research/new-research-on-the-state-of-discipleship/>.

The Church has gotten caught up trying to treat the symptoms rather than address the real culprit. The Church has sin in the camp. In Joshua, the Children of Israel had sin in the camp; “The Lord said to Joshua, “Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore, the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. Get up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the Lord, God of Israel, “There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you.”¹⁶⁴

The Church needs to repent and purge the camp of sin. The Lord God made it quite clear to His children “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”¹⁶⁵ The Church sees the effect of generational sin. Fathers have not been leading and serving their families, and thus the Church is losing the battle. For current student ministries to have lasting fruit, there must be a greater emphasis on men and families.

Separate ministries in the church must work together in a holistic approach to better equip

¹⁶⁴ Joshua 7:10-13 (ESV).

¹⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 5:8-10 (ESV).

families and help ready men for battle. The enemy has unleashed a full-out assault on the family and the church. The data and research show that the church is reaching fewer people, and families are being sacrificed on the altar. A simple philosophical change back to the beginning will reap a great harvest. Jesus said He would build His Church, but He has charged moms and dads with raising God-fearing children. From the beginning, God has ordained the family to be fruitful and multiply.

“Many say this is the battle. Divorce, death, disagreement. But I don’t believe it. Oh yes, its real. And yes, it’s a battle. But it’s not the main battle. Is the field hospital the main reason for having troops on the field? What’s the main reason sergeants are in the trenches? To settle soldier’s disputes. Do chaplains come along just to bury the dead? Or is there a war to be won?”¹⁶⁶ Training men for the battle is what discipleship does. It gives men the tools they need as they engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. Those tools are prayer and the Word of God. Men are also prepared to defend against the enemy's assault by putting on the whole armor of God. Paul tells the Ephesians to be prepared. The only place on the body that was not protected was the back. Paul in Ephesians six was telling the people they needed to have each other's back. Just like a good soldier who looks out for himself and those around him.

A return to discipling men who disciple their families, especially their children, will turn the tide of the battle. In this battle, the General is Jesus and He is on the front line waiting for the Church to join Him. Meanwhile, many Christian men and women hang out in the mess tent eating, drinking, and arguing over trivial matters. When people spend all their time in the back, they may accidentally shoot someone in the back rather than protect themselves on the front line. This philosophy is not new by any stretch, and some would say antiquated. This author has seen

¹⁶⁶ Dave Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity* (Grand Rapids MINN. Zondervan 2009), 69.

first-hand what can happen when a Church decides instead of gathering a crowd; she works intentionally to make disciples one person at a time.

This will take time and may not even seem to be gaining traction in the first few years, but if the Church perseveres and commits to the long-term effect, she will see lasting fruit. The Church must use the training manual given by God Almighty Himself, His Word the Holy Scriptures. “Anyone who has read the book of Proverbs knows the Bible is filled with valuable child-training information. God has not left us in the dark on this issue. He wants us to know how to raise our children. But how do we go about teaching our children this vast, often intimidating book that most of us have a difficult time understanding ourselves?¹⁶⁷ This is where the small discipleship groups help men to know and apply the Word of God to their lives and to be able to teach it to others.

What if the Church and pastors challenged all men to the biblical qualifications of an elder? “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith* (Wheaton ILL. Crossway 2007), 96.

¹⁶⁸ 1st Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV).

Teaching men from the Word of God and helping them to stay connected to the only life source we have, the Spirit of God will change men, change families, and change the Church. This author believes they will respond if it's made a priority in the church and if student ministries partner with families to see a radical shift in the way churches do ministry. Most men will receive this challenge well, especially when pastors/elders and other leaders in the church are willing to walk alongside the men and the family. "Some parents mistakenly think they can train their children spiritually without confronting their own spiritual condition. The message they give to their children is, Do what I say, not what I do! It doesn't work. The first and most important step in the developing a legacy is making sure our own hearts are right with God. A right relationship with God starts with the realization that we are sinful and need His forgiveness."¹⁶⁹

The Word of God still changes lives and teaches men and families how to lead in the home, and the church will be strengthened both for the coming day of the Lord when everyone will stand before the Lord and give an account. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."¹⁷⁰ This author is excited about the movement of God in the hearts and minds of men and the role the Church is slowly taking to partner student and children's ministries with families to make an impact for the kingdom.

¹⁶⁹ Kurt Bruner & Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith* (Chicago ILL. Moody 2010), 84-85.

¹⁷⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV).

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The most incredible legacy each person has is their family. This legacy can be good or bad. Jonathan Edwards, the puritan preacher, left a lasting legacy as you examine his children, grandchildren, and so on. This is not by accident. Edwards believed men must invest in their families or the enemy will. His legacy has lasted for generations and generations. Reading from Edwards daughter Esther gives a clear picture of the impact of his parenting:

“last eve I had some free discourse with my father on the great things that concern my best interest – I opened my difficulties to him freely and he s freely advised and directed. The conversation has removed some distressing doubts that discouraged me much in my Christian warfare – He gave me some excellent direction to be observed in secret that tend to keep my soul near to God, as well as others to be observed in a more public way – What a mercy that I have such a Father! Such a Guide!”¹⁷¹

Leaving a spiritual legacy is the greatest gift a parent can leave to their child. The Lord is looking for a few good men that will stand in the gap as God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel “And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.”¹⁷²

The Lord is still seeking those men that will stand up and be counted, those men that will breach the gap. Men must do as Joshua spoke to the Children of Israel toward the end of his life “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers

¹⁷¹ Dane Ortlund, *Jonathan Edwards on the Christian Life* (Wheaton IL. 2014), 35-36.

¹⁷² Ezekiel 22:30 (ESV).

served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”¹⁷³

The research and data collected and analyzed by this author have shown a return to biblical principles and foundations. Truths revealed in the Bible are critical for the Church and even more so for the family. To reach people and particularly the youth, we have created a shortcut in evangelism. Evangelism must include discipleship and vice versa. You cannot be effective in evangelism without disciple-making, and you cannot make disciples and not be evangelistic. They are two oars on the same boat working in harmony to guide the boat across the waters, just as the Church and the home must also be two oars on the same boat guiding the boat through tests and trials throughout life.

A biblical return to raising up men is desperately needed today. It is said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results. This author suggests a change in philosophy that centers on men and the home that will then ring out in the church and across the world. This simple approach will work anywhere at any time. It requires no budget, no buildings, and no programs. All it needs is a few men committed to God and their families. The data presented in Appendix A show the importance of someone personally investing in the lives of youth. The data shows personal discipleship is effective. The data also shows the lack of fathers doing the disciple-making. This shows the limits to youth leaders as they can only personally invest in a few youths compared to fathers and mothers.

The data also shows the lack of a reproducing strategy in student ministry. Student ministry has long been about reaching students. There is nothing wrong with reaching students, but there will be more reproducing if they are reached with the Gospel and then disciplined by

¹⁷³ Joshua 24:14-15 (ESV).

caring adults, preferably their parents. Without a strategy to reproduce students, student ministries are caught in the proverbial rat race of always trying to do bigger and better events to reach students with no one to help them grow. Although the data shows success with those responding, discipleship mainly occurred within the confines of the church.

Many would look at this as a success, but the long-range outlook is not as great. Very few of those invested in have ever reproduced, and they have only been trained in the context of the church. They haven't witnessed or seen a regular example in the home they can replicate as they have families. The discipleship was primarily based on programs, not true life on life, with the Bible as the central tool. A return to the basics is this author's suggestion to have a lasting, reproducing ministry model. Reading the Bible and witnessing the effect of Jesus on twelve ordinary men is the greatest example of multiplying disciples. By Acts 17, you read how the disciples had multiplied "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also."¹⁷⁴

A simple, steady process is what will be required to make consistent disciples. Dawson Troutman started with six navigators, and today there are navigators all over the world. The navigators have a simple, steady approach to making disciples one person at a time. From the early days of the ministry, Dawson Troutman always thought with the end in mind. The ending was a disciple-making movement where men and women were trained and equipped through simple Bible reading, Scripture memory, journaling, and sharing one's faith. This same approach is what is needed for every Christian. Taking men and women and walking through Scripture and helping them grow in Christ with a continual reminder that they will take the same things they are learning and teach them to another.

¹⁷⁴ Acts 17:6 (ESV).

When continued over and over, this process will not only yield fruit but lasting fruit generation after generation. “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.”¹⁷⁵ When the church sees fathers and mothers reproduce by making disciples in the home, she will see good fruit. Jesus is telling his followers that a disciple of His will be known by how they live their lives and how they care for others. A true disciple will look like Jesus. “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”¹⁷⁶

The data suggest very clearly moms and dads must take ownership of their children's spiritual well-being. This author believes churches and pastors must take more initiative in the lives of the men through personal investment, equipping and empowering the men to lead. This will require a shift in resources and manpower. It will not involve new programs or ministries and a simple fundamental change in the church's time. Men must become the priority as this author presented a plan to reach men and teach them how to lead their families best.

This must start at the top with the senior pastor and flow down through the elders and the deacons into every man. An intentional training strategy begins with men reaching other men in their community and is followed by a specific plan to get them connected into small groups of men that will develop deeper relationships that will culminate with men in groups of three being intentionally disciplined so that they can do likewise. It is said imitation is the greatest form of flattery. To be imitated because of the life that is well lived walking with the Lord is a sign of a healthy man of God.

¹⁷⁵ Luke 6:43-44 (ESV).

¹⁷⁶ Luke 6:40 (ESV).

The church must make it the priority after the preaching of God's Word to raise up Godly men and fathers. When the men of the church are prayed for and led to be effective disciplers in the home and the church, revival will be felt across churches worldwide. This author has seen first-hand the effects of men being disciplined. Through years of student ministry and the witness of countless youth falling away from the church and not returning to seeing families broken up and destroyed by the enemy, it is with a deep conviction more needs to be done.

This author is committed to doing whatever it takes to reach men and make them a priority in the church. If men are reached with the Gospel and disciplined the wife, and children will follow. When men are targeted and challenged to step up, many men will respond. It will take getting hands dirty and getting down in the trenches. Men are called to be on the front lines of battle, running toward the fight. Unfortunately, in many churches, the women are fighting the battles because of the lack of men. For this to change, it will take men of courage and conviction.

Joshua is commissioned by Moses to be courageous and to stand firm:

After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, ²“Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ³Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.⁴From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. ⁵No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ⁶Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success^[a] wherever you go. ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹Have I not

commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”¹⁷⁷

Churches must take up the baton passed down throughout the Scriptures and history to lead men well. The Apostle Paul reminds the Church at Corinth: “be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”¹⁷⁸ The greatest battles in the church are still ahead, but God has given the church everything she needs to be prepared for the battle. The church must be willing to take up arms and fight. Paul's words two thousand years ago ring more accurate today than ever before. The church needs men to act like men and be strong and firm in the faith. The church did not get to where she is today overnight, and she will not return to all God has intended overnight, but in due time if she remains faithful to the call, the church in America will rise up and see the Kingdom advance like never before.

Pastor's will need to be more active in pursuing men for this to take root. It will require pastors to be real and honest and develop meaningful relationships with other men. Many studies reveal pastors are struggling with isolation in the current culture. Pastors must get out of their comfort zones so that men can see them and follow their lead. Jesus and Paul lead by example so that the men around them could witness how they lived, and they could emulate Jesus and Paul. Paul reminds the reader in Romans: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Joshua 1:1-9 (ESV).

¹⁷⁸ 1 Corinthians 16:13 (ESV).

¹⁷⁹ Romans 8:28-30 (ESV).

The call is to be conformed into the image of Christ. Christians are to look and act like Jesus. All Christians are still sinners saved by grace, but day by day, they are becoming more like Jesus as they grow in his grace and truth. Today's pastor must be willing to raise up new leaders and develop men into entirely devoted followers of Christ. The church needs to be like the church at Antioch that raised up men and sent them out to go and share the Good News of Jesus Christ. "Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.¹⁸⁰

For families in the church to stop losing their children to the world, dads must take back the leadership in the home and show kids what it is to walk with the Lord and in the Lord. Paul tells the Church at Colossae, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."¹⁸¹ Every pastor, church leader and parent are accountable for raising up the next generation. It will take laser like focus and a strong resolve to get back to God's order for the family and the church.

God has not left us alone in this endeavor; He has given us His Spirit to guide and encourage us. The work is real, and the battle is here. The question is will you join the battle for the hearts and minds of the next generation by making disciples that will go to the front lines of the battle and join King Jesus?

¹⁸⁰ Acts 13:1-3 (ESV).

¹⁸¹ Colossians 1:28-29 (ESV).

APPENDIX A

Research Questions and Results

1. How would you describe your understanding of discipleship in a sentence or two?

Responses:

- Discipleship is the replication of yourself in your walk with Jesus that takes place in the context of relationships.
- Discipleship is a lifelong process of forming a deeper relationship and better understanding of Jesus. As you learn about and from Jesus you then obey his commands by telling other people what He has taught you.
- Discipleship is loving Christ so much to the point of spreading his word constantly and persistently so that others may know his love.
- A relationship that grows both individuals spiritually, making them better equipped and spiritually ready to go out into the world for God's glory.
- Discipleship is teaching others about God and what He did through His son, Jesus. It is intentionally pouring into individuals as you share the love of Christ with them.
- Discipleship is when, as a follower of Jesus, you go out and share the gospel to reach others.
- To be a child of God and to share his faith and love
- Understanding and abiding by the words of Jesus in your life
- Discipleship is teaching people the commands of Christ Jesus and helping them observe them.
- Discipleship equips the Christian with God's Word, prayer, worship, encouragement, and service.
- Discipleship is the means in which Christians provide accountability to one another. It incorporates sound doctrine and a call-to-action that together bring about spiritual growth in a believer or direct a non-believer towards Christ. Discipleship is ultimately a work of the God through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:7) and its end should always be to His glory.
- Someone who bases their everyday life on the teachings of Christ.
- Discipleship is the act of going out and sharing the gospel with people to make disciples.
- Discipleship is growing and being made more like someone through the instruction of individual(s) about a said topic or person.

2. Who has been the primary disciple-makers in your life? (Pastor, Youth Pastor, Parent, Mentor, etc.)

Responses:

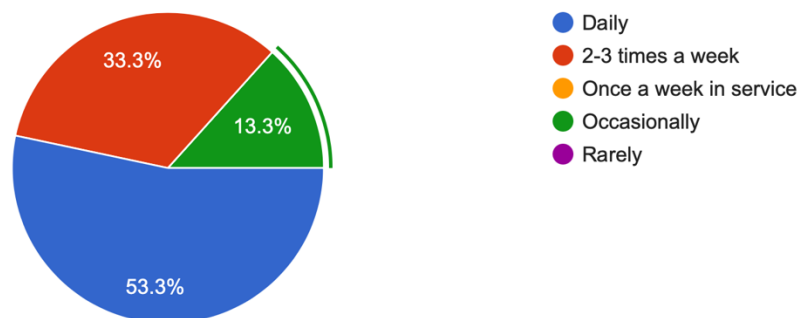
- Youth Pastor
- Mother, Youth Pastor, Pastor, and Mentors
- My Pastor Mike Cauthorne
- parents, leaders in campus ministry
- Pastors and youth leaders or Bible study leaders
- Pastor, youth leader, parents
- Mike Cauthorne- Pastor and Youth pastor
- pastor and youth pastor
- Mentor
- Youth Pastor
- My father, youth pastor, and elder
- My youth pastor Mike, and a mentor named Brittany
- Parent, Pastor
- Pastor, mother, friends
- Parents, Pastor, Older couples

3. How often do you read scripture?

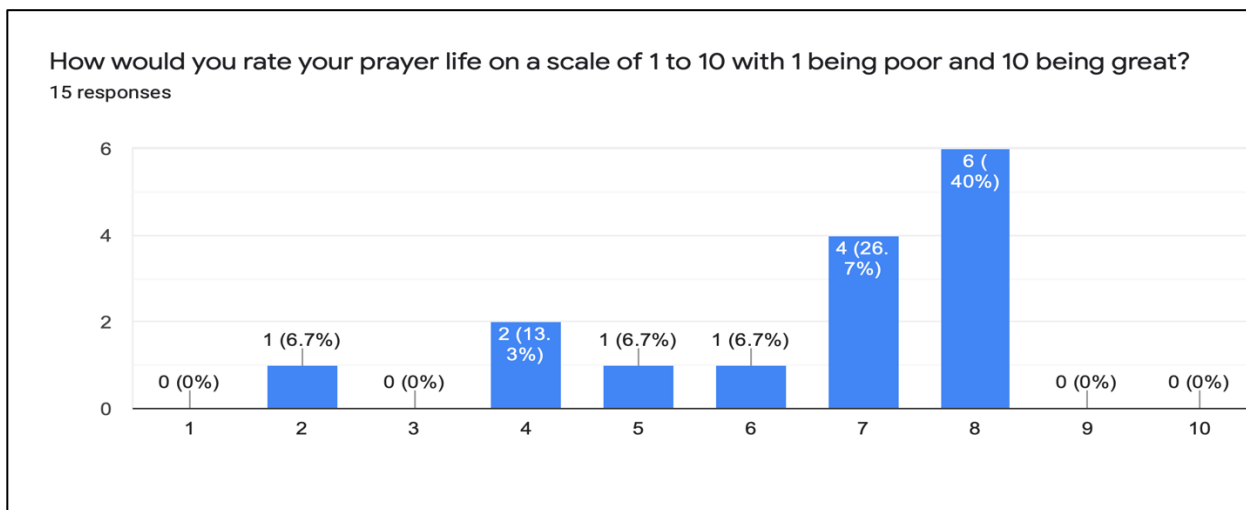
- Daily
- 2-3 Times a week
- Once a week in service
- Occasionally
- Rarely

How often do you read scripture?

15 responses

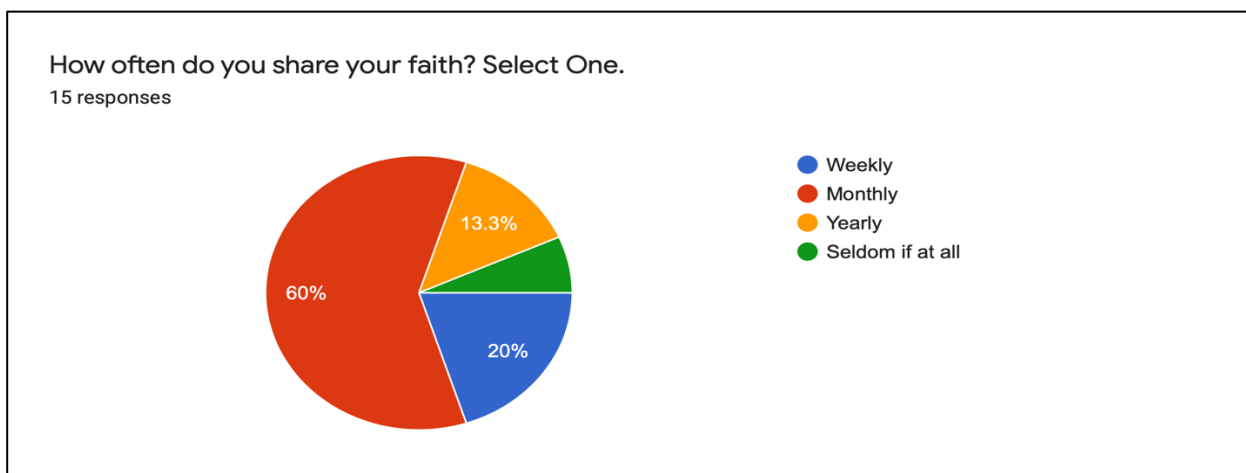


4. How would you rate your prayer life on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being great?



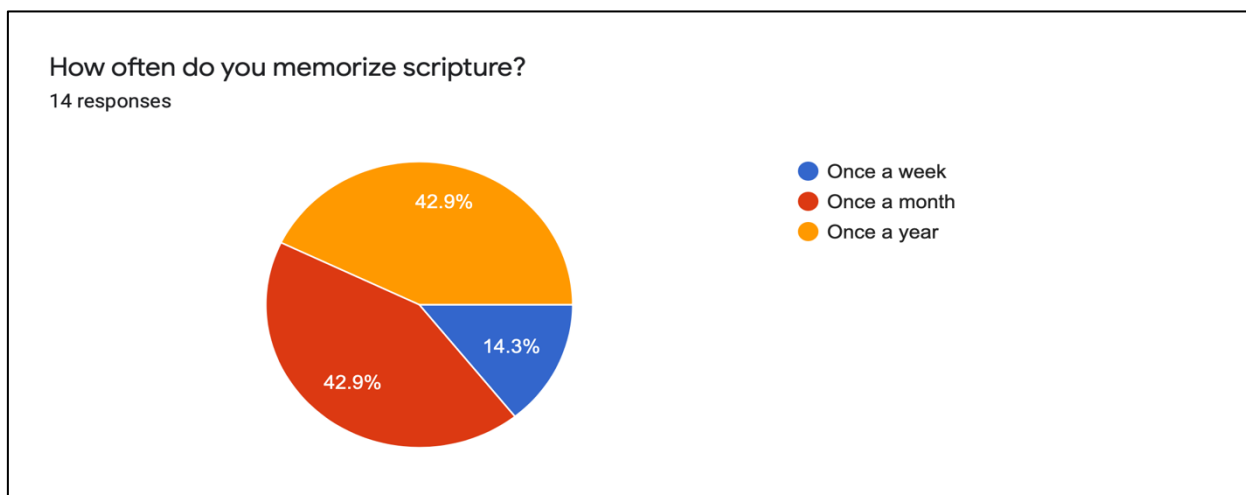
5. How often do you share your faith? Select One.

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- Seldom if at all



6. How often do you memorize scripture?

- a. Once a week
- b. Once a month
- c. Once a year



7. How involved were your parent(s) in discipleship when you were a child and teenager?

Responses:

- Negligible.
- My mother was very involved (still is)
- My mother helped with and eventually ran the children's ministry at my church.
- not very involved in spiritually discipling me.
- My parents went to church and brought me with them, but there was never a time for intentional discipleship as a child and teenager.
- Very involved
- Very involved
- seldom
- Not very intentional.
- My mom was very involved and a huge encouragement.
- My parents were very involved and discipled me through example including prayer, Bible reading, church, and serving.
- A moderate amount
- Very involved; they constantly mentored me and helped me to grow in my faith.
- My mother encouraged me to get involved at church. My dad didn't care
- A great deal. They were intentional throughout my development.

8. How involved was your father in discipling you and your family growing up?

Responses:

- Negligible.
- None
- My father is not Christian, but he's been an incredible mentor and foundation for our family.
- not too involved.
- My father was not involved in discipling me or my family.
- Very involved
- Very involved
- seldom
- He brought me to church, and that was about it.
- He did not play a role in discipleship. (Not involved)
- My father was very involved.
- Little
- Very involved; My father was constantly discipling my family and I through every season of life.
- Not involved at all
- He was busy, but still made time to disciple me and my siblings.

9. How has this positively or negatively impacted your ability to disciple your current family?

Responses:

- It sometimes feels weird to sit down and do Bible study as a family because it's foreign to my upbringing. However, my general rule of thumb has been to do the opposite of my unbelieving parents which has worked out well thus far.
- I don't have children yet, but my mother has certainly given me a good example to follow. Also, helped lead me to marry a man that I knew would disciple our children well.
- My father has been driven away from the church due to many still sinning as if conversion never happened.
- not much, other people who have spent time discipling me have made me want to have a more impactful discipleship relationship on others.
- It has positively impacted me because I want to be intentional with my kids when I have them.
- It has positively impacted my ability because it has caused me to grow in discipleship.

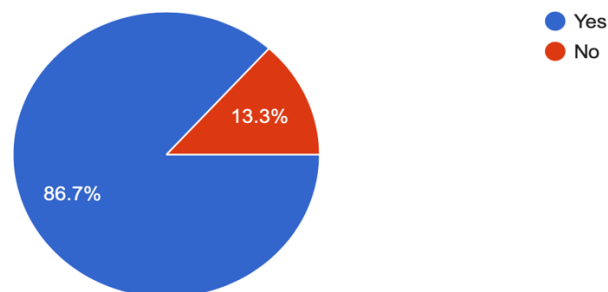
- Helped me a lot, I need to do better but childhood church experience has greatly impacted though I have fallen short recently
- it hasn't affected it
- It has taught me what not to do in raising my daughter to know Jesus.
- It's a struggle. I still get confused about what a true relationship with a Heavenly Father looks like.
- It has given me a stronger springboard than he had and has led to multigenerational faithfulness.
- Makes me more aware of how important discipline your children are.
- This has positively impacted my ability as this has allowed me to have a strong faith and be able to go out and share my faith with other people including my future family.
- Hasn't impacted me at all. My dad has always been hands off for the most part, so I've always done my own thing regardless of him
- Positively

10. Do you believe you were discipled effectively to this point in your life?

- Yes
- No

Do you believe you were discipled effectively to this point in your life?

15 responses



11. What areas would you say still need the most improvement?

Responses:

- Prayer Life
- Generally, there is always room to grow in every aspect. Specifically, I'd say I need boldness in general. I need accountability to be pushed and encouraged in that area.
- Self-confidence to actually speak to people more often.
- biblical knowledge

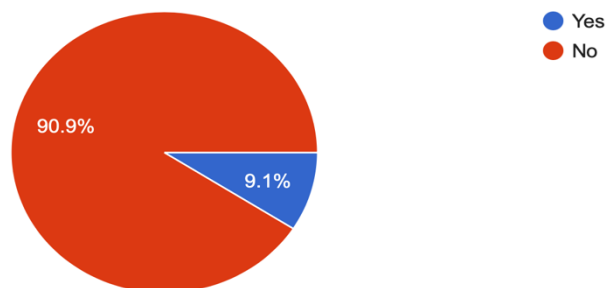
- Learning to speak grace and truth to people, sharing my faith boldly
- Getting out of my comfort zone to spread the gospel
- Going back weekly service and reading scripture
- Reading with my daughter more often.
- Reading, memorizing, and spending continual time in God's word. Life gets busy and I often find myself doing the bare minimum.
- Within my own family I could bring more formality to the Bible reading and catechisms. Within our church the men's ministry is beginning to address the lack of both family driven discipleship as well as peer-to-peer discipleship. A lack of discipleship has plagued the church for years and will be an essential part of its liveliness moving forward.
- Prayer life
- Scripture Memorization
- Accountability
- Prayer, Holiness

12. If you are currently married or have children, do you have a daily family devotion?

- Yes
- No

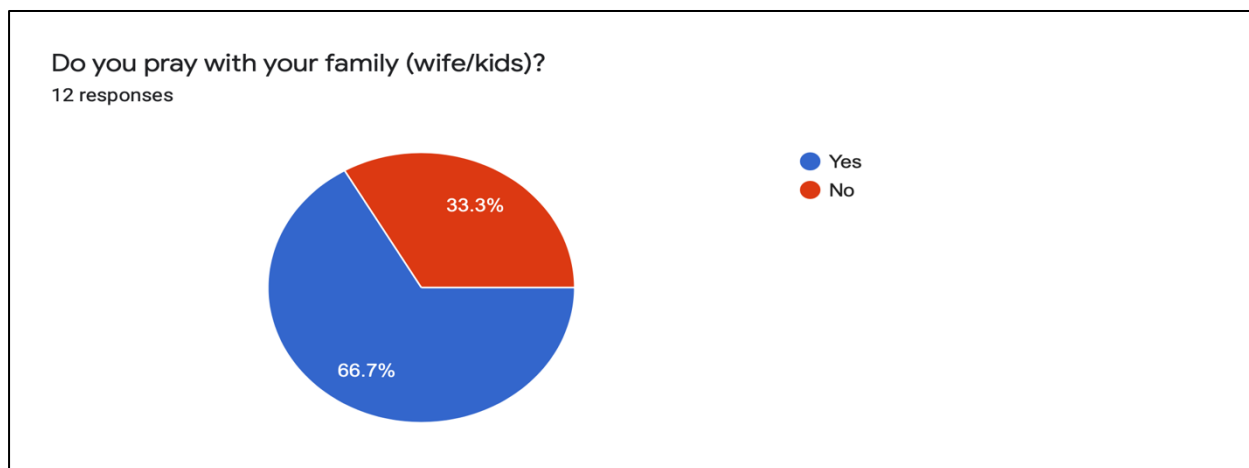
If you are currently married or have children, do you have a daily family devotion?

11 responses



13. Do you pray with your family (wife/kids)?

- a. Yes
- b. No



14. What did discipleship look like in your home growing up?

Responses:

- It didn't exist in a Christian context.
- In my home it was modeled in the way my mother spoke to me, disciplined me, advised me, and prayed with me. It was modeled even more in watching the way she treated others, shared with them, and talked about them (most so in the things she chose not to say or point out, even when I knew she was thinking them).
- Doing things for others even when they don't ask without even thinking about rewarded or praised.
- it wasn't a practical thing
- I wasn't disciplined as a child by my parents.
- Parents always encouraged us to share the gospel and always were good examples themselves.
- Church every week, prayer together every day. Church trips, bible readings
- non-existent
- My parents prayed with me at night and meals.
- My discipleship took place in church and from my youth leaders.
- Prayer, Bible reading, conversations about doctrine
- None really
- Discipleship in my home growing up included my parents challenging myself and my siblings to be strong in our faith and to seek the Lord. My parents sought out to be a mentor in my life and encouraged me to make my faith my own to be able to go out and share my faith with others.

- There was none from middle school on
- Mom & Pop would constantly point us to Christ in both the small & large things. We were never consistent with family devotions, but they were active in our spiritual development. They instructed us on memorizing Scripture & lead us in prayer, but they didn't often read the Bible with us outside of major events and/or holidays (i.e., Christmas morning). They were intentional with me about recognizing the spread of the Gospel.

15. With your understanding of discipleship at your current age, what could have been done better to create an atmosphere of discipleship in your home?

Responses:

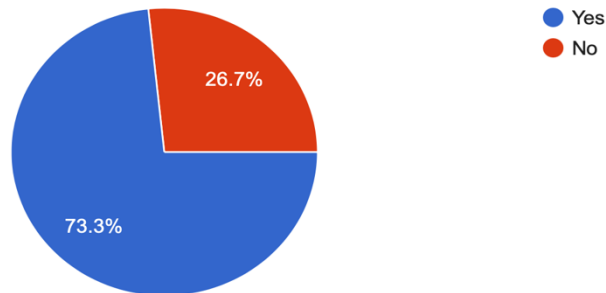
- I suppose daily Bible study as opposed to weekly.
- More conversations about actual scripture. There were plenty of conversations about biblical principles, but I think it took me longer to realize that power is in scripture itself, spoken out loud, not in just talking about the overall message of it. I think that helps reinforce the importance in reading and memorizing it now in a way that it didn't back then.
- Just my father to convert, he's shown a lot of interest and has been very supportive of us when it comes to Christ. He has a spark that keeps getting turned away by seeing Christians that don't practice or care about their faith.
- making it known, talking more about faith on the daily basis
- If my parents had a relationship with the Lord and they showed that through actions like spending time reading scripture daily and sharing scripture with me as a kid, as well as encouraging me to read scripture and pray.
- Actually, gone out to make disciples more
- I have been given every opportunity to have a good discipleship atmosphere in my, it rests on me to make it better and have better relationship with God. Mike was a great pastor and friend and guided me through my baptism, and help show me a path to have a relationship with God. My parents were also great and involved in the church and help teach me scriptures. It is on me now to better my relationship with God and teach my daughter the same lessons my family and Mike taught me.
- had parents who went to church with me
- Instead of prayer alone, I would include more teaching of God's Word.
- Having both parents that were believers and having a spiritual leader... but, also, I could have stepped to the plate in this area as well.
- Frequency. The use of shorter catechisms to establish an early foundation of sound doctrine. More of a set-apart attitude, distinguished from the world. A connection to God in all areas of education.
- Having parents who talked openly about their faith
- There could have been more family devotion time.

- I'm not sure
- Definitely more time in the Word as a family, more one-on-one times with my Dad specifically, and perhaps a greater focus on the things of Christ and not necessarily pursuing "American-dream-like things".

16. Do you feel your home church was effective at making disciples when you were growing up?

- Yes
- No

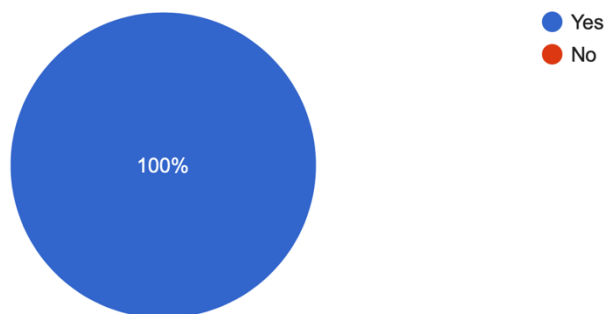
Do you feel your home church was effective at making disciples when you were growing up?
15 responses



17. Did anyone in your home church take extra time to help you in your spiritual growth as a youth?

- Yes
- No

Did anyone in your home church take extra time to help you in your spiritual growth as a youth?
15 responses



18. If so, what did that look like?

Responses:

- My youth pastor spent a lot of time and money investing in me. We would have lunch together, talk, and serve.
- From my youth pastor's perspective, it looked like taking time to learn about what was happening in my life. Visiting us in school, making time to talk with us at church, and being there in big life moments (bad and good). It also meant letting us see when things in life weren't always perfect and allowing us to know we didn't have to be perfect either. From my mentor's perspective it meant actually walking with me daily. We spoke every single day and I saw her most days out of the week. She didn't just advise me spiritually but took a genuine interest in my life. Because I knew she cared about me, I cared about what she had to say and thankfully it always brought me to Jesus and made me excited to be at church. Both people were considerably older than me but willing to get on my level (whether that was 12 years old or 18) and help me understand the Bible.
- My Pastor was originally my Youth Pastor at the first church I went to, he taught me everything I know today and has made me a better person.
- spending time being involved in my life, but not so much one on one as I have now.
- Taking time to meet with me outside of youth group and showing up during important times in my life.
- My youth leader always helped me grow in my faith since a young age.
- Parents helped me understand and read scripture and we prayed together daily
- they modeled God's word and encouraged others to lead a lifestyle that reflected biblical principles
- I had a mentor actually explain the "basics" of the Gospel.
- I did not have anyone trying to "sell" me Jesus! I had leaders that showed me who Jesus was. They did this with unconditional love, encouragement, accountability, and action in their everyday life.
- Outside of my parents there was little discipleship. My youth pastor disciplined me but there wasn't a formal process.
- Yes, my youth pastor as well as several other mentors throughout middle and high school showed me how to have hard conversations and look into my life to see what areas to improve on.
- My youth leaders over the years strongly poured into my helping me to become stronger in my faith and lead by example of how I was to lead others.
- There were key people in the group that were kind of assigned to different youth and they would take time to personally invest in us. They encouraged us, hung out with us and over all invested their time, spiritual gifts in connecting with us.
- Well, the dude asking me to do this survey would occasionally take me out to lunch and disciple me. I would say he was probably too busy at most times and could have been

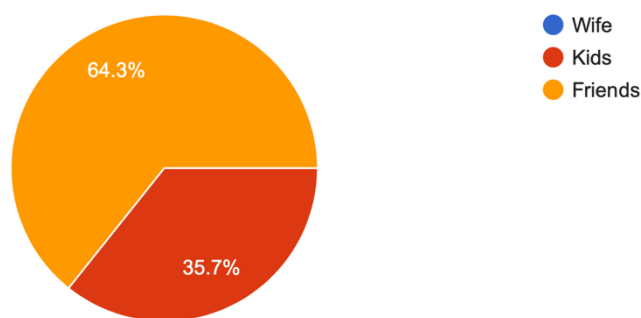
more qualitative with fewer young men and less quantitative at times, but I think the Lord has taught Him that since beginning CP.

19. Are you currently discipling anyone? Select One.

- a. Wife
- b. Kids
- c. Friends

Are you currently discipling anyone? Select One.

14 responses



20. Do you agree with the statement "You are called to disciple your kids and your kids' friends?" Why or Why not?

Responses:

- Yes. The biblical command is to "Go and make disciples," it doesn't give any kind of boundaries. If anything, I spend time with my kids' friends' parents teaching them how to be a godly parent.
- Yes. We are called to make disciples. From my example, I was disciplined by those that spent the most time with me (and the most intentional time). As a parent, particularly when they are younger, your kids see you most of the time so you would be the primary disciple-maker in their life. And when your kids bring other kids into your home, why would you not want to also involve them in daily disciple-making? On a practical side note: As a kid, if my friends had parents that were believers, those people became second parents to me and certainly had an influence on my life. My friends that didn't have Christian parents, I always felt that I needed to have a guard up. My point is godly parents can have a significant influence on a lot of young lives.
- Yes, because children are the future adults and if they learn to live a Holy life, they'll have a happy life and parenting always effects the next generation of children.

- Yes, because some children don't have proper guidance or people in their life who can disciple them, therefore it's our duty to reach and care for as many people as possible.
- Yes. We are all called to be disciples and it shouldn't stop at just our family.
- I think you are called to disciple your kids and you should impact your kids in a way that they disciple their friends.
- I would agree because we are taught to share our faith and I feel that is especially true for our kids and family.
- sure. some kids don't have parents that disciple them, so someone needs to be that figure in their life
- Yes, because it is our responsibility to disciple our family and it is important to help disciple those that are around the family.
- Yes, we are called to be disciples' to all... We lead by our actions.
- Yes. I will disciple my kids and (if necessary) their friends because my kids need to see that I also care about those outside of our family. It also provides an opportunity to impact the lives of those who in some way/shape/forms are influencing my child. Depending on the parent situation this could also allow me to be the church through meeting an important need.
- Yes! So that they are able to have a strong foundation in their love and knowledge of Jesus.
- Yes, I agree because as Christians we are to be a leader to our kids and our kids' friends. We are to be the example of what Christ looks like to everyone in our life as well as in our kid's life.
- Yes. Jesus calls all His people to "go and be fishers of men" we are called not just share God's word but also invest in others for God kingdom. Doing life together for the purpose of sharing God's word and adding to the kingdom of God.
- I would agree with that statement with one qualifier: "I am called to disciple my kids FIRST, and then if the Lord allows my kids' friends too." I believe as a parent it is my duty and good responsibility from God to disciple my children. In the process, I think I should emulate Christ and speak of Christ to my kids' friends. As they progress into being teenagers, I believe it's a good opportunity to take my kid and his (I'm a male, so only doing this with males) friends on activities, etc. while pointing them to God. I think Christ is glorified in that.

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IRB Approval/Waiver Page

Mike Cauthorne

IRB Exemption 3314.071718: Developing an Intentional Disciple Making Strategy for Fathers to Lead Their Families in Spiritual Transformation

Dear Mike Cauthorne,

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School



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