

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Measuring the Effectiveness of Large-Scale Discipleship Methods in Adult Believers:

A Study of the Southwest Church *Rooted* Experience

A Thesis Project Submitted to

the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

Kim Harrell

Lynchburg, Virginia

December 6, 2021

Copyright © December 6, 2021, by Kim Harrell
All Rights Reserved

Liberty University
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Dr. C. Todd Hartley, DMin

Dr. David Wheeler, Ph.D

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Kim Harrell

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, December 6, 2021

Mentor: Dr. C. Todd Hartley, DMin

Spiritually mature believers bear the burden of responsibility for an early-stage believer's discipleship development. As a believer matures over time, the weight of responsibility shifts from the church corporately to the individual believer's responsibility to disciple himself and others. Southwest Church has approximately 3,500 adult attendees on an average weekend and has the responsibility to disciple large numbers of early-stage believers in their faith journey.

This research of large-scale programmatic discipleship methods centers on the *Rooted* experience recently adopted at Southwest Church. The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to positively affect the early discipleship development of adult believers at Southwest Church by evaluating, measuring, and recommending improvements to the effectiveness of the *Rooted* discipleship experience. If Southwest Church implements the *Rooted* experience effectively, individual adult believers will be developed, encouraged, and equipped as disciples of Jesus Christ. Although individual believers will experience different spiritual development levels, there will be measurable individual results, and disciples will take necessary and important spiritual growth steps.

Abstract length: 165 words

Key words: disciple, discipleship, large-scale, methods, programmatic, *Rooted*, stages

Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction.....	13
Ministry Context.....	13
Geography	14
Demographics	15
History	18
Problem Presented.....	18
Purpose Statement.....	18
Basic Assumptions	19
Definitions.....	20
Limitations.....	23
Delimitations	23
Thesis Statement	24

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review	25
Biblical Mandate	25
<i>Dietrich Bonhoeffer</i>	26
<i>A.B. Bruce</i>	26
<i>Bill Hull</i>	27
<i>Glenn McDonald</i>	28
<i>J. Oswald Sanders</i>	28
<i>Matthew Henry</i>	29
<i>Greg Ogden</i>	29
Measures of Discipleship	30
<i>Transformed Life</i>	30
<i>Jim Putman</i>	30
<i>George Barna</i>	30
<i>Earley and Dempsey</i>	31
Measurable Actions	31
<i>Bill Hull</i>	31

<i>Paul Pettit</i>	32
Stages of Development	33
<i>A.B. Bruce</i>	33
<i>Bill Hull</i>	33
<i>John Koessler</i>	34
<i>Jeff Stott</i>	34
Methods and Strategies	35
<i>D. Michael Henderson</i>	35
<i>Rick Warren</i>	35
<i>Andy Stanley</i>	36
<i>Mavuno Church</i>	37
<i>Bill Hull</i>	38
Summary: Literature Review	39
Theological Foundations	40
Mandate	40
<i>The Great Commission</i>	40
<i>The Conditions and Cost of Following Jesus</i>	43
Meaning	47
<i>Disciple</i>	47
<i>Conformed Into the Image of Jesus</i>	49
Measures	51
<i>Stages of Development</i>	51
<i>Delays in Spiritual Development</i>	54
<i>Spiritual Fruit</i>	56
<i>Personal Character Transformation</i>	57
<i>Bearing Fruit in Ministry</i>	58
Methods	58
<i>Dependence on the Holy Spirit</i>	58
<i>Biblical Discipleship Methods: Jesus</i>	60
<i>Biblical Discipleship Methods: Paul</i>	62
<i>Biblical Discipleship Methods: Early Church</i>	63

Summary: Theological Foundations	64
Theoretical Foundations	64
Baptizing and Teaching	64
Measures	66
<i>Transformed Life</i>	66
<i>Measurable Actions</i>	69
Time	70
Talent	71
Treasure	72
Models	73
<i>Historical Discipleship: Middle Ages</i>	74
<i>Historical Discipleship: Reformation</i>	74
<i>Historical Discipleship: John Wesley</i>	77
Wesleyan Societies	77
Wesleyan Classes	78
Wesleyan Bands	78
Utilizing a Relational Context at Southwest Church	79
<i>Planted - Weekend Services</i>	80
<i>Rooted - The Rooted Experience</i>	80
<i>Growing and Going - Small Groups</i>	80
Five Levels of Development	81
Measurement Characteristics	82
Summary: Theoretical Foundations	84
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	
Intervention Design	85
Overview	85
Measurement Tools	86
<i>Quantitative Giving and Serving Data</i>	86
<i>Qualitative Data: Participant Survey Questionnaires</i>	86
<i>Participant Survey: Design of Spiritual Stage Assessments</i>	87
<i>Participant Survey: Design of Spiritual Stage Self-Assessment</i>	88

<i>Participant Survey: Self-Assessment – Question Detail</i>	89
<i>Participant Survey: Design of Measured Assessment</i>	92
<i>Survey Distribution</i>	93
Implementation of the Intervention Design	95
Research Milestones	95
Methodology: Summary	98
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	
Overview	99
Self-Assessment Summary	100
Self-Assessment: Multiple Choice Questions	100
Self-Assessment: Open-Ended Questions	106
Measured Assessment Summary	115
Adult Stage Believer: Sample Measured Assessment	116
Young Adult Stage Believer: Sample Measured Assessment	117
Early-Stage Believer: Sample Measured Assessment	118
Pivotal Either-Or Response Pairs	118
<i>Pivotal Pair #1: Being Invited -vs.- Inviting Others</i>	119
<i>Pivotal Pair #2: God Loves Me -vs.- Salvation of Others</i>	119
<i>Pivotal Pair #3: Private with Faith -vs.- Sharing Their Story with Others</i>	120
<i>Pivotal Pair #4: Being Fed, Self-Feeding, or Feeding Others</i>	120
<i>Pivotal Pair #5: Being Fed, Self-Feeding, or Feeding Others</i>	121
<i>Pivotal Pair #6: Church Member -vs.- Servant</i>	121
<i>Pivotal Pair #7: Time -vs.- Money</i>	121
Inconclusive Either-Or Response Pairs	122
Rooted Effectiveness Summary	123
Prayer	123
Bible Reading	124
Giving	125
Serving	126
Sharing Your Story	127
Quantitative Giving and Serving Data	128

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Problem and Purpose Revisited	129
Thesis Statement Revisited	129
Evaluation.....	130
Spiritual Maturity Self-Assessment	130
<i>Self-Assessment: Self-Description</i>	<i>130</i>
<i>Self-Assessment: Spiritual Discipline Questions.....</i>	<i>131</i>
Prayer	131
Bible Reading.....	131
Giving.....	131
Serving	132
Multiple-Choice Questions: Recommended Improvements	132
<i>Self-Assessment: Open-Ended Questions</i>	<i>132</i>
Spiritual Maturity: Measured Assessment.....	133
<i>Rooted Experience Effectiveness</i>	<i>134</i>
Prayer	135
Bible Reading.....	135
Giving.....	136
Serving	137
Sharing Your Story	137
Other Observations	138
Observation on Participants	138
Observation on Time.....	138
Research Conclusions.....	139
Bibliography	141
Appendix A	145
Appendix B	147
Appendix C	153
IRB Approval	158

Tables

2.1	Five Stages of Discipleship Maturity	83
3.1	Spiritual Assessment Combined Stages	88
3.2	Spiritual Stages: Language and Behavior Characteristics	91
3.3	Spiritual Stage Either-Or Questions	92
3.4	Research Milestones	97
4.1	Self-Assessment: Self-Description	101
4.2	Self-Assessment: Bible Reading	102
4.3	Self-Assessment: Serving	103
4.4	Self-Assessment: Prayer	104
4.5	Self-Assessment: Giving	105
4.6	Self-Assessment Open-Ended Question: Becoming a Christian	106
4.7	Self-Assessment Open-Ended Question: Money, Savings, and Debt	108
4.8	Self-Assessment Open-Ended Question: Serving	109
4.9	Self-Assessment Open-Ended Question: Surrender	110
4.10	Self-Assessment Open-Ended Question: Growing Spiritually	112
4.11	Self-Assessment Open-Ended Question: Fruit of the Spirit	113
4.12	Measured Assessment: Maturity Weighted Scoring	116
4.13	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Prayer – All Participants	123
4.14	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Prayer – ESB Participants	124
4.15	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Bible Reading – All Participants	124
4.16	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Bible Reading – Early-Stage Believers	125
4.17	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Giving – All Participants	126
4.18	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Giving – Early-Stage Believers	126
4.19	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Serving – All Participants	127
4.20	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Serving – Early-Stage Believers	127
4.21	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Sharing Your Story – All Participants	128
4.22	<i>Rooted</i> Assessment: Sharing Your Story – Early-Stage Believers	128
5.1	Recommended Either-Or Response Matrix	134

Illustrations

Figures

1.1	Map: Los Angeles to the Coachella Valley, <i>Google Maps</i>	14
1.2	Population by Race/Ethnicity, <i>Joshua Survey 2018</i>	15
1.3	Comparison by Race/Ethnicity, <i>Joshua Survey 2018</i>	16
1.4	Comparison by Generation, <i>Joshua Survey 2018</i>	16
1.5	Comparison by Gender and Age, <i>Joshua Survey 2018</i>	17
2.1	Southwest Church Discipleship Pathway, <i>Southwest Church 2021</i>	79
3.1	Sample Either-Or Response Graph.....	93
3.2	Survey Monkey Controls, <i>Survey Monkey 2021</i>	94
4.1	Survey Responses Per Day 9-1-2021 Through 9-30-2021	99
4.2	Self-Assessment: Self-Description Responses	101
4.3	Self-Assessment Results: Bible Reading Disciplines.....	102
4.4	Self-Assessment Results: Serving Disciplines	103
4.5	Self-Assessment Results: Prayer Disciplines	104
4.6	Self-Assessment Results: Giving Disciplines.....	105
4.7	Measured Assessment: Adult Stage Believer (Participant #5).....	117
4.8	Measured Assessment: Young Adult Stage Believer (Participant #17).....	117
4.9	Measured Assessment: Early-Stage Believer (Participant #53).....	118
4.10	Pivotal Pair #1	119
4.11	Pivotal Pair #2	119
4.12	Pivotal Pair #3	120
4.13	Pivotal Pair #4	120
4.14	Pivotal Pair #5	121
4.15	Pivotal Pair #6	121
4.16	Pivotal Pair #7	121
4.17	Inconclusive Either-Or Response Pairs	122

Abbreviations

AB	<i>Adult Believer</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
ESB	<i>Early-Stage Believer</i>
EFCA	<i>Evangelical Free Church of America</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
YAB	<i>Young Adult Believer</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The church bears the burden of responsibility in the early stages of discipleship development. Early-stage believers need mature disciples to come alongside to teach and guide them, and church leadership should celebrate and encourage disciple-making by equipping and empowering disciples to make other disciples. Throughout a believer's lifetime, the weight of responsibility shifts from the church corporately to the individual believer's responsibility. As maturity increases, individual disciples take increasing personal responsibility in their development to become disciple-makers themselves.

This project researches large-scale, programmatic-style discipleship methods, focusing on the *Rooted* experience recently adopted at Southwest Church. It is critical to know if the *Rooted* experience is effective in the early-stage development of disciples in the church.

- Does the *Rooted* experience move people forward in their journey of faith?
- Does the *Rooted* experience provide a firm spiritual base to allow people to grow?
- Are there observable, measurable results in graduates of the *Rooted* experience?

Ministry Context

Southwest Church is a church of approximately 3,500 adult attendees on an average weekend. So, by most church measurement standards, it is a megachurch. The challenge of discipling large numbers of adults within the megachurch context is the focus of this research. Understanding and embracing the megachurch context's realities (advantages and challenges) is essential to improve disciple-making at Southwest Church. Researching biblical, historical, and current discipleship methods is critical to the foundations of this research. The research

performed on similar large-scale discipleship models, and learning from complementary research in the megachurch context is informative to this research thesis.

Southwest Church's vision is to be a gospel-centered, multiethnic, intergenerational church that loves discipleship. With that vision in mind, Southwest Church's goal is to reach the surrounding community with the gospel and reflect the multiethnic and intergenerational realities of the community.

Geography

Southwest Church is located in the Coachella Valley of Southern California, an approximate two-hour drive east of the greater Los Angeles area. Historically, the Coachella Valley is known by one of its major cities, Palm Springs, and is a vacation and retirement destination for thousands of people each year.

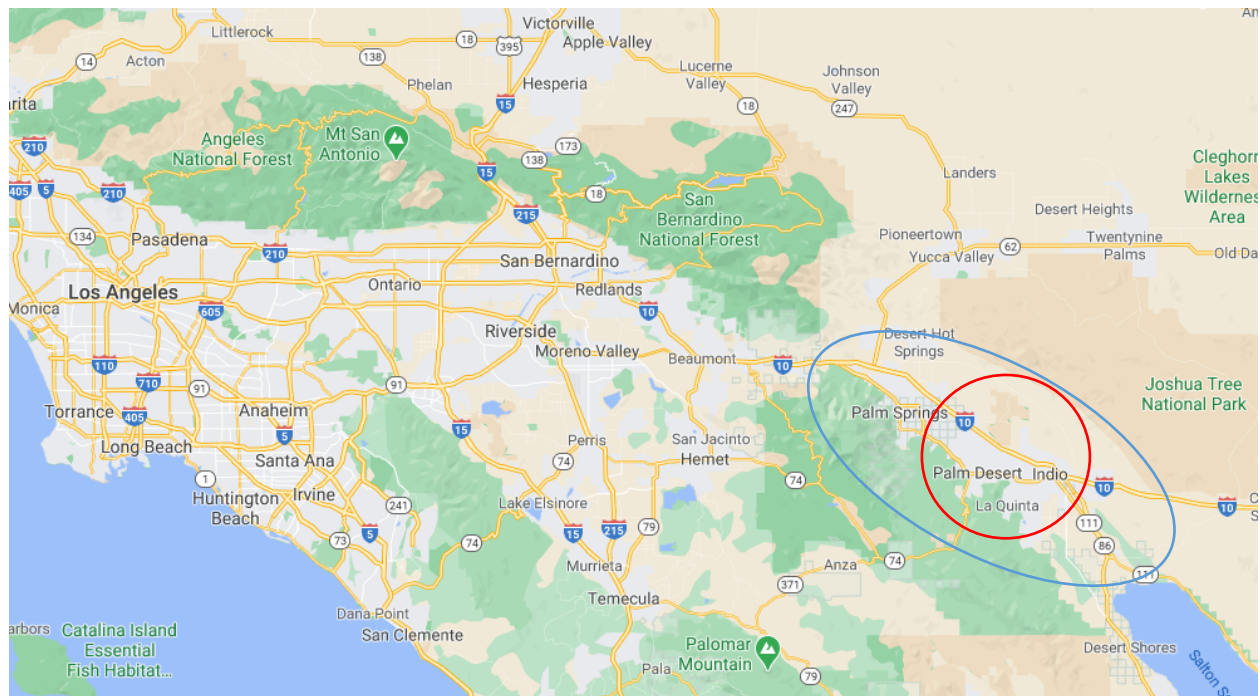


Figure 1.1 Map of Southern California from Los Angeles to the Coachella Valley. The Coachella Valley is represented by the approximately 45-mile long blue oval. Southwest Church's immediate geographic context (10-mile radius) is emphasized with the red circle. Image: *Google Maps*.

The Coachella Valley measures about 45 miles in length, with the population centers mainly concentrated along Interstate 10. Southwest Church is located close to the center of the most populated area of the valley. The extreme west and east ends of the valley are less populated, and the eastern valley has a large concentration of rural and farming areas.

The Coachella Valley is a desert climate and experiences very high temperatures in the summer months, beginning in May and continuing through September. The weather contributes to a seasonal vacation and retirement community. Church attendance and ministry participation increase by one-third from November through April (known as “the season”). Weekend adult church attendance grows by approximately 25% from 3,000 to 4,000 attendees during the season, and small groups and other participation increases proportionally.

Southwest Church’s ministries mainly follow the school calendar from September through May, embracing the seasonal rhythms and scaling back in the summer months. Although ministries continue in the summer, the seasonal nature allows for summer planning and strategy sessions for launching new initiatives in the upcoming ministry year.

Demographics

The Coachella Valley more than doubled in population over the past 30 years, going from 169,000 residents in 1989 to 388,000 residents in 2019. In the immediate ten-mile radius around Southwest Church, the population is 296,120. Southwest Church commissioned a study by the Joshua Survey group in 2018 and 2019 focusing on the church’s ten-mile radius.

The multiethnic context of Southwest Church is primarily Anglo and Hispanic. The

Population By Race/Ethnicity	Anglo	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Native Am. and Other
Study Area	43%	2%	51%	2%	2%
U.S. AVERAGE	60%	12%	18%	6%	3%

Figure 1.2. Population by Race/Ethnicity. Image: *Joshua Survey, 2018.*

surrounding community (study area) reflects a much higher Hispanic population than the U.S. average. The Joshua Survey results indicate that the church population aligns well with the community, primarily between Anglo and Hispanic populations.

Community

Church

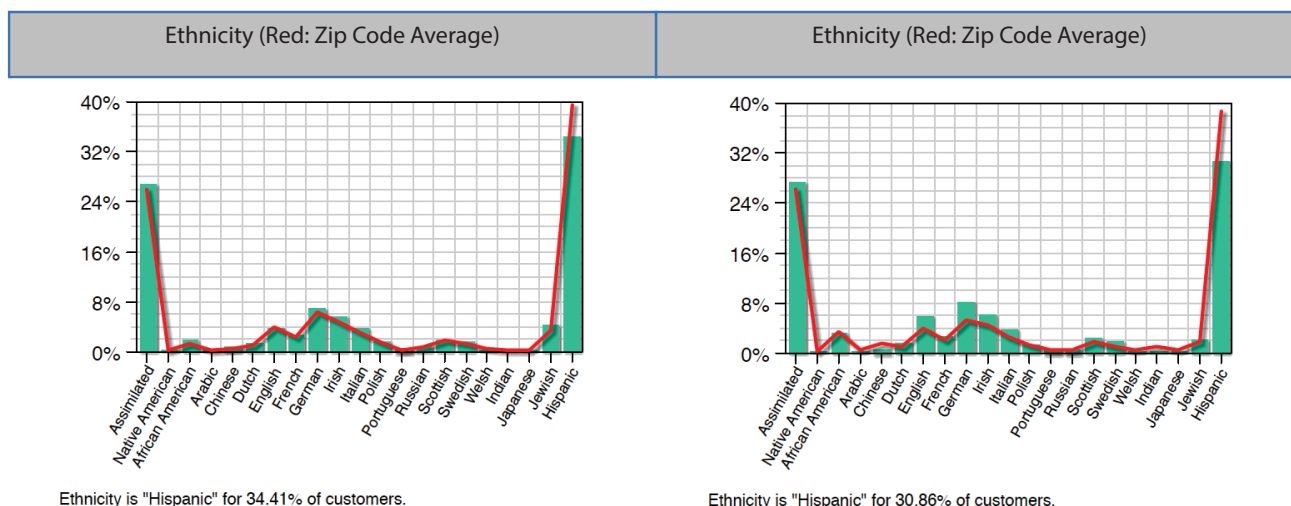


Figure 1.3. Community compared to Church by Race/Ethnicity. Image: *Joshua Survey, 2018*.

Most of the Hispanic population of the church attends English language services and small groups. For the people of the church that Spanish is the primary and preferred language, Southwest Church has a Spanish ministry responsible for leading a Spanish language weekend service. All church ministries, including Kids, Students, and Small Groups, are designed to meet our English and Spanish ministries' needs.

The intergenerational context of Southwest Church includes a large population of older adults. The Joshua Survey results indicate the church population does not mirror the community

Population By Generation	Gen Z 0 to 16	Millennials 17 to 36	Survivors 37 to 57	Boomers 58 to 75	Silents 76 to 93	Builders 94 & up
Study Area	21%	23%	23%	23%	10%	< 1%
U.S. AVERAGE	21%	27%	27%	19%	6%	< 1%

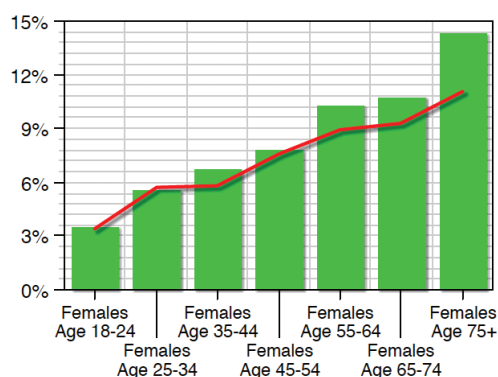
Figure 1.4. Community by Generation. Image: *Joshua Survey, 2018*.

population. Southwest Church draws more adults in the age groups of 35 to 64 than is reflected in the community. The church draws much less attendance from the older (75+) population in the community. Separate data provided by the Joshua Survey indicates that the church is attracting more families with children, supporting the high numbers of adults in their 30s and 40s attending the church.

Community

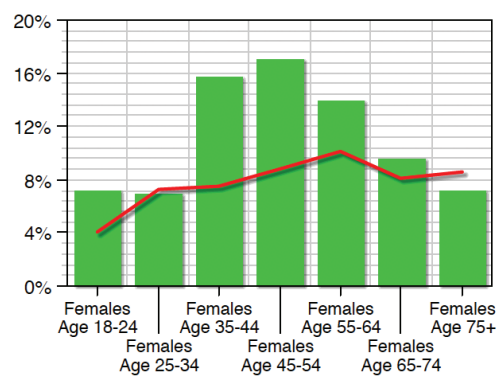
Church

Presence of Adults Female Age Bands (Red: Zip Code Average)



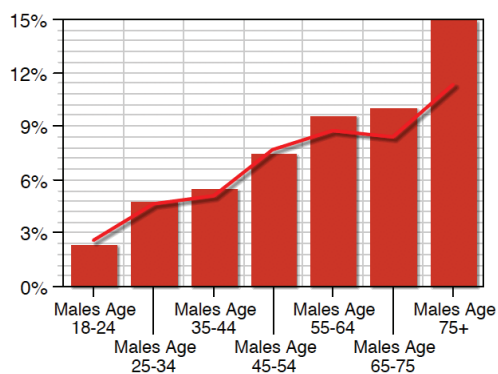
14.25% of customers have a Presence of Adults Female Age Bands category of Females Age 75+.

Presence of Adults Female Age Bands (Red: Zip Code Average)



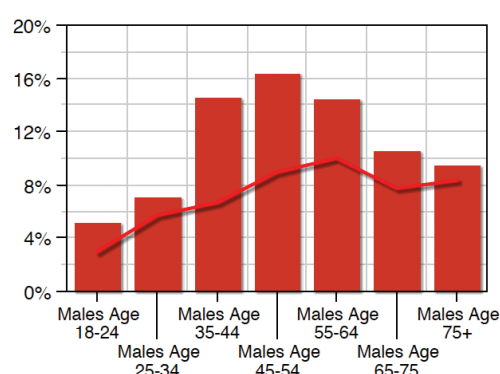
17.01% of customers have a Presence of Adults Female Age Bands category of Females Age 45-54.

Presence of Adults Male Age Bands (Red: Zip Code Average)



14.88% of customers have a Presence of Adults Male Age Bands category of Males Age 75+.

Presence of Adults Male Age Bands (Red: Zip Code Average)



16.34% of customers have a Presence of Adults Male Age Bands category of Males Age 45-54.

Figure 1.5. Community compared to Church by Gender and Age. Image: *Joshua Survey, 2018.*

History

Southwest Church was founded in 1972 as a small Bible study in a house in Palm Desert, CA. The church has gathered at several locations and has had numerous pastors over the years. Although the church has endured turbulent periods, it stands today as one of the largest churches in the Coachella Valley.

Southwest Church is a member of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) denomination. The church has adopted the EFCA's statement of faith, with the ten primary beliefs summarized in Appendix A.

Problem Presented

The problem is that Southwest Church has the responsibility to disciple large numbers of adult believers in the early discipleship stages to help them grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. The challenge of discipling large numbers of adult, early-stage disciples within the megachurch context, and improving these discipleship methods, is the focus of this research.

The megachurch context is becoming a common area for criticism from modern discipleship writers, especially from the missional church community. This research will embrace the realities of the megachurch context and endeavor to improve discipleship within this context.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to positively affect the early discipleship development of adult believers at Southwest Church by evaluating, measuring, and improving the effectiveness of the *Rooted* discipleship experience. Early-stage discipleship must introduce and encourage the practice of vital spiritual disciplines. The research will endeavor to evaluate the opportunities the church provides for early-stage disciples in these elements:

1. Support and encouragement within relationships (primarily small groups).
2. Experiential prayer and serving experiences.
3. Regular Bible study and personal devotional opportunities.
4. Evangelism and stewardship training and practice.

Basic Assumptions

Because the *Rooted* experience is open to participation by the entire church body, this study will involve many believers who are not in the early stages of their faith. It is assumed that there will need to be a screening process to isolate early-stage believers from those who are more mature in their faith. Although not specifically a focus of this research, the data compiled for groups other than early-stage believers can be sorted to compare the effectiveness of the *Rooted* experience across the church body.

Southwest Church is a megachurch and this research assumes the megachurch context will continue to be a significant factor in the future of the Christian church and seeks to measure the effectiveness of large-scale discipleship methods in that context.

Although Southwest Church puts a high value on the training of small group leaders, it is assumed that there will be differences in the leadership quality of groups. The differences in leadership quality may affect the individual results of the *Rooted* experience.

It is assumed that believers can classify their level of spiritual maturity incorrectly. Jim Putman states, “Many Christians have an inaccurate assessment of their own level of spiritual maturity as well as the level of those around them.”¹ It will be necessary to utilize existing tools or develop new evaluation tools to assess the participants’ spiritual maturity biblically and accurately.

¹ Jim Putman, *Real Life Discipleship*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010, Chapter 3.

Definitions

Disciple and Discipleship

George Barna defines discipleship as “becoming a complete and competent follower of Jesus Christ.”² Earley and Dempsey define a disciple as “a person who has trusted Christ for salvation and has surrendered completely to him. He or she is committed to practicing the spiritual disciplines in community and developing their full potential for Christ and his mission.”³ Bill Hull states that disciples are not just mature believers but that all believers are called into discipleship from the moment of spiritual birth.⁴ Andrew Burggraff defines discipleship as “the process of learning the scriptures, internalizing them to shape one’s belief system, and then applying them to change one’s life. It is the church’s role to be actively involved in following this command within the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).”⁵

For the purposes of this research, a disciple is defined as someone who commits to being a learning follower of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is the process of becoming a learning follower of Jesus Christ. As an organization, discipleship is the methods and models in the church to guide others to become learning followers of Jesus Christ.

Early-Stage Believer

An early-stage believer is a person who would identify as someone who has decided to follow Jesus but is still beginning to explore his or her relationship with Jesus. An early-stage

² George Barna, *Growing True Disciples. New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 17.

³ Dave Earley, and Rod Dempsey. *Disciple-Making Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2013), 28.

⁴ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 26.

⁵ Andrew Burggraff, “Developing Discipleship Curriculum: Applying the Systems Approach Model for Designing Instruction by Dick, Carey, and Carey to the Construction of Church Discipleship Courses.” *Christian Education Journal* 12, no. 2 (Fall, 2015): 412.
<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fdeveloping-discipleship-curriculum-applying%2Fdocview%2F1725036343%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

believer is also a person whose observable behaviors would indicate the spiritual condition consistent with what the Apostle Paul would call an infant or child in Christ.⁶ Jim Putman classifies early-stage believers as spiritual infants and spiritual children characterized by lack of knowledge (infants) and self-centeredness (children).⁷ For this research, early-stage believers are defined as new believers, spiritual infants, and spiritual children.

Large-Scale Programmatic Methods

Large-scale programmatic methods are discipleship programs intended to move large groups of people through a systematic approach to discipleship. It is important to identify that *Rooted* will be the resource used to affect a large group of believers in the context of this research. Thom Rainer states that the resource utilized by a church is one of the elements of discipleship, and the program is not the end in and of itself.⁸ *Rooted* is considered a tool and a resource, and not the end in and of itself.

Maturity

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus that one of the key purposes of the church and its ministry was to equip the church for ministry for the body to attain maturity in Christ:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.⁹

⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:1. All Scripture references from the *English Standard Version*, Crossway, 2001. Unless otherwise noted.

⁷ Putman. *Real-Life Discipleship*, Chapter 7.

⁸ Ministry Labs. A Discussion on Discipleship with Thom Rainer. September 19, 2017. <https://resources.churchcommunitybuilder.com/articles/discipleship-webinar-thom-rainer>.

⁹ Ephesians 4:11-14.

Spiritual maturity is not automatic for a new believer or early-stage believer in Jesus; it is a journey that a disciple must pursue. The writer of Hebrews exhorts believers to “...go on to maturity.”¹⁰ J. Oswald Sanders writes: “Maturity in the spiritual realm is not attained overnight, any more than it is in the physical. It is a dynamic process that continues throughout life.”¹¹ As detailed later, maturity is becoming like Jesus and observable in stages of development.

Megachurch

For the purposes of this research, a megachurch will follow the definition by Thumma and Davis, defined as churches that attract two thousand attendees to their weekend services.¹² This research intends to remain neutral with regards to the debate over the positives and negatives of the megachurch context. The research assumes there will be megachurches in the future and seeks to measure the effectiveness of large-scale discipleship methods in that context.

Rooted

*Rooted*¹³ is a ten-week small group experience that originated at Mavuno Church in Nairobi, Kenya. Mariners Church in Irvine, CA, brought *Rooted* to the United States and rewrote the curriculum to fit the American context. At Mavuno Church, the experience is called *Mizizi* and is intended to move people from a weekend consumer Christianity by connecting them to the church community.¹⁴

¹⁰ Hebrews 6:1.

¹¹ J. Oswald Sanders. *Spiritual Discipleship. Principles of Following Christ for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1994), 82.

¹² Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths. What We Can Learn From America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), xviii.

¹³ Mariners Church, *Rooted. Connect with God, the Church, and Your Purpose* (Irvine, CA: Mariners Church, 2011), 7.

¹⁴ Wanjiru M. Gitau, *Megachurch Christianity Reconsidered: Millennials and Social Change in African Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 75. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5557263>. Created from Liberty on 2021-06-19.

Limitations

While a portion of the data gathered by this research will be observable and tangible measurements, another set of data will be collected through self-assessment surveys. A limitation of a self-assessment is its subjective nature, and it is reliant on the individual's self-awareness. Even well-constructed self-assessments will not provide completely accurate results of spiritual maturity.

This research will contain data from *Rooted* sessions conducted before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the limitations of in-person gatherings, some *Rooted* groups will have met virtually through online video calls. The California state and Riverside County gathering limitations will also affect the available opportunities for service projects. Overall, COVID-19 gathering restrictions may negatively affect the experiential elements of *Rooted*.

An uncontrollable variable in the research will be the number of participants in each *Rooted* session. The research data may be limited based on the number of total participants in a given *Rooted* session and the number of early-stage believers in each session.

Delimitations

Although many churches have adopted the *Rooted* experience, this research will be limited to the context of Southwest Church. Following the completion of this research, the results can be shared and compared with other churches.

This research will be limited to adult early-stage believers over eighteen years old. *Rooted* is utilized in student ministries, but this research will be restricted to adult believers only.

Rooted groups are typically required to meet on the church campus instead of meeting off-campus in homes. Due to COVID-19 gathering restrictions in 2020 and 2021, groups will

meet in homes and virtually online. This research will segregate the data into subsets in order to correlate any specific impacts due to COVID gathering restrictions.

Thesis Statement

If Southwest Church implements the *Rooted* experience effectively, then individual adult believers will be developed, encouraged, and equipped as disciples of Jesus Christ. Although individual believers will experience different spiritual development levels, there will be measurable individual results, and new believers and early-stage disciples will take necessary spiritual growth steps.

Rooted is a ten-week, small group discipleship experience intended to deepen connections with God, his church, and a disciple's individual purpose. While study materials in any discipleship system should be biblical and have great content, equally important is how the materials are experienced. Knowledge of the Bible and its truths are vitally important, but experiencing knowledge and truth is essential. This research project will also evaluate the *Rooted* experience's experiential aspects and their contribution to early-stage disciple development and growth.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

This thesis project aims to measure the effectiveness of the *Rooted* experience at Southwest Church in the development of early-stage disciples. This literature review will search existing scholarship to determine the work that has been done in the areas of:

1. Biblical mandate and foundations for discipleship. Primary questions: What does Jesus command the church to do? How does the Bible describe disciples? What are the conditions and cost of following Jesus?
2. Defining stages of disciple development and movement through the stages. Primary question: How does a disciple develop?
3. Methods and strategies used by churches to make disciples. Primary question: How do churches make disciples? Specifically: How does a megachurch make disciples?
4. Measurable characteristics in the maturity of disciples. Primary question: How is a disciple's maturity measured?

This research's narrow focus is to determine the effectiveness of large-scale, programmatic discipleship methods on early-stage believers. This literature review will search the available books, journal articles, and other scholarly writing to determine the characteristics, stages, methods, and measures of disciples and discipleship.

Biblical Mandate

The Great Commission is the clearest command from Jesus to make disciples:

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."¹⁵

¹⁵ Matthew 28:18-20.

In the passage, “make disciples” is the imperative verb, and the other actions to go, baptize, and teach obedience are describing *how* to make disciples. As the church goes about helping Jesus make disciples, it is critically important that people are taught obedience to God’s Word.

Knowledge alone does not make a disciple. Disciples are not only taught what Jesus commanded, but they must be *taught to obey* all that Jesus commanded. As James states, our faith must be lived out: “...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”¹⁶

Dietrich Bonhoeffer states it this way in *The Cost of Discipleship*: “For faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience.”¹⁷ Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus requires more than asking people for their intellectual agreement with Jesus’s teachings. On multiple occasions, Jesus emphasized the importance of obedience to his disciples. It is clear from Jesus’ words that he was serious about obedience and expected it from his disciples. Obedience to Christ is directly related to the love a disciple has for him. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”¹⁸

A.B. Bruce writes in *Training of the Twelve* “...that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others....”¹⁹ The first statement from Jesus to his future followers made it clear from the beginning that they would become disciple-makers: “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.’”

¹⁶ James 1:21b-22.

¹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Macmillan Company, 1960), 54.

¹⁸ John 14:15.

¹⁹ Alexander Balmain Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*. iBooks. <https://books.apple.com/us/book/the-training-of-the-twelve/id1382826351>, 31.

Immediately they left their nets and followed him.²⁰ Speaking to fishermen, Jesus told them that he was going to give them a new vocation. Instead of catching fish, they would instead be fishing for men. Jesus called followers to train them and equip them to continue his ministry after he was gone. The decision to follow a rabbi meant a complete commitment from the disciple.

Bill Hull writes in *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, that the background of the Jewish rabbinical culture plays a significant role in the lives of the early disciples in the Gospels and their understanding of Jesus' methods of discipleship. Jesus was their teacher. He was their rabbi.²¹ Training of disciples in the rabbinical culture was a well-established system in Jesus' day. Hull explains: There were five characteristics of the rabbinical schools. 1. The disciple chose to submit to his teacher. 2. The disciple would memorize his teacher's words. 3. The disciple would learn his teacher's way of ministry. 4. The disciple would imitate his teacher's life. 5. The disciple would be expected to find his own disciples.²²

The mandate to follow Jesus comes with conditions and a cost. Based on Jesus' words from Luke's Gospel, followers of Jesus have must consent to five conditions: First: Disciples are to deny self (Luke 9:23) and need to hate their own life (Luke 14:26). Second: Disciples need to hate their family (Luke 14:26). Third: Disciples must bear their own cross (Luke 9:23 and 14:27). Fourth: Disciples must count the cost before deciding to follow (Luke 14:28-32). Fifth: Disciples must renounce all that they have (Luke 14:33).

²⁰ Matthew 4:18-20.

²¹ Jesus referred to as Rabbi: Matthew 26:25, 26:49, Mark 9:5, 10:51, 11:21, 14:45, John 1:49, 3:2, 3:26, 4:31, 6:25, 9:2, 11:8.

²² Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ, Disciple Maker*. iBooks. <https://books.apple.com/us/book/jesus-christ-disciplemaker/id439746417>, 13. Hull also states in the rabbinical culture, "Every Jewish boy by age thirteen had studied and memorized much of the Pentateuch and the prophets. If he were among the best and the brightest, he would be accepted into a rabbinical school. There he would come under the authority of his teacher. If he were not at the top of his class, he would return to the vocation of shepherd, fisherman, carpenter, or farmer." 13.

Glenn McDonald observes, in his book *The Disciple-Making Church. From Dry Bones to Spiritual Vitality*, “The first mark of an authentic disciple is a heart for Christ alone...Its priority cannot be negotiated. The life that is lived well must be organized around a foundational certainty that Jesus alone is the Giver of Meaning to human existence.”²³ In the first condition, followers of Jesus must deny themselves, give up the rights to their own lives, and live fully for Christ. As Bonhoeffer powerfully states: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”²⁴ A disciple lives fully for Christ, and the disciple's own life becomes secondary.

J. Oswald Sanders writes in *Spiritual Discipleship. Principles of Following Christ for Every Believer* about the second condition that a disciple is required to hate his family. Verse 14:26 reads: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” Sanders states that these words are very harsh sounding, but Jesus was simply telling his followers that he must be their highest love and their most important relationship.²⁵ As hard as it may be to consider family second, in the American and largely self-absorbed context, it may be harder to consider self, second. John the Baptist’s followers questioned him about Jesus’ ministry and that Jesus was also baptizing people. John’s response to his followers perfectly summarizes the idea of a disciple who places himself second to Jesus. John said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”²⁶ Throughout a disciple’s lifetime, Jesus must become more present in a disciple's life and actions, while the disciple’s original life is lost in the joy of following Jesus.

²³ Glenn McDonald, *The Disciple-Making Church. From Dry Bones to Spiritual Vitality*. (Lima, OH: Faith Walk Publishing, 2007), 127.

²⁴ Bonhoeffer, 79.

²⁵ Sanders, 22. Sanders expands: “But note that because we love Christ supremely does not mean we will love our relatives less than we love them now. Indeed, the very reverse can be the case; for when Christ holds first place in our affections, our capacity to love will be greatly expanded.”

²⁶ John 3:30.

Matthew Henry wrote in his great *Commentary of the Whole Bible* that in the third condition, followers of Jesus take up a cross, and disciples must learn to endure hardship: “We frequently meet with crosses in the way of duty; and, though we must not pull them upon our own heads, yet, when they are laid for us, we must take them up, carry them after Christ, and make the best of them.”²⁷

Greg Ogden, in *Discipleship Essentials*, comments on the fourth condition that a disciple is to count the cost before deciding to follow Jesus: “Jesus was up-front with any would-be follower: ‘If anyone would follow me - and I hope you will because I can give life abundantly - this is what you are in for.’”²⁸ An essential element in any discipleship system is to help the individual evaluate the commitment and the cost before deciding to follow Jesus. There is no eternal value to have someone simply make an emotional decision to follow Jesus without fully understanding the commitment.

The fifth condition is that a disciple will renounce all that he has. Although some may indeed be very necessary, worldly possessions will not be the preoccupation for a disciple. In Mark’s Gospel, we see the early disciples sacrificed significantly to be with Jesus.²⁹ Jesus’ first apostles considered the cost and chose to follow him anyway. But Jesus gave them a choice to follow and to weigh the costs. Greg Ogden adds: “A certain rich man heard Jesus’ call to discipleship, and he walked away (Mark 10:17-22). He heard what he was in for and judged it too costly.”³⁰

²⁷ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible. Volume V. - Matthew to John* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1935), 669.

²⁸ Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials. A Guide to Building your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 28.

²⁹ Mark 10:28-31.

³⁰ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 28.

Measures of Discipleship

Understanding the stages of development for a disciple is critical, but the challenge is to measure the progress an individual is making through the discipleship stages. Hawkins and Parkinson ask a valid question: “Is it possible to measure the heart?”³¹ Identifying objective measurements to evaluate a disciple’s maturity focuses on the inner life being transformed and the measurable actions of a disciple.

Transformed Life

The Holy Spirit’s work should ultimately manifest itself in the fruit produced in the life of a disciple. Biblically, *fruit* has two dimensions concerning discipleship. One dimension is the *fruit* of the Spirit in personal character transformation; the second dimension is spiritual gifting and the bearing of *fruit* in ministry service as God works in and through a disciple.

In “A Better Way to Make Disciples,” Jim Putman states: “What does a mature disciple look like then? If that definition does not end up looking like one who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and committed to the mission of Jesus, then our definition has holes in it.”³² Measurements of discipleship begin with outward indications of inward spiritual change. The life of a disciple must be changed as he pursues training in righteousness and godliness.

George Barna states that maturing believers should produce observable qualities that he describes as “holistic personal transformation, not mere assimilation into a community of church members.”³³ Life transformation in a disciple should manifest into observable behaviors that can

³¹ Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson. *Move, What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan: 2011), 12.

³² Jim Putman, “A Better Way to Make Disciples.” *Outreach*, September 5, 2015, 3.
<https://outreachmagazine.com/features/4838-jim-putman-needed-shifts-in-making-disciples.html>.

³³ Barna, 167.

be measured. Some elements may require self-assessment to provide measurement, but the goal of discipleship is that a person's life transforms and conforms to the image of Jesus.

Earley and Dempsey describe our part in discipleship as “cooperating with the Holy Spirit.”³⁴ While the transformation in a disciple's life is almost completely the work of the Holy Spirit, we must do our part in obedience. We come alongside the Spirit and join in the work that he is already doing. Starting with evangelism, the Holy Spirit is already working in the heart of a seeker and continues into the disciple's maturing, as the Holy Spirit develops the heart of a believer. Jesus promises that if a disciple loves him and keeps his commandments: “...I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”³⁵ The work of the Holy Spirit should ultimately manifest itself in the life of a disciple. In personal spiritual transformation and effective ministry, Earley and Dempsey state it plainly: “The measure of discipleship is fruit.”³⁶

Measurable Actions

Bill Hull outlines five characteristics with competencies that should be visible in maturing disciples in the *Complete Book of Discipleship*:³⁷

1. A disciple abides in Christ through the Word and prayer.
2. A disciple bears much fruit.
3. A disciple responds to God's love with obedience.
4. A disciple possesses joy.
5. A disciple loves as Christ loved.

³⁴ Earley and Dempsey, 29.

³⁵ John 14:16-17.

³⁶ Earley and Dempsey, 106.

³⁷ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 47.

These actions and attitudes are visible but might be difficult to measure objectively. Many of the measurements of internal spiritual health and development will be measured utilizing a self-assessment survey.

Paul Pettit writes in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation. A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*: “All of us come to a point in our lives where there is a serious examination of our gifts, our personality, and our passions.³⁸ Does a disciple spend time in service to others? As a disciple matures, he will desire to spend time in service to others, understanding their role in serving the body of Christ. Disciples must also know that they are just living out the purposes that God uniquely created them to do: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”³⁹ Pettit’s book describes successful discipleship taking place in the context of supportive relationships and accountability. The relational community helps to give believers a secure spiritual identity and a sense of significance that comes from being part of something greater than them.

Personal observation and a survey of disciples should reveal whether or not are exploring their gifting, talents, and abilities. As a result of discipleship: Is a disciple combining his time and talents in service to God, or are the talents spent in commercial and business ventures only? Has the individual started to explore their spiritual gifting and seek to understand how God specifically shapes them to serve others?

³⁸ Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation. A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 197.

³⁹ Ephesians 2:10.

Stages of Development

The review of existing literature confirms that a disciple is trained in righteousness and matures over a lifetime of following Jesus. The maturation of a disciple can be observed in stages of development. This literature review will explore multiple descriptions of discipleship development stages: the first description from A.B. Bruce, the second from Bill Hull, the third from John Koessler, and the fourth from Jeff Stott. Although the descriptions are different in the number of phases, they are complementary in most ways and confirm disciples' lifelong development.

A.B. Bruce describes Jesus' development of disciples in three progressive stages: Stage One: Declaration.⁴⁰ Will a person believe in Jesus? Stage Two: Development.⁴¹ Will a person follow Jesus? Stage Three: Deployment.⁴² Will a person go for Jesus? For Bruce, stage one centers on becoming a believer, stage two is about development as a disciple, and in stage three, the disciple is now a disciple-maker himself.

Bill Hull describes the development of disciples in four stages based on the invitations given by Jesus. Stage 1: Come and See.⁴³ Hull writes: "In effect, he [Jesus] was saying, 'Come with me and you can see how I live.'"⁴⁴ Stage Two: Come and Follow me.⁴⁵ Once the decision is made to follow, then disciples can be trained and equipped in the fundamentals of the faith. Stage Three: Come and Be with Me. Hull writes: "During the come and be with me phase, Jesus' trainees made the critical transition from established disciples to equipped laborers."⁴⁶ Stage

⁴⁰ Bruce, 27.

⁴¹ Bruce, 27.

⁴² Bruce, 28.

⁴³ John 1:39a

⁴⁴ Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, 29.

⁴⁵ Mark 1:17-18.

⁴⁶ Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, 124.

Four: Remain in Me.⁴⁷ In the final stage for a maturing believer, the goal is abiding in Christ so that the disciple bears fruit. Abiding [remaining] in Christ is essential for bearing fruit.

John Koessler states in *True Discipleship, The Art of Following Jesus*, that spiritual growth, like human physical growth, develops in stages. He writes: “One of the assumptions behind the complaint of Hebrews 5:12 is the expectation that normal Christian growth should occur over time: ‘By this time you ought to be teachers.’”⁴⁸ Koessler categorizes three stages of growth as 1. Infancy, 2. Adolescence, and 3. Maturity, based on the words of the Apostle John.⁴⁹ Koessler writes: “The spiritual infant knows God by faith. The spiritually mature believer knows Him by faith and experience.”⁵⁰ Koessler advises that there will be a “...range of spiritual levels in the church. The church’s strategy for discipleship must take this into account by providing a range of opportunities for believers at every level of development.”⁵¹

Jeff Stott outlines the incremental development of disciples in “*5 Stages of Spiritual Growth*.”⁵² Stage One – The Seeker. In this stage, the Seeker is not a believer in Jesus Christ but seeks answers to life’s greatest questions. Stage Two – The Believer (Spiritual Infancy). Stage Three – The Learner (Spiritual Childhood). Stage Four – The Server (Young Adult Stage). Stage Five – The Leader (Adult Stage).

A.B. Bruce, Bill Hull, John Koessler, and Jeff Stott confirm there are phases and stages to a disciples’ lifelong development and that churches should develop discipleship methods to support and encourage movement through these stages.

⁴⁷ John 15:7-8.

⁴⁸ John Koessler, *True Discipleship. The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 72.

⁴⁹ 1 John 2:13.

⁵⁰ Koessler, 74.

⁵¹ Koessler, 75.

⁵² Jeff Stott. “5 Stages of Spiritual Growth.” *Truth Applied* (blog). <http://truthappliedjs.com/5-stages-of-spiritual-growth/>.

Methods and Strategies

D. Michael Henderson's book, *John Wesley's Class Meeting, A Model for Making Disciples*, informs the research to the value of Wesley's methodical development of interlocking groups, each tailored to a specific function, referred to as societies, classes, and bands. The Wesleyan society was the largest of the groups that included Methodists in a given geographic area. Societies were large meetings that focused primarily on cognitive instruction.⁵³ Classes were smaller groups that met to encourage proper Christian behavior and holy living. Leaders of class meetings were identified and developed from the larger society. Henderson describes Wesleyan disciple-making using the class meeting as the instrument by which preaching and doctrine were harnessed into spiritual renewal.⁵⁴ Wesley's bands were the smallest and most intimate, grouping members by gender, age, and marital status. Wesley was convinced that believers needed the intimacy, honesty, and depth that a band would provide.

Rick Warren states: "Every believer isn't a pastor, but every believer is called into ministry...Service in the body is not optional for Christians."⁵⁵ A pillar of *The Purpose Driven Church* is that every member is a minister. As part of a discipleship strategy, churches need to equip people who have been created by God for ministry and called by God into ministry. Warren utilizes five purposes or tasks that Christ ordained the church to accomplish:⁵⁶

1. Love the Lord with all your heart (Worship or Magnify).
2. Love you neighbor as yourself (Ministry).
3. Go and make disciples (Evangelism or Mission).

⁵³ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting. A Model for Making Disciples* (Whitmore, KY: Rafiki Books, 2016), 82.

⁵⁴ Henderson, 30.

⁵⁵ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 368.

⁵⁶ Warren, 103-107.

4. Baptize them (Fellowship or Membership).
5. Teach them to obey (Discipleship or Maturity)

The five purposes at Saddleback Church have been arranged into a four-step sequential process:

Bring people in, build them up, train them, and send them out.⁵⁷

Andy Stanley discusses five faith catalysts in *Deep and Wide* that he refers to as “five things that God uses to build your faith.”⁵⁸ Stanley’s North Point Church observed five essential ingredients that are present regardless of how a church organizes or programs:

1. Practical Teaching. “When individuals describe their faith journey, they always reference the first time they were exposed to practical teaching.”⁵⁹
2. Private Disciplines. “Somewhere along the way, Christians begin to pray. Alone. They begin to explore the Bible on their own.”⁶⁰
3. Personal Ministry. “When people describe their faith journeys, they always talk about the first time they engaged in some kind of personal ministry.”⁶¹
4. Providential Relationships. “When people tell their faith stories, they always talk about the individuals they believe God put in their paths.”⁶²
5. Pivotal Circumstances. “When people describe their faith journeys, they always include events that could be describes as ‘defining moments.’ Some of these are good...But just as often, these defining moments involve pain and disappointment.”⁶³

⁵⁷ Warren, 109.

⁵⁸ Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide. Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 108.

⁵⁹ Stanley, 111.

⁶⁰ Stanley, 117.

⁶¹ Stanley, 125.

⁶² Stanley, 131.

⁶³ Stanley, 137.

Stanley encourages churches to prioritize creating environments and circumstances for the five faith catalysts to happen, with organization and programming providing support to the five faith catalysts.

Warren and Stanley are both Senior Pastors in a megachurch context. They have both detailed a specific strategy contextualized to reach their communities with the gospel, and to engage attendees and members in a large-scale discipleship process.

Mavuno Church, in Nairobi Kenya has a four-step discipleship approach called the Mavuno Marathon. This contextualizes the process of making disciples into a marathon, which the people of Kenya would know well from their nationally celebrated marathon runners.⁶⁴ The four-step Mavuno Marathon takes a person from a complacent outsider to a committed life group member, where discipleship occurs in relationship over a lifetime.

Step 1: Reaching the complacent in society. Mavuno finds creative ways to engage the community around them through entertainment, speakers, and social media taking the gospel and practical help to people in the community that would be unlikely to attend church. The goal of step one is to get people to attend church.

Step 2: Consumer Christians attending Sunday services. Mavuno understands that the complacent person becomes a casual attender on Sunday. The goal in step two is to help the person to become open to spiritual conversations through a welcoming environment, engaging worship music, and a compelling sermon.

Step 3. Discipling in a core catechism class. Mavuno uses the ten-week *Mizizi* (the original African version of *Rooted*) to help people experience and build personal connections

⁶⁴ Gitau, 69.

within the church community. The goal of step three would be the person continuing into a life group with the people from their *Mizizi* group.

Step 4. Commitment to the church community. After completing *Mizizi*, the person is known to a small group of people in their life group focusing on three A's: association, accountability, and application. In association, people do life with one another. In accountability, people focus on growth, prayer, confession, and forgiveness. In application, people study scripture and relate it to specific circumstances.

Bill Hull organizes a disciple-making plan centered on the four-stage development of disciples.⁶⁵ This follows Jesus' disciple-making process found in the Gospels:

1. Come and See (tell them what; tell them why). These are primarily larger gatherings for worship, outreach events, seminars, and other venues to introduce people to the church and create interest in Christ.

2. Come and Follow Me (show them how). This is the heart of discipling in small groups and connecting people in ministry in the church and service in the community.

3. Come and Be with Me (let them do it). This stage focuses on leadership training for small group leaders, elders, church planters, and missionaries.

4. Remain in Me (release them). This stage commissions and releases believers to serve the church's mission and reach the world with the gospel.

⁶⁵ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 29.

Summary: Literature Review

The review of precedent literature reveals a vast number of authors who have contributed their voice to the areas of the biblical mandate, measures, and methods of discipleship. These authors have clearly described the mandate that Jesus gave his church to make disciples. Their contribution to the study of discipleship helps the church to understand that disciples are made through stages, and it is possible to see measurable changes in a disciple's speech, actions, and behaviors as the disciple matures through the stages. There are numerous existing volumes on the systems and processes for making disciples. Many authors have chosen to tackle the macro-level of discipleship, but it is very difficult to measure the on-going growth in an individual.

Where this research can make its own contribution, and potentially fill a gap in the available literature, is by evaluating a specific method of discipleship and measuring the growth of a disciple with the early stages of their journey of faith. Disciples are made through stages and over a lifetime. This research will endeavor to measure the growth of a disciple within the early stages, and determine the impact that large-scale, programmatic methods can have on adult believers. This research will help Southwest Church know that the initial discipleship steps offered to a new believer are spiritually effective.

Having many people to disciple is common to a large church, and certainly not unique to Southwest Church. Determining the effectiveness of large-scale discipleship programs should be transferable between churches and different ministry contexts. It is the hope of the researcher that this study would potentially help other large churches by giving them tools to evaluate spiritual growth within their own discipleship programs.

Theological Foundations

The theological foundations for discipleship will be explored to expand the understanding of the biblical mandate, meaning, measures, and methods of discipleship. The theological and scriptural foundations for discipleship provide us with clarity and direction for all of our discipling work in the church. Pastor Charles Swindoll writes on the importance of grounding the church's work in scripture: "Clear, biblical thinking must override secular planning and a corporate mentality...Studied, accurate decisions must originate from God's Word, not human opinions."⁶⁶ The discipleship work of the church must be grounded in the truth of scripture.

The biblical mandate to make disciples that began with Jesus' commission in Matthew 28 is modeled in the New Testament church and lived out in the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. The biblical mandate includes the implications (commitment and cost) for the individual believer and the implications for the church corporately and should be the beginning of all modern-day discipleship.

Mandate

The Great Commission

The Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew Chapter 28 is the most direct command from Jesus to make disciples:

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."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Charles Swindoll, *The Church Awakening. An Urgent Call For Renewal* (New York, NY: FaithWords, 2010), 27.

⁶⁷ Matthew 28:18-20.

Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus requires more than asking people for their intellectual agreement with the teachings of Jesus. Teaching and training must ultimately be reflected in the actions of the disciple. T. Ryan Jackson summarizes the fulfillment of the Great Commission this way:

In order to fulfill this commandment of Jesus, we have to be engaged in leading people through a process of growth and maturation. The remaining elements of the Great Commission itself bear that out. Making disciples involves baptism - bringing people to a place of identifying with the work of Jesus on their behalf - and it involves teaching. The teaching Jesus had in mind was not just a transfer of information. It wasn't just about a mental download of doctrine. The commandment involves teaching people "to observe" (Mat 28:20). Being a disciple then isn't just about affirming a set of theological propositions; it is also about action.⁶⁸

On multiple occasions, Jesus emphasized the importance of obedience to his disciples. It is clear from Jesus' words that he was serious about obedience and expected it from his disciples.

Obedience to Christ is directly related to the love a disciple has for him. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."⁶⁹ Jesus also told his disciples that listening to his words and obeying them would work together to build a foundation of faith that could not be shaken:

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built."⁷⁰

Bonhoeffer states: "faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience...The idea of a situation in which faith is possible is only a way of stating the facts of a case in which the following two

⁶⁸ T. Ryan Jackson, "A Pauline Strategy for Challenging Cultural Liturgies: Making Corinthian Disciples." *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* 3 (2016): 65–85. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAIgEV171007000438&site=ehost-live&scope=site>, 65.

⁶⁹ John 14:15.

⁷⁰ Luke 6:46-48.

propositions hold good and are equally true: only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.”⁷¹

The first statement from Jesus to his future followers made it clear from the beginning that they would become disciple-makers: “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.”⁷² Speaking to fishermen, Jesus told them that he was going to give them a new vocation. Instead of catching fish, they would instead be fishing for men. Meaning that Jesus would train and equip them so that they could make disciples. A.B. Bruce writes:

“Follow Me,” said Jesus to the fishermen of Bethsaida, “and I will make you fishers of men.” These words (whose originality stamps them as a genuine saying of Jesus) show that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others: to cast the net of divine truth into the sea of the world and to land on the shores of the divine kingdom a great multitude of believing souls.⁷³

In Acts Chapter 1, Jesus issues his final words of instruction and focuses his disciples back to the Great Commission:

He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 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.” And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.⁷⁴

Earley and Dempsey comment: “A person’s last words can be the most significant words they ever speak. Often they are a summary of their life, mission, values, and passion. That certainly

⁷¹ Bonhoeffer, 54.

⁷² Matthew 4:18-20.

⁷³ Bruce, 31.

⁷⁴ Acts 1:7-9.

was the case with Jesus. In His last words, He not only told His disciples that they were to be witnesses, but also the extent of that witness—to the ends of the earth.”⁷⁵

The Conditions and Cost of Following Jesus

The mandate to follow Jesus comes with conditions and a cost. Jesus’ words from Luke’s Gospel clearly describe the commitment required of a follower of Jesus: “And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?’”⁷⁶ As difficult as these words may sound, later in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus unfolds the rest of the conditions necessary to be his disciple:

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So, therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”⁷⁷

Based on the biblical text, followers of Jesus must consent to five conditions: First: Disciples are to deny self (Luke 9:23) and need to hate their own life (Luke 14:26). Second: Disciples need to hate their family (Luke 14:26). Third: Disciples must bear their own cross

⁷⁵ Earley and Dempsey, 82.

⁷⁶ Luke 9:23-25.

⁷⁷ Luke 14:25-33.

(Luke 9:23 and 14:27). Fourth: Disciples must count the cost before deciding to follow (Luke 14:28-32). Fifth: Disciples must renounce all that they have (Luke 14:33).

In the first condition, followers of Jesus must deny themselves, give up the rights to their own lives, and live fully for Christ. Bonhoeffer stated: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”⁷⁸ A disciple lives fully for Christ, and the disciple’s own life becomes secondary. McDonald observed: “The life that is lived well must be organized around a foundational certainty that Jesus alone is the Giver of Meaning to human existence.”⁷⁹ For the disciple of Jesus, the importance of self becomes secondary and life is now lived with the meaning and purpose that Jesus gives.

Secondly, a disciple is required to hate his family. Verse 14:26 reads: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” These words are very harsh sounding, but he tells his followers that he must be their highest love and their most important relationship. J. Oswald Sanders explains:

The use of the word hate here has been the cause of considerable misunderstanding. The word Christ used is far removed from the normal connotation of the word in today’s usage. He does not tell us in one breath to love and honor our parents and then in the next to hate them. Jesus was using the language of exaggerated contrast. Hate here means simply “to love less.” So the disciple is a follower of Christ whose love for Him transcends all earthly loves.⁸⁰

John the Baptist’s response to his followers perfectly summarizes the idea of a disciple who places himself second to Jesus. John said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”⁸¹ Throughout

⁷⁸ Bonhoeffer, 79.

⁷⁹ McDonald, 127.

⁸⁰ Sanders, 22.

⁸¹ John 3:30.

a disciple's lifetime, Jesus must become more present in a disciple's life and actions, while the disciple loses his original life in the joy of following Jesus.

In the third condition, followers of Jesus are required to take up a cross. In his excellent commentary of the whole Bible, Matthew Henry wrote that disciples "must learn to endure hardship. We frequently meet with crosses in the way of duty; and, though we must not pull them upon our own heads, yet, when they are laid for us, we must take them up, carry them after Christ, and make the best of them."⁸² J. Oswald Sanders further explains:

What did the cross mean to Jesus? It was something He took up voluntarily, not something that was imposed on Him; it involved sacrifice and suffering; it involved Him in costly renunciations; it was symbolic of rejection by the world. And it is to cross-bearing of this nature that the disciple is always called. It involves a willingness to accept ostracism and unpopularity with the world for His sake. We can evade carrying the cross simply by conforming our lives to the world's standards...If the disciple is unwilling to fulfill this condition, Jesus said, "He cannot be my disciple."⁸³

Isak Du Plessis confirms: "A disciple of Jesus has to be prepared to accept the same rejection as Jesus."⁸⁴

The fourth condition for a disciple is to count the cost before deciding to follow Jesus. Greg Ogden comments: "Jesus was up-front with any would-be follower: 'If anyone would follow me - and I hope you will because I can give life abundantly - this is what you are in for' (see Mark 8:34-35)"⁸⁵ An essential element in any discipleship system would be to help the individual evaluate the commitment and the cost before they decide to follow Jesus. There is no eternal value to have someone make an emotional decision to follow Jesus without fully

⁸² Henry, 669.

⁸³ Sanders, 24.

⁸⁴ Isak J. Du Plessis, "Discipleship According to Luke's Gospel." *Religion & Theology* 2, no 1, (1995), 66. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001020613&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁸⁵ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 28.

understanding the commitment. Ogden adds: “Notice he uses the word ‘if’. That if reflects Jesus’ acknowledging our freedom to choose. A certain rich man heard Jesus’ call to discipleship, and he walked away (Mark 10:17-22). He heard what he was in for and judged it too costly.”⁸⁶

The fifth condition is that a disciple will renounce all that he has. Although some may indeed be very necessary, worldly possessions will not be the preoccupation for a disciple. In Mark's Gospel, we see the early disciples sacrificed to be with Jesus:

Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”⁸⁷

Jesus’ first apostles considered the cost and chose to follow him anyway.

Jesus’ disciples would have known the commitment they were making when they decided to follow him. Their cultural context would have helped inform them of the level of commitment they were making to their rabbi. Bonhoeffer writes: “The only right and proper way is quite literally to go with Jesus. The call to follow implies that there is only one way of believing on Jesus Christ, and that is by leaving all and going with the incarnate Son of God.”⁸⁸ Disciples need to be taught so that they fully understand the calling to a total commitment to the person and work of Jesus.

⁸⁶ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 28.

⁸⁷ Mark 10:28-31.

⁸⁸ Bonhoeffer, 52. Bonhoeffer comments on the importance of taking the first step of obedience: “The first step places the disciple in the situation where faith is possible. If he refuses to follow and stays behind, he does not learn how to believe. He who is called must go out of his situation in which he cannot believe, into the situation in which, first and foremost, faith is possible. But this step is not the first stage of a career. Its sole justification is that it brings the disciple into fellowship with Jesus which will be victorious.”

The Apostle Paul clearly understood the mandate and the cost of following Jesus. A look at the beginning of Paul's letters to the churches at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, and his pastoral letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon show Paul understood who he was in Christ:

- Paul, a servant [*doulos*] of Christ Jesus... Romans 1:1
- Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus...1 Corinthians 1:1
- Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus...Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 & 2 Timothy
- Paul, a servant [*doulos*] of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ...Titus 1:1
- Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus...Philemon 1

The word that Paul used for servant is the Greek *doulos* (transliterated). *Doulos* is best defined as one who gives himself up to another's will and those whose service is used by Christ to extend and advance his cause among men or one devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests.⁸⁹ The relationship orientation is essential because some servants or slaves are placed against their will, so slavery is subjected to them. In the Greek *doulos*, the stress is instead on the slave's dependence on his Lord.⁹⁰ A *doulos* is a willing bondservant of Jesus, placing himself under his master's teachings and care, with total devotion and dependence on him.

Meaning

Disciple

The word "disciple" used in the New Testament is the Greek word *mathetes* (transliterated). This was a common and familiar word in the Jewish context because Jewish rabbis would have disciples. John the Baptist had disciples. Jesus had disciples. The purpose of

⁸⁹ Thayer and Smith, *NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon*. δοῦλος. Accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/>.

⁹⁰ K. H. Rengstorff, G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, and G. Friedrich, *Theological dictionary of the New Testament electronic ed., Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), δοῦλος, σύνδουλος, δούλη, δουλέω, δουλεία, δουλόω, καταδουλόω, δουλαγωγέω, ὀφθαλμοδουλία, 261. Commenting on the Greek word group and word sense: "The distinctive feature of the self-awareness of the Greek is the thought of freedom. The Greek finds his personal dignity in the fact that he is free. Thus, his self-awareness stands out sharply from anything which stands under the concept δουλεύειν."

any form of discipleship is to become like the master. Francis Chan writes: “It’s impossible to be a disciple or a follower of someone and not end up like that person... That’s the whole point of being a disciple of Jesus: we imitate Him, carry on His ministry, and become like Him in the process.”⁹¹

What is unique about the context of Jesus’ use of *mathetes* is that he told them that even though they were called to be disciple-makers, he would always be their rabbi and have a lifetime of learning as his disciple.⁹² Jesus said to them, “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.”⁹³ Disciples of Jesus join in a lifetime of learning at his feet, imitating his life and character, and learning his way of doing ministry.

Disciples of Jesus do not become rabbis themselves, but instead walk alongside others as brothers and sisters, continually point people to one rabbi (one teacher): Jesus. First-century discipleship involved following Jesus’ relational model of disciple making and twenty-first century disciple making should follow the same formula. Bill Hull writes: “...spiritual awakening will happen when we walk backward into the future and restore disciple making to its first-century character, moving our base of operation outside the church walls while following Jesus’ example.”⁹⁴

The central relationships for a disciple were the close relationship they had with their rabbi, and the close relationships they had with other disciples. Mark Labberton writes about the

⁹¹ Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply. Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012), 16.

⁹² William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 183.

⁹³ Matthew 23:8-10.

⁹⁴ Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, 24.

importance of relationship and community among disciples of Jesus: “Community should be a natural cornerstone of life as a Christian disciple, we’re meant to be part of the community of God’s people. After all, Christian disciples can’t live faithfully by themselves, and we seldom hear the call of God alone.”⁹⁵ In a 2020 study of young disciples in eastern Canada, it was found that engaging in group activities was one of the strongest influences on depth of discipleship.⁹⁶ Relational disciple-making should continue to be of central importance in discipleship models.

Conformed Into the Image of Jesus

The very heart of discipleship is God’s primary will that disciples be conformed into the image of his Son:

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.⁹⁷

The inner being and character of a disciple are developed over time to become more like Jesus.

The goal for a disciple is to be like his teacher: “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher.”⁹⁸ Jesus becomes the standard, and a disciple’s life and character are measured against his. Jesus was righteous and godly, and his disciples should aspire to righteousness and godliness to be like him. Paul writes to his son in the faith Timothy of the eternal value of pursuing godliness:

⁹⁵ Mark Labberton, *Called. The Crisis and Promise of Following Jesus Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 80.

⁹⁶ Leslie J. Francis, Bruce G. Fawcett, Tracy Freeze, Renee Embree, and David W. Lankshear. “What Helps Young Christians Grow in Discipleship? Exploring Connections between Discipleship Pathways and Psychological Type.” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, ahead-of-print, 2020, 16.

⁹⁷ Romans 8:28-30.

⁹⁸ Luke 6:40.

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.⁹⁹

Disciples are trained in righteousness through knowledge and application of scripture in their lives. Paul writes in his second letter to Timothy: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”¹⁰⁰ The knowledge a disciple attains from the study of scripture trains and equips him for application in his life. Applying scripture allows a disciple to be equipped for every good work. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus that the goal of equipping the saints is to attain “...to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”¹⁰¹

As the Apostle Paul grew in maturity and stature in Christ, it allowed him to mentor men like Timothy and Titus. He was able to model Christian character so that he could write to the church at Corinth to “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”¹⁰² As disciples follow and grow in Christ, they can also model character growth as they mentor other believers. The aim of discipleship is to train and equip people in righteousness in order to develop into the character, image, and fullness of Christ. Rick Yount writes: “Proper discipleship seeks the Lord, and this is not mere acquisition of knowledge about the Lord. Scripture study is not the end but the beginning of transformation.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ 1 Timothy 4:6-8.

¹⁰⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

¹⁰¹ Ephesians 4:13b.

¹⁰² 1 Corinthians 11:1.

¹⁰³ Rick Yount, “The Mind: Discipleship that Forms the Thoughts of Christians—Reflections on Dallas Willard’s Thinking on the Mind (Thoughts).” *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 1 (04, 2019): 63. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fmind-discipleship-that-forms-thoughts-christians%2Fdocview%2F2184330260%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

Measures

Stages of Discipleship

A disciple is trained in righteousness and matures over a lifetime of following Jesus. A.B. Bruce describes Jesus' development of disciples in three progressive stages: "The twelve arrived at their final intimate relation to Jesus only by degrees, three stages in the history of their fellowship with Him being distinguishable."¹⁰⁴

Stage One: Declaration. "In the first stage, they were simply believers in Him as the Christ, and His occasional companions at convenient, particularly festive, seasons."¹⁰⁵ The question in stage one is: Will a person believe in Jesus?

Stage Two: Development. "In the second stage, fellowship with Christ assumed the form of an uninterrupted attendance on His person, involving entire, or at least habitual abandonment of secular occupations."¹⁰⁶ The question in stage two is: Will a person follow Jesus?

Stage Three: Deployment. "The twelve entered on the last and highest stage of discipleship when they were chosen by their Master from the mass of His followers, and formed into a select band, to be trained for the great work of the apostleship. This important event probably did not take place till all the members of the apostolic circle had been for some time about the person of Jesus."¹⁰⁷ The question in stage three is: Will a person go for Jesus? For Bruce, stage one centers on becoming a believer, stage two is about development as a disciple, and in stage three, the disciple is now a disciple-maker himself.

¹⁰⁴ Bruce, 27.

¹⁰⁵ Bruce, 27.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce, 27.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce, 28.

Bill Hull, from his book *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, describes the development of disciples on four stages based on the invitations given by Jesus. Michael Johnson tells us that the first three stages are adapted from F.F. Bruce's work in 1877.¹⁰⁸

Stage 1: Come and See. "Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and you will see.'"¹⁰⁹ Hull writes: "In effect he [Jesus] was saying, 'Come with me and you can see how I live.'"¹¹⁰ Philip made the appeal when he witnessed to Nathanael: "'We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'"¹¹¹

Come and see was the simple witness of the Samaritan woman at the well following her life-changing conversation with Jesus: "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"¹¹² For someone to believe in Jesus, they must be invited into his presence. Paul writes to the Romans about the importance of sending witnesses into the world: "For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"¹¹³ The come and see stage is where seekers are allowed space to discover Jesus.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Johnson, "Stages in Disciple-Growing: There's Not One-Best-Way for Everyone to Grow in Christ." *Network* (blog). <https://network.crena.org/small-groups/stages-disciple-growing-theres-not-one-best-way-everyone-grow-christ>.

¹⁰⁹ John 1:39a.

¹¹⁰ Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, 29.

¹¹¹ John 1:45-46.

¹¹² John 4:29.

¹¹³ Romans 10:13-15.

Stage Two: Come and Follow me. “And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.”¹¹⁴ Why would these men immediately follow Christ? Hull explains: “These men followed Jesus at his bidding because they had already been with him. A chronological review of the disciples’ exposure to Jesus reveals that during the initial four-month come and see period; they received an intensive exposure to Jesus and to the nature of ministry.”¹¹⁵ The movement from stage one to stage two will take time. Following Jesus’ model will allow people the necessary time to investigate Jesus and consider the costs before deciding to follow. Once the decision is made to follow, then disciples can be trained and equipped in the fundamentals of the faith. This stage is marked by the initial training in righteousness and godliness.

Stage Three: Come and Be with Me. Hull writes: “After they had gone through the process of being established in the basics of ministry, the disciples were ready to actually be with Jesus, taking part in the mission of spiritual harvesting. It would not be a four-month stint this time. This time it would be for life! During the come and be with me phase, Jesus’ trainees made the critical transition from established disciples to equipped laborers.”¹¹⁶ For Jesus’ disciples, this phase was around two years, but the Book of Acts demonstrates the growth in the disciples continued well beyond their time with Jesus.

Stage Four: Remain in Me. “If you abide [remain] in me, and my words abide [remain] in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this, my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”¹¹⁷ In the final stage for a maturing believer, the goal is abiding in Christ so that the disciple bears fruit. Abiding [remaining] in Christ is essential

¹¹⁴ Mark 1:17-18.

¹¹⁵ Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, 69.

¹¹⁶ Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, 124.

¹¹⁷ John 15:7-8.

for bearing fruit. Jesus said: “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.”¹¹⁸

John Koessler states that spiritual growth, like human physical growth, develops in stages. He writes: “One of the assumptions behind the complaint of Hebrews 5:12 is the expectation that normal Christian growth should occur over time: ‘By this time you ought to be teachers.’”¹¹⁹ Koessler categorizes three stages of growth as 1. Infancy, 2. Adolescence, and 3. Maturity, based on the words of the Apostle John: “I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.”¹²⁰ While John may have been literally writing to young men, fathers, and children, one can figuratively see the stages of discipleship and spiritual development in relation to human growth. The responsibility each stage carries is also evident in the movement from a child to a father. Koessler writes: “The spiritual infant knows God by faith. The spiritually mature believer knows Him by faith and experience.”¹²¹ Koessler advises that there will be a “...range of spiritual levels in the church. The church’s strategy for discipleship must take this into account by providing a range of opportunities for believers at every level of development.”¹²²

Delays in Spiritual Development

The Bible is clear that God is faithful to abide in those that abide in him. There are struggles that can stunt the growth of disciples, and delays in discipleship must be viewed from the perspective and actions of the disciple. The writer of Hebrews states:

¹¹⁸ John 15:5.

¹¹⁹ Koessler, 72.

¹²⁰ 1 John 2:13.

¹²¹ Koessler, 74.

¹²² Koessler, 75.

About this, we have much to say, and it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.¹²³

The writer of Hebrews stated they were “slow to learn.”¹²⁴ Koessler amplifies: “The Greek adjective translated ‘slow’ in this verse is a term that was commonly used in the New Testament era to speak of sluggishness or neglect...As a result, they had stalled in their spiritual development.”¹²⁵ Bill Hull writes that people can delay their discipleship progress by not abiding and practicing spiritual disciplines of the faith. There are many believers that should be more mature than they are: “‘By this time you ought to be teachers.’ In essence, the writer to the Hebrews was saying to his spiritually immature readers, ‘You have some really bad habits.’ Instead of serving as proponents for the kingdom of God, they had stagnated and lost their passion. Their spiritual formation was actually a malformation of passivity and a retreat from making disciples themselves.”¹²⁶

Understanding the stages of development for a disciple is critical, but the challenge is to measure the progress an individual is making through the discipleship stages. Identifying objective measurements and outward observations that can be made to evaluate the maturity of a disciple is the focus of this section of the literature review.

¹²³ Hebrews 5:11-14.

¹²⁴ Hebrews 5:11.

¹²⁵ Koessler, 75. The Greek word translated “slow” is *Nothros* (transliterated). Also translated in English texts as *dull of hearing (ESV)*, *no longer trying to understand (NIV)*, *spiritually dull*, and *don't seem to listen (NLT)*.

¹²⁶ Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 202.

Spiritual Fruit

The transformation in a disciple's life is almost completely the work of the Holy Spirit. God does what only he can do, and a disciple does his part through obedience. Earley and Dempsey describe the disciple's part in discipleship as "cooperating with the Holy Spirit."¹²⁷ We simply come alongside the Spirit and join in the work that he is already doing. The work starts with evangelism, as the Holy Spirit is already working in the heart of a seeker. It continues into the maturing of a disciple, as the Holy Spirit develops the heart of a believer.

Jesus makes a promise to a disciple who loves him and keeps his commandments: "...I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."¹²⁸ Francis Chan comments: "Jesus said that the Father would give the disciples 'another Counselor to be with [them] forever' (14:16 NIV). In this case, the Greek word 'another' means another that is just like the first (as opposed to another that is of a different sort or kind). So, Jesus was saying that the One who would come would be just like Him!"¹²⁹ Jesus also promises that the Holy Spirit will dwell inside of a disciple, and will teach and remind a disciple of truth: "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."¹³⁰ The work of the Holy Spirit should ultimately manifest itself in the life of a disciple.

¹²⁷ Earley and Dempsey, 29.

¹²⁸ John 14:15-17.

¹²⁹ Francis Chan, *Forgotten God. Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*, iBooks, 30.
<https://books.apple.com/us/book/forgotten-god/id490713941>.

¹³⁰ John 14:25-26.

Biblically, fruit has two dimensions with respect to discipleship. One dimension is the fruit of the Spirit in personal character transformation; the second dimension is spiritual gifting and the bearing of fruit in productive ministry service as God works in and through a disciple. Greg Ogden comments regarding fruit resulting from a disciple's quiet time communing with the Holy Spirit through God's Word: "Healthy fruit in our lives is the byproduct of well-nourished and cultivated roots. If we sink our inner life deep into the truth of God's Word, life will blossom in us."¹³¹ If a disciple does his part, the Holy Spirit is faithful to do his part.

Personal Character Transformation

The Apostle Paul writes that the work of the Holy Spirit is manifested in the fruit of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...."¹³² These character attributes listed by Paul as the fruit of the Spirit are character attributes of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit themselves. If you want to describe Jesus, you can simply look to the fruit of the Spirit for a description. A disciple who is becoming like Christ, with the Holy Spirit working in his heart, will begin to manifest the fruit of the Spirit in greater measure as he matures.

Jesus tells his disciples that people will be known by the fruit they manifest. "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. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."¹³³ Just as one can approach an apple tree and see apples, one can approach a disciple of Jesus and

¹³¹ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 33.

¹³² Galatians 5:22-23a.

¹³³ Luke 6:43-45.

see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Or, by contrast, one can approach a person and see hate, stress, conflict, impatience, cruelty, depravity, lack of faith, harshness, self-centeredness, and self-indulgence. While difficult to measure objectively and empirically, the attitude and countenance of a believer is a measure of the maturity of a disciple and the stage of discipleship.

Bearing Fruit in Ministry

Jesus said to his disciples: “By this, my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”¹³⁴ Early and Dempsey confirm that not only does fruit take the form of personal character development in the form of Christ-like love, Christian character, and “most importantly, other Christians.”¹³⁵ Jesus states that goal of bearing fruit would be that the fruit itself would abide. Disciples would make disciples that would become mature followers in Jesus and would abide in such a way that they would become disciple-makers themselves. In personal spiritual transformation and in productive ministry, Earley and Dempsey state it plainly: “The measure of discipleship is fruit.”¹³⁶

Methods

Dependence on the Holy Spirit

Ultimately, methods, strategies, and programs alone will not make true disciples of Jesus. Rick Yount writes: “Proper discipleship requires the intentional, ongoing engagement of the Holy Spirit as Discipler. Without him, discipleship plans and programs must fail because, being

¹³⁴ John 15:8 and 15:16.

¹³⁵ Earley and Dempsey, 108.

¹³⁶ Earley and Dempsey, 106.

human-driven, they have no power within themselves to transform hearts.”¹³⁷ Jesus tells his disciples what they can expect from the coming Holy Spirit: “...the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”¹³⁸

Klaus Issler writes “A number of questions and hesitations may arise regarding the topic of character formation. This is no moral formation project done by our own human power, but it must be initiated and sustained by God’s empowering grace.”¹³⁹ Issler adds: “Deep character formation requires that we attend to the core of our self – the heart – and cooperate with God’s good work within.”¹⁴⁰ The Holy Spirit makes and matures disciples, and it is the disciple’s role to cooperate in the process. As Paul Pettit writes: “The process of spiritual formation (the believer becoming more like Christ) is a mysterious outworking of both God’s initiative and involvement over time *and* a concerted response or action plan by the individual believer who fully understands that growth graciously proceeds from God.”¹⁴¹ Nel Malan adds: “It is safe to assume that for whatever kind of ministry we need preparation, equipping, training – to name but a few possible translations for *katarizein*...we need help to be able to help...Within the field of practical theology, there is indeed a new emphasis on our dependence on the work of the Spirit.”¹⁴² With that important clarification regarding dependence on the Holy Spirit made,

¹³⁷ Yount, 63.

¹³⁸ John 14:26.

¹³⁹ Klaue Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus. The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 33.

¹⁴⁰ Issler, 33.

¹⁴¹ Pettit, 23.

¹⁴² Nel, Malan. "Discipleship: Seeking the 'Kingdom and His Righteousness'." *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017), 6.
<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fdiscipleship-seeking-kingdom-his-righteousness%2Fdocview%2F2332156322%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

research on the biblical methods of discipleship educates the church in structuring a discipleship program to come alongside the Holy Spirit to cooperate in disciple-making.

Biblical Discipleship Methods: Jesus

Biblical discipleship methods form the foundation for all other historical discipleship methods. Early and Dempsey set the tone: “We are called to make disciples, and the model and structure we choose should be based on biblical principles.”¹⁴³ By studying the discipleship methods of Jesus, Paul, and the early church, we can learn the biblical methods critical to any program of discipleship.

Jesus Christ made disciples in the context of relationships. Although Jesus taught thousands and healed multitudes, his earthly ministry centered on twelve men, with whom he walked and had relationships. Jesus was their rabbi, and they were his disciples. As reviewed previously, according to Bill Hull, there are four stages of Jesus’ discipleship ministry:

- Stage One: Come and See.
- Stage Two: Come and Follow Me.
- Stage Three: Come and Be with Me.
- Stage Four: Remain in Me.

Jesus was working with the pressure of a three-year ministry window, but he allowed the disciples to come without pressure tactics. Hull writes: “Jesus launched his ministry with a simple invitation: ‘Come and see.’ During this inaugural four-month period, he allowed people to observe who he was and to learn what he planned to do. He answered their questions at length. But even though he was indeed the Messiah, he did not force himself on the people of Israel.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Earley and Dempsey, 273.

¹⁴⁴ Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, 33.

In an important moment in Jesus' ministry, he selected his Apostles from among the many disciples that began to follow him:

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.¹⁴⁵

Jesus prayed to his Father and then selected twelve faithful men. These men would be the focus of his life and ministry. A.B. Bruce writes:

From the time of their being chosen, indeed, the twelve entered on a regular apprenticeship for the great office of apostleship, in the course of which they were to learn, in the privacy of an intimate daily fellowship with their Master, what they should be, do, believe, and teach, as His witnesses and ambassadors to the world. Henceforth the training of these men was to be a constant and prominent part of Christ's personal work.¹⁴⁶

To Jesus, relationships were critical. "Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus had all kinds of relationships with all kinds of people. Hundreds, even thousands, of people flocked to him everywhere he went. Yet he chose twelve men as disciples to entrust with his mission...."¹⁴⁷

Jesus took a group of twelve men, and except for Judas Iscariot, charged them to carry the gospel forward as they became leaders of his church. The early chapters of the Book of Acts record the works they did following Pentecost in proclaiming Christ, healing people, and providing leadership to the church. The job of discipleship was being passed on from Jesus to his disciples, and it would now be their job to make other disciples. Jesus had modeled relational ministry, and we see in the book of Acts that the early church continued that model, especially visible in the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

¹⁴⁵ Luke 6:12-16.

¹⁴⁶ Bruce, 52.

¹⁴⁷ Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus. Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 119.

Biblical Discipleship Methods: Paul

The Apostle Paul understood the church as a biblical family. Paul's epistles to the churches expressed family imagery and spoke of the church relationally in family terms. He writes to Timothy, "Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity."¹⁴⁸ Joseph Hellerman writes that the family imagery Paul used was in four categories, "affective solidarity, family unity, material solidarity, and family loyalty."¹⁴⁹ Solidarity, unity, and loyalty were evident in the early church. Hellerman writes: "People did not convert to Christianity solely because of what the early Christians believed. They converted because of the way the early Christians behaved."¹⁵⁰ David Platt writes of the contrast we see between the modern church (particularly the American church) and the first-century church: "When you turn through the pages of the New Testament, you see a very different picture of the church. Instead of a building, you see a body made up of members and a family made up of brothers and sisters who together have died to themselves and are living in Christ."¹⁵¹

Paul followed Jesus' model for building up ministry leaders. He selected men and would work closely and personally with them to mentor them as they traveled on missionary journeys together. He would model ministry and Christian character to men like Timothy, Silas, Luke, and Titus. Early and Dempsey describe Paul's experiential leadership in five stages:

1. Know what Jesus taught.
2. Find faithful men.

¹⁴⁸ 1 Timothy 5:1-2.

¹⁴⁹ Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family. Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2009), 78.

¹⁵⁰ Hellerman, 105.

¹⁵¹ David Platt, *Follow Me. A Call to Die. A Call to Live* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 153.

3. Spend regular time with your faithful men.
4. Do ministry together.
5. Let them do it without you.¹⁵²

Paul followed Jesus' model because, as he was equipping faithful men for the ministry; he was also modeling and imitating Jesus. The examples of both Jesus and Paul show us the core of discipleship and leadership development in the relational context.

Biblical Discipleship Methods: Early Church

In the first century, we see the church described as a body of believers with Christ as the head (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 1, 4). The early church was known for the love that Christians had for one another. Outwardly, Christian love was expressed in care for the poor, widows, and orphans, visits to the condemned in prison, and acts of compassion during famine or war.¹⁵³ The first century church is described in the book of Acts as a tight knit community of believers who depended on each other:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.¹⁵⁴

Scripture describes the picture of the body made up of different people who are depending on one another to do their part. The church working as a body is the model for roughly the first three hundred years of the church, with believers actively serving the church.

¹⁵² Earley and Dempsey, 155-163.

¹⁵³ Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 35.

¹⁵⁴ Acts 2:42-47.

Summary: Theological Foundations

The theological foundations for discipleship clearly describe the biblical mandate, meaning, measures, and biblical methods of discipleship. The church has a clear biblical mandate from Jesus and relational examples to follow from the life and ministries of Jesus, Paul, and the early church. Theologically, scripture describes disciples as those who would put their faith in Jesus, and follow after him with a desire to become like him. A disciple's life and character are transformed over time by the work of the Holy Spirit (and the cooperation of the disciple) to resemble Jesus. Disciples mature through stages of development, which are observable and measurable in the speech, actions, and behaviors of the disciple. Ultimately, the maturity of a disciple can be measured in the fruit produced by his transformed life, both fruit of the Spirit in the disciple's personal development, and in the fruit produced by the disciple's ministry.

Theoretical Foundations

This section establishes the theoretical framework based on the theological foundations discussed in the last section. The research now focuses on the theoretical and practical application of discipleship measures and models in the megachurch context. Specifically:

- What practical ways can the church measure maturity in a disciple?
- What can the church learn from discipleship models practiced throughout church history?
- What practical discipleship model does Southwest Church use to encourage the movement of disciples through stages of maturity?

Baptizing and Teaching

The biblical mandate calls the church to make disciples by baptizing and teaching obedience to followers of Jesus. In the early stages of a disciple's journey, he is called to make a public profession of faith "because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe

in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”¹⁵⁵ Discipleship must include the opportunity for believers to make a public declaration of their faith.

This public declaration is sometimes done at an altar call responding to a salvation message, or many churches make the ceremony of baptism that public moment. Baptism is an important milestone for a believer and should be encouraged and celebrated by the church body. Jesus modeled obedience to the Father by being baptized by John the Baptist.¹⁵⁶ Because new believers are infants and children in the faith, baptism must be followed by teaching the early-stage believers the foundational truths of the faith.

Teaching within the discipleship model must include the truths of scripture, but critically important is the need to teach obedience to the Word of God and how to apply scripture to one's life. Klaus Issler states: “Through scripture our worldview can become aligned with God's view of reality...The Bible provides an exclusive set of truth claims about key matters of life and reality itself that we can find nowhere else.”¹⁵⁷ Isak Du Plessis writes: “Discipleship is more than outward acknowledgement. Only when his commands and words are obeyed and implemented can a true relationship be effected. This means that discipleship is not merely cognitive acceptance, but rather existential decision.”¹⁵⁸

In the early stages, discipleship involves moving people from conversion, through baptism, and into an introduction to the foundational elements of the faith that Brad Waggoner would describe as part of a “deliberate process of moving Christians forward spiritually.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Romans 10:9.

¹⁵⁶ Jesus' baptism: Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3.

¹⁵⁷ Issler, 142.

¹⁵⁸ Du Plessis, 63.

¹⁵⁹ Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 14.

Measures

Transformed Life

Measurements of discipleship begin with outward indications of inward spiritual change. The life of a disciple must be changed as he pursues training in righteousness and godliness. Jim Putman simply states: “What does a mature disciple look like then? If that definition does not end up looking like one who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and committed to the mission of Jesus, then our definition has holes in it.”¹⁶⁰ Maturing believers should produce observable qualities that George Barna describes of true discipleship:

1. Produces holistic personal transformation, not mere assimilation into a community of church members.
2. Determines people to be a blessing to others—people who are never content to simply accept and enjoy God’s blessings.
3. Creates Christians who aggressively pursue spiritual growth.
4. Spawns individuals who develop renewed lifestyles instead of believers who mechanically check off completed assignments.
5. Results in people who are more concerned about the quality of their character than the extent of their knowledge.¹⁶¹

In addition to the observations that can be made of an individual disciple’s behaviors and actions, Jim Putman adds that there are representative things disciples might say which can reveal their stage of development:

1. Spiritual Infants – Believers.
 - a. “I don’t have to go to church to be a Christian.”

¹⁶⁰ Jim Putman, “A Better Way to Make Disciples”, 3.

¹⁶¹ Barna, 167.

- b. “I don’t have to be in relationship with another Christian.”
- c. “I pray and read my Bible; that is good enough for me.”
- d. “I didn’t know the Bible said that.”¹⁶²

2. Spiritual Children – Learners.

- a. “I am not being fed at my church, so I am going to a church that meets my needs better.”
- b. “Who are all these people coming to my church? Tell them to go somewhere else.”
- c. “I love my small group. Don’t add any more people to it.”
- d. “I don’t have anyone who is spending enough time with me; no one is discipling me.”
- e. “My small group is not taking care of my needs.”¹⁶³

3. Spiritual Young Adults – Servers.

- a. “Look at how many are at church today – it’s awesome! I had to walk two blocks from the closest parking spot.”
- b. “In my devotions I came across something I have a question about.”
- c. “I think I could lead a group with a little help. I have three friends I have been witnessing to, and this group would be too big for them.”
- d. “Randy and Rachel missed group and I called to see if they were okay. Their kids have the flu, so maybe our group can make meals for them. I’ll start.”¹⁶⁴

4. Spiritual Adults – Leaders.

¹⁶² Putman, *Real Life Discipleship*, 92.

¹⁶³ Putman, *Real Life Discipleship*, 106.

¹⁶⁴ Putman, *Real Life Discipleship*, 127.

- a. “This guy at work asked me to explain the Bible to him. Pray for me.”
- b. “We get to baptize someone from our small group tonight. When is the next 101 class? I want to get her plugged into ministry somewhere.”
- c. I realized discipleship happens at home, too. Will you hold me accountable for discipling my kids?”
- d. “Our small group is going on a mission trip, and I have given each person a different responsibility. Where do you think we should go?”¹⁶⁵

Jeff Stott describes five stages of spiritual growth: 1. Seeker, 2. Believer, 3. Learner, 4. Server, and 5. Leader.¹⁶⁶

Stage One – Seeker. In this stage, the seeker is not a believer in Jesus Christ but is seeking answers to life’s greatest questions. It is important to remember that this person is spiritually dead and needs to be introduced to Christ with the hope of moving to stage two.¹⁶⁷

Stage Two – Believer. When a seeker believes they enter this stage, which is spiritual infancy. Because they are spiritual infants, stage two believers need “individual attention from a mature believer” to explain the basic truths found in scripture and to model the lifestyle of a growing believer.¹⁶⁸

Stage Three – Learner. As a believer matures, they enter stage three, which is spiritual childhood. Although this stage of development is marked by excitement and motivation, it is also a time of childish actions, rebellion, and self-centeredness.

Stage Four – Server. As a learner grows, they enter stage four, which is the young adult stage. A server has an intermediate grasp of scripture, and they have a great desire to “serve,

¹⁶⁵ Putman, *Real Life Discipleship*, 143.

¹⁶⁶ Jeff Stott, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Ephesians 2:1.

¹⁶⁸ Jeff Stott, 2. Scripture ref: 1 Peter 2:2 and 1 Corinthians 3:1.

help, bless, and to make their life count.”¹⁶⁹ The church can provide encouragement and accountability, as well as help identifying spiritual gifting and other ministry skills.

Stage Five – Leader. In this final stage of development, a disciple is “spiritually mature enough to reproduce disciples.”¹⁷⁰ A leader acts as a spiritual parent for other discipleship stages, helping them to grow and develop.

Practically speaking, life transformation in a disciple should manifest into observable behaviors that can be measured. It can also be observed in the language characteristics of disciples in ordinary interactions at the church. Some elements may require self-assessment in order to provide measurement, but the goal of discipleship is that a person's life is actually and literally being transformed and conformed into the image of Jesus.

Measurable Actions

There are numerous measurable actions that can be observed in the lives of believers. Bill Hull outlines five characteristics with competencies that should be visible in maturing disciples:

1. A disciple abides in Christ through the Word and prayer. The disciple possesses a faith that embraces discipleship and distinguishes itself from a mere agreement or intellectual assent with demonstrated proof.
2. A disciple bears much fruit. The disciple’s faith embraces discipleship and is defined historically by people who took action.
3. A disciple responds to God’s love with obedience. Jesus distinguished a faith that embraces discipleship as thoughtful obedience instead of religious words.
4. A disciple possesses joy. Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.”

¹⁶⁹ Jeff Stott, 3. Scripture ref: 1 John 2:13.

¹⁷⁰ Jeff Stott, 5. Scripture ref: 1 Corinthians 4:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:11.

5. A disciple loves as Christ loved. Jesus said: “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.”¹⁷¹

These actions and attitudes are visible but might not be measurable. Many of the measurements of internal spiritual health and development will need to be made using a self-assessment survey.

Dr. Adam McClendon writes of the activity of faith described by the apostle Paul in the book of Galatians: “Faith is not merely a momentary act, but a decision that continually governs the course of one’s spiritual experience throughout their life...Genuine faith will bring about a change and be manifested in the course of one’s spiritual journey.”¹⁷² There are three practical areas based on biblical principles that can be measured in an individual disciple to determine if there is positive spiritual development: Time, Talent, and Treasure. These measures will only tell part of the story of a disciple’s development. But, these objective measurements can be used in combination with self-assessments to achieve the overall assessment of the progress of a disciple.

Time

Does the disciple spend time in personal study and prayer with Jesus? Jesus modeled this for us in the time he spent alone with his heavenly Father: “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”¹⁷³ A disciple should spend time in prayer following the model of his Master.

Does a disciple spend time in service to others? As a disciple matures, he will desire to spend time in service to others. Paul Pettit writes:

All of us come to a point in our lives where there is a serious examination of our gifts, our personality, and our passions. We come to a point in life where we examine our "uniqueness" and how God has "wired us." We come to a point in life where we really contemplate how to engage people in contexts around us,

¹⁷¹ Hull, *Complete Book of Discipleship*, 46-47. Scripture ref: John 13:34.

¹⁷² Dr. Adam McClendon, *Paul’s Spirituality on Galatians. A Critique of Contemporary Christian Spiritualities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 129.

¹⁷³ Mark 1:35.

loving people as God would have them loved. We join the saints of old in looking at how God has called us.¹⁷⁴

As disciples mature, they understand their role in serving the body of Christ. Disciples must also understand that they are just living out the purposes that God uniquely created them to do:

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”¹⁷⁵

Observation and a survey of disciples would reveal if, as a result of discipleship, they served more, which may evidence maturing as a disciple. As a result of discipleship, it could be noted if they felt a desire or a calling to a specific ministry passion or need.

Talent

In this instance, the word talent will be reserved for gifting, skills, and abilities that a disciple possesses to serve the church, the lost, and the less fortunate. Spiritual gifting is supplied by the Holy Spirit when a disciple comes to faith and is to be used for service in the body of Christ: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”¹⁷⁶ Bill Hull writes of the importance of serving the body: “I want to express this clearly, but in a way that I fear will be misunderstood: As Christians, we become the corporate Christ. As Bonhoeffer so eloquently put it, ‘Christ exists on earth through his body... We each have roles within the body individually, but we can build ourselves up in love only when we have others to love.’”¹⁷⁷

Talent also applies to the responsibility the church has to steward the potential of individuals in our church communities to develop leaders to their true potential. Alan Hirsch states “...the quality of the church’s leadership is directly proportional to the quality of the

¹⁷⁴ Pettit, 197.

¹⁷⁵ Ephesians 2:10.

¹⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:7. Context: Description of the Body of Christ, made up of one body and many parts.

¹⁷⁷ Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 165.

discipleship. If we fail in the area of making disciples, we should not be surprised if we fail in the area of leadership development.”¹⁷⁸

Observation and a survey of disciples should reveal if they are exploring their gifting, talents, and abilities. Is a disciple combining his time and talents in service to God, or are the talents being spent in commercial and business ventures only? As a result of discipleship, has the individual started to explore their spiritual gifting and to seek to understand how they are specifically shaped by God to serve others? In addition: Is the church developing the spiritual gifts of potential leaders to ensure continuity and growth beyond the current generation of leaders?

Treasure

Scripture clearly teaches us that God owns everything and that we are merely stewards of what belongs to him.¹⁷⁹ The Psalmist celebrates that God owns everything and everyone: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.”¹⁸⁰ Paul tells the church at Colossae: “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”¹⁸¹ It is all about Jesus, and as Rick Warren sets the tone at the beginning of *The Purpose Drive Life*: “It’s not about you.”¹⁸²

The way we consider money is a heart issue. Jesus knew that money would be a potential trap for his disciples when he warned: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve

¹⁷⁸ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), 127.

¹⁷⁹ Scripture reference: Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30.

¹⁸⁰ Psalm 24:1 (*emphasis added*).

¹⁸¹ Colossians 1:16.

¹⁸² Warren, 17.

God and money.”¹⁸³ Disciples can be measured by the way they give, save, and spend money. Disciples can be measured on the proportional amount they give to Christian organizations, compared to how much they save and spend.

Disciples are encouraged in scripture to eliminate debt from their lives when possible:

- “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.”¹⁸⁴
- “Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you?”¹⁸⁵
- “Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”¹⁸⁶

It is not the goal of discipleship to police the spending of the members but simply to see if an experiential knowledge of Jesus will change their giving, saving, and spending habits. A survey of disciples could show if they had less debt, more savings, or more giving. A change in these behaviors and attitudes toward money may evidence the maturing of a disciple. As a result of discipleship, it could be noted if their spending habits changed to become less materialistic or self-centered and if they were generous and forgiving.

Models

Bill Hull writes: “Discipleship isn’t just one of the things the church does, it *is* what the church does.”¹⁸⁷ The theoretical foundations of discipleship will review the historical models for making disciples and seek to understand the best practices allows churches and individuals to

¹⁸³ Matthew 6:24.

¹⁸⁴ Proverbs 22:7.

¹⁸⁵ Proverbs 22:26-27.

¹⁸⁶ Romans 13:7-8.

¹⁸⁷ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 24.

walk on the well-worn and established paths for disciple-making. The modern-day church can learn lessons, both good and bad, from the history of the church that have been modeled for over two millennia. Many changes to discipleship models have occurred throughout church history, and these changes inform this research on how the church has arrived at modern-day practices.

Historical Discipleship: Middle Ages

The growth of hierarchical leadership grew during the Middle Ages as the church developed a more institutional structure. Leadership hierarchy elevated the professional clergy over the volunteer laity throughout the Middle Ages, especially within Roman Catholicism. Ogden writes that the sacerdotal functions of the church were exclusively the work of priests “acting as intermediaries between God and the people...A holy order was necessary in order to handle the holy sacraments. Only a priest, changed by ordination, was consecrated to hold the sacred elements.”¹⁸⁸ The elevation of the priests resulted in the view that there were two kinds of people: clergy and laity. Ogden adds: “Ordination was viewed as a kind of second baptism that lifted clergy into a higher stage of Christian achievement, while the laity lived a compromised life.”¹⁸⁹ The increase in papal authority during the Middle Ages had an undermining effect on discipleship. By the seventh century, church doctrine had been corrupted with increased church teaching on purgatory, prayers for the dead, and adoration of Mary.¹⁹⁰

Historical Discipleship: Reformation

Men such as Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli led the Protestant Reformation in the 1500’s. They were rebelling against Roman Catholic doctrine and (for Luther particularly) for

¹⁸⁸ Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business. Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 67.

¹⁸⁹ Ogden, *Unfinished Business*, 67.

¹⁹⁰ Gordon Isaac, “Lecture 3: Early Church and the Middle Ages.” <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/early-church-and-middle-ages/church-history>.

the selling of indulgences. These leaders wanted to return the church and the gospel to their classic roots. Luther believed that all Christians were priests, and the role of the priest was not an appointment to a high church office:

Because they are justified by grace through faith alone, according to Luther, all Christians are priests unto God. That is another of his basic theological principles. Whereas the medieval church has elevated a particular class of men called priests to a special spiritual status as mediators between sinners and God with supernatural powers to absolve guilt and perform sacraments, Luther elevated every true believer to the same spiritual status. He referred to the entire church as the “communion of saints” and the “evangelical priesthood.”¹⁹¹

The theology of a priesthood of believers has been part of evangelical traditions since the reformation. But, many churches (both denominational and non-denominational) have set up hierarchical systems of governance that have allowed a drift back into a preference for professional clergy that works against the theology of a priesthood of believers.

In modern times, there has been a desire of many church leaders to return the ministry to the people. Modern-day reformers are challenging the church to rethink the calling that is on a believer’s life. Greg Ogden speaks of flipping the current script, and instead of ordaining a few select people who lead the church, the church should be ordaining all baptized believers, and then a few leaders brought from the body will work to support them.¹⁹² Discipleship in this context involves church leaders who believe it is the job of the church to equip the laity. The church would need to accept that the work of the ministry is performed by lay people, and not necessarily performed by professional clergy.

This method of discipleship is at the heart of returning the church to its classic first-century roots and is in alignment with Ephesians 4:11-12: “And he gave the apostles, the

¹⁹¹ Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 391-392.

¹⁹² Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business*, 269.

prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” John Stott states this well:

The New Testament concept of the pastor is not a person who jealously guards all ministry in his own hands and successfully squashes all lay initiative, but one who helps and encourages all of God's people to discover, develop and exercise their gifts. His teaching and training are directed to this end, to enable the people of God to be servant people, ministering actively but humbly according to their gifts in a world of alienation and pain. Thus, instead of monopolizing all ministry himself, he actually multiplies ministries.¹⁹³

Ed Stetzer expresses his concern over the church being divided into two classes: “My fear is that we have created a class system in the body of Christ comprised of the ‘called’ [clergy] and the ‘not so-called’ [laity].”¹⁹⁴ He explains that the danger in this class system is that it naturally produces professional ministers who do much of the work of ministry and spectators (or customers) who view from the sidelines praying and paying for the ministry. A pillar of *The Purpose Driven Church* is that every member is a minister. Rick Warren states: “Every believer isn’t a pastor, but every believer is called into ministry...Service in the body is not optional for Christians.”¹⁹⁵

In discussing Luther’s lasting legacy on the church, Elaine Graham writes about the importance of participation in God’s mission (*missio Dei*) by equipping believers theologically: “If the *missio Dei* leads to these tasks of attending, acting, and bearing witness, then this will require the church not just to treat the laity as reserves of labour or activism, but to build them up as sources of wisdom – an informed and theologically-literate laity.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message to the Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 167.

¹⁹⁴ Ed Stetzer, “Laypeople and the Mission of God, Part I.” *Christianity Today*. July 17, 2012. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/july/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-1--killing-clergy.html>.

¹⁹⁵ Warren, 368.

¹⁹⁶ Elaine Graham, “Luther’s Legacy: Rethinking the Theology of Lay Discipleship 500 Years after the Reformation.” *Ecclesiology*. 13, no. 3 (2017): 345.

All followers of Jesus were created for ministry and have also been called into ministry: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”¹⁹⁷ As part of a discipleship strategy, churches need to equip people who have been created by God for ministry and called by God into ministry.

Historical Discipleship: John Wesley

John Wesley (1703-1791) was an Anglican priest and the founder of Methodism. Moved emotionally by his encounters with Moravian believers during a mission to Savannah, Georgia, Wesley was motivated to develop a methodology to help people grow spiritually.¹⁹⁸ Wesley developed interlocking groups, each tailored to a specific function, which he referred to as societies, classes, and bands.

Wesleyan Societies

The Wesleyan society was the largest of the groups that included Methodists in a given geographic area. The society can be thought of as the modern congregation and focused primarily on cognitive instruction. Henderson writes: “The Methodist society was the focal point of group identification. In relation to the other groups within the Methodist system, the society was the hub of all other functions; it was the ‘umbrella’ group of the organization in that all other related groups came under its jurisdiction.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ 2 Peter 2:9-10.

¹⁹⁸ Shelley, 333-335.

¹⁹⁹ Henderson, 82.

Wesleyan Classes

Wesley's class meeting is widely praised as one of his most significant contributions to the Christian group experience. D.L. Moody stated: "The Methodist class meetings are the best institutions for training converts the world ever saw."²⁰⁰ Classes were smaller groups that met to encourage proper Christian behavior and holy living. Initially, the class meetings were not voluntary: every Methodist became a member of a class and attended regularly, or else they would no longer be eligible to be a member of the larger society.²⁰¹ Leaders of class meetings were identified and developed from the larger society.

Wesleyan Bands

Wesley's bands were the smallest and most intimate within the Methodist group structure. Unlike the other groups, the band was homogeneous: grouping members by gender, age, marital status, and so on. The bands were voluntary and consisted of complete openness and honesty. Wesley was convinced that believers needed the intimacy and depth that a band would provide. Overall, in the Methodist system, "It could be said metaphorically that the society aimed at the head, the class meeting for the hands, and the band for the heart."²⁰² D. Michael Henderson makes this comment on Wesley's disciple-making:

The Wesleyan revolution is an illustration that long-lasting spiritual transformation is not the product of dynamic preaching or of correct doctrine. It only comes through serious disciple building, in keeping with Jesus' Great Commission to "go into all the world and make disciples." The class meeting which Wesley developed was the instrument by which preaching and doctrine were harnessed into spiritual renewal. It carried the revolution.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Winfield Bevens, *Marks of a Movement. What the Church Can Learn Today From the Wesleyan Revival* (New York: Harper Collins, 2019), 91.

²⁰¹ Henderson, 93.

²⁰² Henderson, 110.

²⁰³ Henderson, 30.

The modern church can learn from Wesley's methodical group approach to discipleship, especially in creating our small groups (Classes) and accountability groups (Bands). Wesley's commitment to group life was also his secret to developing leaders. Class leaders were identified, developed, and placed into the class meetings from the larger society. The church can learn from Wesley's simple dual standard for excellence: "Is it scriptural, and does it work."²⁰⁴

Utilizing a Relational Context at Southwest Church

The relational discipleship context seen to Jesus, Paul, and throughout church history should be demonstrated in large gatherings, small groups, and more intimate discipleship and accountability groups. Southwest Church has developed a relational discipleship strategy that begins with weekend services and endeavors to move people through to our small group ministry. The four-step process at Southwest Church is: Planted, Rooted, Growing, and Going.

- **PLANTED:** We want to welcome people well and get them planted into Southwest Church. We believe everyone should be planted in a Bible teaching church.
- **ROOTED:** Rooted is our foundational discipleship and small group experience. It connects the unconnected and provides our first discipleship and leadership development opportunities.
- **GROWING:** Everyone at Southwest should be part of a healthy, growing, and multiplying small group. Our small group ministry helps disciples learn how to make other disciples while serving our church, our valley, and the world.
- **GOING:** Disciples walk alongside someone else as they journey to become a follower of Jesus.

Figure 2.1. Southwest Church Discipleship Pathway. Image: *Southwest Church, 2021.*

²⁰⁴ Henderson, 113.

Planted – Weekend Services

Weekend ministries at Southwest Church are designed to get people planted in the word of God and the church body. The weekend service is a large group gathering similar to the Wesleyan society. The weekend worship service provides a first-step connection for a seeker to become connected and planted to the church.

***Rooted* – The *Rooted* Experience**

The *Rooted* experience offers many believers their first small group experience. Like the Wesleyan class meeting, *Rooted* provides essential teachings on Christian doctrine and experiential opportunities to serve, pray and give. Ultimately, this experience's goal is to get people rooted in their faith and relationships with other believers.

Rooted is also the beginning of leadership development and training. Participants in the *Rooted* experience are screened and vetted to be future *Rooted* co-leaders and ultimately lead their own groups. After leading *Rooted* groups successfully, leaders can be equipped and encouraged to lead other small groups. This research project will measure and seek to improve the *Rooted* experience to make the overall discipleship ministry more effective.

Growing and Going – Small Groups

Small group ministry is at the heart of the Southwest Church discipleship model. While *Rooted* is the front door, small groups are the living room where people can experience life together and live out their faith relationally. The small group ministry allows believers to experience a group similar to the Wesleyan bands.

Small groups are where growth will occur and groups will also be catalyst for service to the church and outreach to the community and the world. Small groups will be encouraged to grow, serve, and go together in order to live out their faith. Phil Maynard writes it this way:

“Discipleship is a contact sport. It happens in connection with other believers. Small groups are the most common expression of relational connections (even if they are not specifically focused on the discipleship journey).”²⁰⁵ A vibrant and active small groups community provides needed connection for the unconnected in a church. Dave and Jon Ferguson explain: “From the very beginning, God’s dream was to satisfy our relational, emotional, and spiritual needs through community – a relational oneness that we experience vertically with God and horizontally with other human beings...God designed us to feel like something is missing when we’re not connected with him and others.”²⁰⁶

Going in the Southwest Church context involves disciples making other disciples. Believers walk alongside another person as they journey to become a fully-developed follower of Jesus Christ.

Five Levels of Development

This research will utilize five levels of discipleship development, adapted from the works of Jim Putman, Bill Hull, Jeff Stott, and A.B Bruce. The five levels for this research are seeker, believer, learner, server, and leader. These levels have biblical support and mark significant spiritual growth changes that should be observable and measurable.

This research will focus on stages one through three, with the primary goal of measuring believers’ movement in stages two and three. The discipleship model utilizing the *Rooted* experience materials is designed to move believers toward a more mature stage.

²⁰⁵ Phil Maynard, *Shift 2.0. Helping Congregations Back into the Effective Game of Ministry* (Knoxville, TN: Markey Square Publishing, 2018), 117.

²⁰⁶ Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 89.

Measurement Characteristics

Measurements of the effectiveness of discipleship in a church should endeavor to evaluate the life change occurring within an individual (personal spiritual growth). Many observable behaviors and actions will be measurable, and a personal growth survey will assess the less observable elements of personal growth. The measuring tools and personal survey tools created for this research will evaluate the progress of disciples in the *Rooted* experience.

Many churches and parachurch organizations have developed surveys to measure the maturity level of disciples. Objective measurement tools, such as church attendance, small group involvement, service project participation, and generosity records, will provide numerical data to the research. However, this data is only part of the overall measurement that could show movement in the believer's maturity. To measure spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, devotions, worship, and Sabbath, a more subjective personal survey will be developed.

Table 2.1

	Stages of Discipleship Maturity				
	1	2	3	4	5
Jim Putman <i>Language and Behavior Characteristics</i>	Spiritually Dead <i>Unbelief</i>	Infant <i>Ignorance</i>	Child <i>Self-Centeredness</i>	Young Adult <i>Service God-Centered Other-Centered</i>	Adult <i>Intentionality Strategy</i>
Bill Hull	Come and See	Come and Follow Me		Come and Be with Me	Remain in Me
Jeff Stott	Seeker	Believer	Learner	Server	Leader
A.B. Bruce Earley and Dempsey	Declaration		Development		Deployment
Phil Maynard EMC ³ Ministry Coaching ²⁰⁷	Searching	Beginning		Growing	Maturing
Paul Johnson Canadian National Baptist Convention ²⁰⁸ <i>Language and Behavior Characteristics</i>	Curious <i>Hungry</i>	Believer <i>Being Fed</i>		Disciple <i>Feeding Themselves</i>	Disciple-Maker <i>Feeding Others</i>
John Koessler <i>1 John 2:13</i>	Infancy <i>"I write to you, dear children..."</i>		Adolescence <i>"I write to you, young men..."</i>		Maturity <i>"I write to you, fathers..."</i>
Greg Ogden ²⁰⁹ Growth of the Apostles <i>Readiness Level</i>	Seeker <i>Hungry to know</i>	Observer and Imitator <i>Ready to observe</i>	Student <i>Ready to interact</i>	Short-Term Missionary <i>Ready to be used</i>	Apostle <i>Ready to assume full responsibility</i>
Southwest Church	Planted				
	Rooted				
	Growing				
	Going				

²⁰⁷ Phil Maynard, EMC³ Ministry Coaching. <https://emc3coaching.com/>. Accessed 2/5/2021.

²⁰⁸ Paul Johnson, Disciple Making Stages. Canadian National Baptist Convention. <https://disciplemakingstages.com/portfolio/stages-explained/>. Accessed 2/5/2021.

²⁰⁹ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship, Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 82.

Summary: Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical foundations of discipleship provide examples of practical application for the church in the areas of discipleship program models and measurement of maturity. While the primary work of discipleship is done by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individual believers, the church can provide structure and encouragement to help a believer move through the stages of maturity. The structure and programs that a church provides is especially important in the early stages for infants (believers) and children (learners) in the faith, providing initial faith foundations.

Biblical and historical discipleship methods and models inform the church of the importance of developing disciples in a relational context. The church should develop discipleship models that place people in relational environments for encouragement and support. As a disciple develops in maturity, the group experience can and should take different shapes of increased leadership and accountability. The maturity of a disciple is observable and measurable through speech, actions, and behaviors.

The church should esteem making mature disciples, and the discipleship model of a church should encourage individuals to progress through the stages of maturity. It is the first priority of the church to come alongside Jesus in transforming lives to encourage and equip believers on to maturity in their faith. Large-scale, programmatic models of discipleship are a method and a tool to assist churches in moving people toward maturity in the faith. These methods are not an end in themselves, but a working element of a much larger cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Southwest Church has designed a discipleship model that encourages people to connect with others, be rooted and growing in their faith, and going to make disciples in our valley and in the world.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Intervention Design

Overview

The research into the effectiveness of the *Rooted* experience in the discipleship of early-stage adult believers at Southwest Church will rely on a series of survey questionnaires and interviews from *Rooted* participants, *Rooted* group leaders, and church staff. The questionnaires and interviews are designed to evaluate the spiritual changes in *Rooted* participants. When possible, the survey questionnaires will be supplemented by gathering available serving and giving statistical data from the church databases.

Southwest Church adopted the *Rooted* experience as a front door, single entry point for discipleship foundations, small group introduction, and small group leadership development. This research will utilize the existing *Rooted* experience to evaluate its effectiveness and areas for improvement. The ten-week *Rooted* sessions during 2021 will be conducted as they have been over the past two years. Participants from 2019, 2020, and 2021 will be assessed for growth in spiritual maturity due to the *Rooted* experience. Because the focus of this research is early-stage believers, the measurement tools are designed to evaluate each participant's stage of development. This research will survey participants on the spiritual disciplines that are core focuses of *Rooted*: prayer, Bible reading, generous giving, practical service, and sharing their faith stories.

Once the survey questionnaires have been gathered and analyzed, conclusions can be made and submitted to the leadership of Southwest Church. These conclusions will include advising on the overall effectiveness of the *Rooted* experience and suggested changes to improve disciple-making among early-stage believers.

Measurement Tools

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation tools have been designed to identify early-stage believers and measure their spiritual progress attributed to the *Rooted* experience. Quantitative and qualitative data are both essential to obtain a complete assessment, with quantitative data providing tangible confirmation of changes in levels of participation and generosity. While the survey responses will be anonymous, the individual's specific *Rooted* session will be a required answer to sort the survey results by session.

Quantitative Giving and Serving Data

Quantitative measurements will be obtained by comparing objective changes in ministry participation, serving participation, and giving levels before and after the *Rooted* experience. Southwest Church tracks ministry involvement through a central database, and giving levels to the church can be obtained from the church finance department. Quantitative serving and giving data for 2019 and 2020 sessions will be derived for the six months before *Rooted* and the six months following *Rooted*.

The information accessed from church systems for serving and financial data will be grouped by session for anonymity and confidentiality, and individual names will be withheld. Because serving and generosity often occur outside of church-related opportunities, the individual participants will also be surveyed to determine their current attitudes and participation in these areas. This survey will allow comparison and confirmation between the objective data and subjective survey data.

Qualitative Data: Participant Survey Questionnaires

The responses from the individual participants will provide comparative assessments of the participant's spiritual growth stage. Questions assessing spiritual stages will position the

participant's maturity on the five-stage maturity spectrum in Table 2.1. The spiritual stage questions are a variety of open-ended, multiple-choice, and either-or styles to target each participant's specific language and behavior characteristics. These responses will be evaluated for changes in the language and behavior characteristics that would indicate spiritual growth.

Because the focus of this study is the spiritual development of early-stage adult believers, the spiritual maturity assessment will be critical to providing the primary sorting of participants by stage. The early-stage believer responses from each *Rooted* session will be segregated and analyzed separately from the balance of the responses. The primary analysis will concentrate on the spiritual development of early-stage believers. The results for all participants at all spiritual stages will provide a comprehensive summary of the overall impact of the *Rooted* experience for Southwest Church.

In the *Rooted* specific portion of the survey, the questionnaires will ask participants to provide feedback on the *Rooted* experience's overall impact on them. The *Rooted* questions are a variety of open-ended, multiple-choice, and Likert scale styles to provide the proper response formats. The questions are structured to solicit the participant's "before *Rooted*" and "after *Rooted*" conditions to measure the overall effectiveness in encouraging growth in the participants during the *Rooted* experience.

Participant Survey: Design of Spiritual Stage Assessments

As stated previously, to accomplish the goal of this research, participants will need to be classified and sorted into their spiritual maturity levels. As a result, it is necessary to develop assessment tools designed to measure the spiritual development stage of an individual participant. The spiritual maturity tools designed for this research involve two assessments:

- 1) a participant self-assessment and 2) a measured assessment.

Participant Survey: Design of Spiritual Stage Self-Assessment

Eight multiple-choice and six open-ended questions were given to the survey participants to begin the research survey. This portion of the survey is intended to allow the participant to self-assess their level of spiritual maturity. The questions are designed to correlate to the five levels of spiritual maturity: spiritually dead, infant, child, young adult, and adult. For the self-assessment and measured assessment, the stages of infant and child are combined and referred to as early-stage believers. The combination of the two early stages is shown in Table 3.1.

The self-assessment results can be compared against the measured assessment to determine if the participant's self-assessment agrees with the measured assessment (Was the self-assessment accurate, understated or overstated?). The self-assessment responses can also be analyzed to determine if specific responses are more predictive of the individual's spiritual maturity in the measured assessment section. For example, if the individual answers that they tithe (ten percent), is that predictive of a person who will be considered a more mature (adult) believer?

Table 3.1

Spiritual Assessment Combined Stages				
1	2	3	4	5
Spiritually Dead	Early-Stage Believer		Young Adult	Adult
Spiritually Dead <i>Seeker</i>	Infant <i>Believer</i>	Child <i>Learner</i>	Young Adult <i>Server</i>	Adult <i>Leader</i>

Participant Survey: Self-Assessment – Question Detail

One question from the self-assessment will allow the participants to directly describe their spiritual maturity, selecting from four options (with typical stages described in parenthesis):

I would describe myself as...

- a) A believer who serves regularly but is not quite ready to lead others (young adult).
- b) A new believer in Jesus Christ – or in the early stages of my faith (early-stage believer).
- c) A believer for a long time, but I have never been really active in my faith (early-stage believer).
- d) A mature follower of Jesus Christ, ready and equipped to lead others (adult).

Three multiple-choice questions are designed to determine if someone is a believer at any stage or is potentially spiritually dead (seeker):

Who I say Jesus is...

- a) Jesus was a great moral teacher (seeker).
- b) I am confident that Jesus is the only way to heaven.
- c) Jesus is one of the ways to get to heaven (seeker).
- d) I'm still learning who Jesus was (seeker).

What I believe about Christianity...

- a) Christianity is one of the great world religions (seeker).
- b) Christianity teaches good moral behaviors (seeker).
- c) Christianity is the only true faith.
- d) Christianity is largely based on other religions (seeker).

What I believe about truth...

- a) I believe in what is visible and verifiable (seeker).
- b) I believe the Bible contains real truth.
- c) Truth can be known, but it can be different for each person (seeker).
- d) There is no absolute right and wrong (seeker).

Four multiple-choice questions will provide information in four primary areas: Bible reading, serving, prayer, and giving (generosity). These four areas are essential to spiritual development and are a primary focus during at least one week of the *Rooted* experience. The four questions are listed below (with typical stages described in parenthesis):

My Bible reading...

- a) I read my Bible every day (adult).
- b) I prefer someone leading me through the Bible (early-stage believer).
- c) I read my Bible occasionally on my own (young adult).
- d) I rarely read my Bible (early-stage believer).

My Serving...

- a) I don't serve very often (early-stage believer).
- b) I serve often in church-arranged events (young adult).
- c) I would serve more regularly, but I'm too busy right now (early-stage believer).
- d) I serve often, and I invite others to serve with me (adult).

About prayer...

- a) I don't pray very often (early-stage believer).
- b) I pray mostly before meals (early-stage believer).
- c) I pray when I need to talk to God (young adult).
- d) I pray often and feel like something is missing when I don't pray (adult).

About giving...

- a) I give regularly to the church and/or other Christian causes (young adult).
- b) The church doesn't need my money (early-stage believer).
- c) I tithe 10% or more to the church or other Christian causes (adult).
- d) I would give, but I can't afford to at this time (early-stage believer).

These first eight multiple-choice questions will provide a structured response format and a consistent initial self-assessment for all participants.

The self-assessment section also includes six open-ended questions that solicit responses in the participants own words (own voice):

1. In your own words, how does someone become a Christian?
2. What is your view on money (generally), savings, and debt?
3. Are you currently serving at the church or in ministry? Do you know where you serve best?
4. Are you aware of any areas in your life that you haven't fully surrendered to God?
5. Are there areas that you need to grow spiritually? Were these revealed during *Rooted*?
6. After *Rooted*, describe any changes in your life in the areas of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control.

These answers will be analyzed for words, speech, and actions typical for the spiritual maturity stages. Language and behavior characteristics are summarized from the previous sections of this research in table 3.2. The answers provided in these open-ended questions will be analyzed for consistency with the language and behaviors in the measured assessment.

Table 3.2

Spiritual Stages: Language and Behavior Characteristics				
1	2	3	4	5
Spiritually Dead <i>Seeker</i>	Early-Stage Believer <i>Believer/Learner</i>		Young Adult <i>Server</i>	Adult <i>Leader</i>
Unbelief Hungry to know	Ignorance Self-focused Being fed Observing/Interacting		Service God-centered Other-focused Feeding themselves Ready to be used	Responsible (spiritually) Intentional (spiritually) Feeding others Ready to lead others

Participant Survey: Design of Measured Assessment

The measured assessment portion of the survey questionnaire contains a mixture of multiple-choice, open-ended, and either-or questions. Responses will be evaluated and measured against the expected language and behaviors in Table 2.1 and summarized in Table 3.2.

The twenty-six either-or questions are biased toward the language and behaviors of specific spiritual stages. Table 3.3 below contains a snapshot of six of the twenty-six either-or questions. For example, the survey participant is asked to choose between two options regarding serving in the church. The responses are subtly different, with one response indicating a preference to be invited to serve, and the other response indicating that the participant will serve in an area needed by the church:

Table 3.3

Spiritual Stage Either-Or Questions

<input type="checkbox"/> I want to honor God with the choices I make in movies and music <input type="checkbox"/> God doesn't care about the movies I watch or the music I listen to	<input type="checkbox"/> I volunteer to serve where I am needed <input type="checkbox"/> I volunteer to serve where I am invited
<input type="checkbox"/> I mostly find security in what I can control <input type="checkbox"/> My security is in my faith	<input type="checkbox"/> I try to not to use foul language <input type="checkbox"/> God doesn't care if I use foul language
<input type="checkbox"/> I have a daily practice of prayer <input type="checkbox"/> I pray to God occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/> I see myself mostly as a servant/minister <input type="checkbox"/> I see myself mostly as a church member

52 statements
26 pairs

Dead
Seeker
☐ = 1

Infant
Believer
☐ = 15

Child
Learner
☐ = 15

Young Adult
Server
☐ = 15

Adult
Leader
☐ = 6

While the responses are admittedly subjective based on the ministry experience of the researcher, the survey response to serve where the church needs the participant will be viewed as the more spiritually mature response due to the participant seeing the needs of others and the needs of the church as more important. The response to serve where invited would still be considered the

response of a believer but would indicate a less mature stage in comparison due to the focus on self and the need to be invited.

The either-or questions contain twenty-six pairs with fifty-two individual statements. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of the statement responses within the five spiritual stages. The participant responses will be tabulated into five columns representing the spiritual stages and should measure a leaning toward the spiritual level of the participant. Figure 3.2 shows a sample graph of the either-or assessment for an early-stage believer (Stage 3: Child/Learner).

While the either-or questions have been carefully designed using the spiritual characteristics described in this project, the researcher concedes that the either-or question

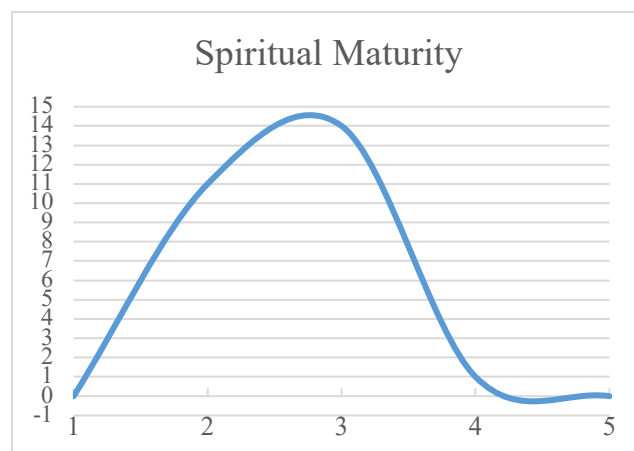


Figure 3.1. Sample Either-Or Response Graph.

format has limitations. Participant responses may be limited due to the wording of responses not being clearly written. Also, respondents might try to guess what the researcher is looking for, over-estimate their level of spirituality, or supply a response that they wish was true of them. These challenges to the research survey responses will be true of all of the survey sections, so the whole of the survey responses will need to be evaluated in their totality to achieve the best measurement of spiritual maturity in a participant.

Survey Distribution

The survey questionnaires will be available in a printed format (contained in Appendix B) for those participants who desire to respond to a written form. In the printed format, the research consent form will be required before a participant is provided the survey questionnaire.

The consent form will be segregated and kept separate from the anonymous survey questionnaires.

Due to current COVID gathering restrictions and our large population of seasonal residents, the survey questionnaires will be available through a web-based survey tool called Survey Monkey to maximize the greatest possible responses. Proper controls are in place so that the survey will allow

only one reply per device, responses are anonymous, and the research consent form is required to access and submit the survey questionnaire.

Quantitative Giving and Serving Data

Quantitative measurements will be obtained by comparing objective changes in ministry participation, serving participation, and giving levels before and after the *Rooted* experience. Southwest Church tracks ministry involvement through a central database, and giving levels to the church can be obtained from the church finance department. Quantitative serving and giving data for 2019 and 2020 sessions will be derived for the six months before *Rooted* and the six months following *Rooted*.

The information accessed from church systems for serving and financial data will be grouped by session for anonymity and confidentiality, and individual names will be withheld. Because serving and generosity often occur outside of church-related opportunities, the individual participants will also be surveyed to determine their current attitudes and participation in these areas. This survey will allow comparison and confirmation between the objective data and subjective survey data.

The image shows a screenshot of the SurveyMonkey 'Confidentiality Controls' settings panel. It is divided into three sections: 'MULTIPLE RESPONSES:', 'RESPONSE EDITING:', and 'ANONYMOUS RESPONSES:'. Each section has a title bar with a question mark icon and an expand/collapse arrow. The 'MULTIPLE RESPONSES' section has two options: 'On, allow the survey to be taken more than once from the same device' (unselected) and 'Off, only allow the survey to be taken once from the same device' (selected with a green dot). The 'RESPONSE EDITING' section has three options: 'On, respondents can change their answers on any survey page until they complete the survey' (selected with a green dot), 'On, respondents can change their answers even after they complete the survey' (unselected), and 'Off, respondents can't change their answers once they leave a survey page' (unselected). The 'ANONYMOUS RESPONSES' section has two options: 'On, your respondents will be anonymous' (selected with a green dot) and 'Off, include respondents' IP addresses in your survey results' (unselected).

Figure 3.2. Confidentiality Controls. *Survey Monkey*.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Rooted is a copyrighted study and cannot be modified. Therefore, the research data will provide necessary feedback to determine if the *Rooted* materials effectively encourage and develop early-stage believers. Because the church cannot modify the *Rooted* materials themselves, the results of this research could reveal a change is needed in the discipleship materials themselves, and the church should be open to that possibility.

If the *Rooted* materials prove effective, the church should analyze how it conducts the *Rooted* experience. The church should view the execution (methods and manner) of the *Rooted* experience as an opportunity for continued improvement. The researcher desires that the tools created for this research will allow assessment of each future *Rooted* session, and continuous development should result.

Research Milestones

Milestones will measure the progress of this research journey. Each milestone will have specific goals to ensure the project's progress and momentum are maintained. Research milestones are summarized in Table 3.1.

Final Preparation: This step will involve developing research questionnaires and survey tools using a Southwest Church staff focus group to ensure the questions are clear and understandable. During this first phase, the language and behavior characteristics in Table 2.1 will be developed into a final set of evaluative words and behaviors to assess participants' and leaders' responses objectively. The evaluation tools will be submitted to the IRB for approval with the goal for Milestone One completion of September 1, 2021.

Milestone One: After IRB approval and following the staff focus group and any refinements to the survey questionnaires, the participant and leader survey questionnaires will be

distributed to *Rooted* graduates from 2019, 2020, and the spring 2021 session. Collection of quantitative serving and giving data for 2019 and 2020 *Rooted* participants and leaders will also occur during this phase. The targeted date for Milestone Two completion is September 15, 2021.

Milestone Two: The second portion of the research journey will involve sorting and categorizing the survey questionnaire responses. Preliminary assessments of the data and participant responses will be made to determine and schedule follow-up interviews. The target date for the completion of Milestone Two is September 30, 2021.

Milestone Three: The third milestone will include follow-up interviews to clarify responses, final sorting, and categorizing all data. The researcher will complete data analysis and write the results and conclusions sections of the thesis with a target completion of October 15, 2021.

Milestone Four: The final milestone will involve professional proofreading of the entire thesis writing project and support any final writing edits. The proofreading will also help any editing to how the research data is presented to ensure completeness and clarity. Milestone four will be complete when the research thesis is ready for final submittal. The targeted completion of the final research milestone is October 31, 2021.

Table 3.4

Research Milestones	
Final Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group meetings and improvement sessions. • Final development of research questionnaires and survey tools. • Expansion and finalization of evaluative language and behaviors. • Development of online survey tool (i.e., Survey Monkey). • Submittal and approval from IRB. <p>Target completion date September 1, 2021.</p>
Milestone One DMIN 885 Milestone One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of survey questionnaires to previous <i>Rooted</i> participants and leaders from 2019 and 2020. • Collection of quantitative serving and giving data for 2019 and 2020 <i>Rooted</i> participants and leaders. • Distribution of survey questionnaires to spring 2021 <i>Rooted</i> participants and leaders. • Begin collection of survey responses. <p>Target completion date September 15, 2021.</p>
Milestone Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorting and categorizing survey questionnaire responses. • Assessment of participant and leader responses. • Assessment of quantitative serving and giving data. • Drafting initial assessment and data analysis. <p>Target completion date September 30, 2021.</p>
Milestone Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up interviews. • Final sorting, categorizing, and assessment of all data. • Finalizing writing of results and conclusions. <p>Target completion date October 15, 2021.</p>
Milestone Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final submission of DMIN Research Thesis. <p>Target completion date October 31, 2021.</p>

Methodology: Summary

The thesis for this project is: If Southwest Church implements the *Rooted* experience effectively, then individual adult believers will be developed, encouraged, and equipped as disciples of Jesus Christ. Although the actual amount of spiritual growth is assumed to be non-linear and unique to every believer, there will be measurable individual results. New believers and early-stage disciples will take necessary spiritual growth steps.

Based on the project thesis, the successful outcome of this intervention depends on a sufficient participation allowing an accurate assessment of the efficacy of the *Rooted* experience. It is also the desire of the researcher that the tools developed for this project be proven effective and continuously adapted, improved, and used in the future for the discipleship ministries of the church. The researcher also desires that the tools developed for this project be shared and used in other churches and ministry contexts to evaluate the spiritual maturity of disciples and the effectiveness of discipleship programs and strategies.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

This analysis has two purposes: 1) Assemble and organize the responses of the efficacy of the *Rooted* experience, 2) Analyze the survey questionnaire to determine how effectively it assesses the spiritual maturity of the participants. The *Rooted* experience feedback will be sorted by *Rooted* session and by the spiritual maturity stage of the participants. The spiritual maturity responses will be organized by 1) self-assessment and 2) measured assessment.

The survey questionnaires were distributed entirely online through the Survey Monkey tool, with no participants requesting printed surveys. Survey Monkey confirmed 662 prospective participants received survey questionnaires. One hundred sixty-five surveys were returned to the researcher (25% response rate). The researcher determined 31 responses to be incomplete and excluded them from the research, leaving 134 (20%) complete responses included in the analysis. The targeted completion date for the survey responses was September 15th; however, the survey was left open through September 31st to maximize the number of responses before closing the survey. Detail of responses received per day is shown in Table 4.1:

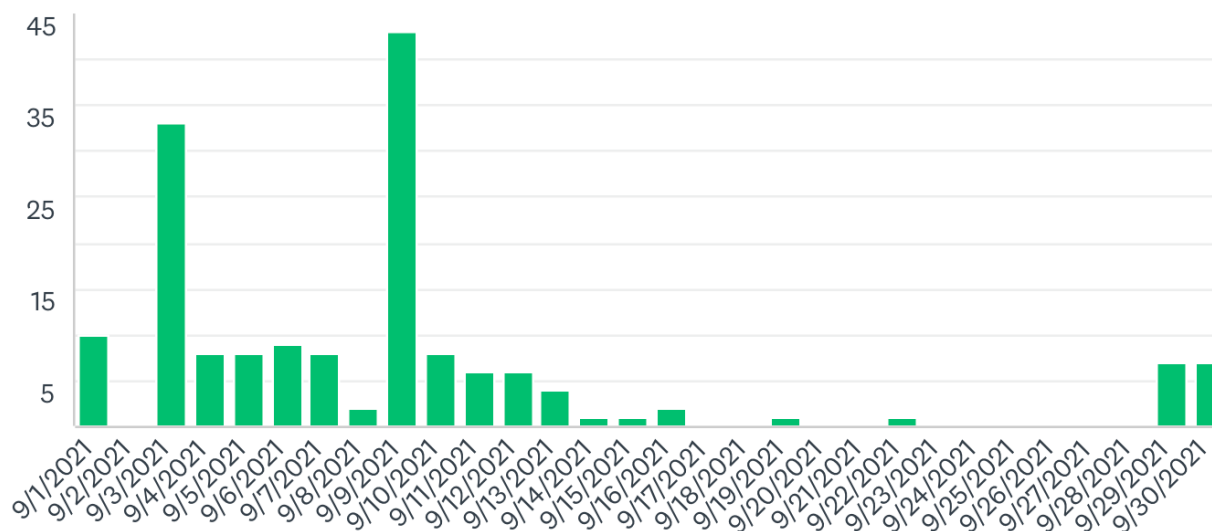


Figure 4.1. Responses per day 9-1-2021 through 9-30-2021.

Interestingly, the responses received early in the survey window were typically measured as adult believers and young adult believers. In contrast, the responses received later in the window were typically measured as early-stage believers (26 of 28 later responses). The spiritual maturity self-assessment and the measured assessment identified the 134 participants maturity as follows:

- 59 Adult Believer (AB) participants
- 37 Young Adult Believer (YAB) participants
- 38 Early-Stage Believer (ESB) participants.

Self-Assessment Summary

The self-assessment allowed the participant to describe their spiritual maturity from their perspective directly. Analysis from the fourteen questions (eight multiple-choice and six open-ended) provided insights and a predictive correlation between the self-assessment and the measured assessment.

Self-Assessment: Multiple Choice Questions

Three of the multiple-choice questions (*Who I say Jesus is, What I believe about Christianity, What I believe about truth*) differentiated if a participant is a believer at any stage or is spiritually seeking. These questions did not reveal any participants included in the survey results which were unbelievers or seeking. All participants in the survey professed faith in Christ, Christianity as the only true faith, and the Bible contained real truth. The five other multiple-choice questions provided significant differentiation and predictive patterns relating to the measured assessment.

One multiple-choice question asked the participant to self-describe their maturity, and the results are summarized in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1:

Table 4.1

I would describe myself as...	All	AB	YAB	ESB
A believer who serves regularly but is not quite ready to lead others.	23%	9%	24%	47%
A new believer in Jesus Christ – or in the early stages of my faith.	1%	0%	0%	5%
A long-time believer, but I have never been really active in my faith.	10%	3%	11%	16%
A mature follower of Jesus Christ, ready and equipped to lead others.	66%	88%	65%	32%

Of all participants, 66% described themselves as mature followers of Jesus Christ, ready and equipped to lead others. Only 1% of participants described themselves as new believers.

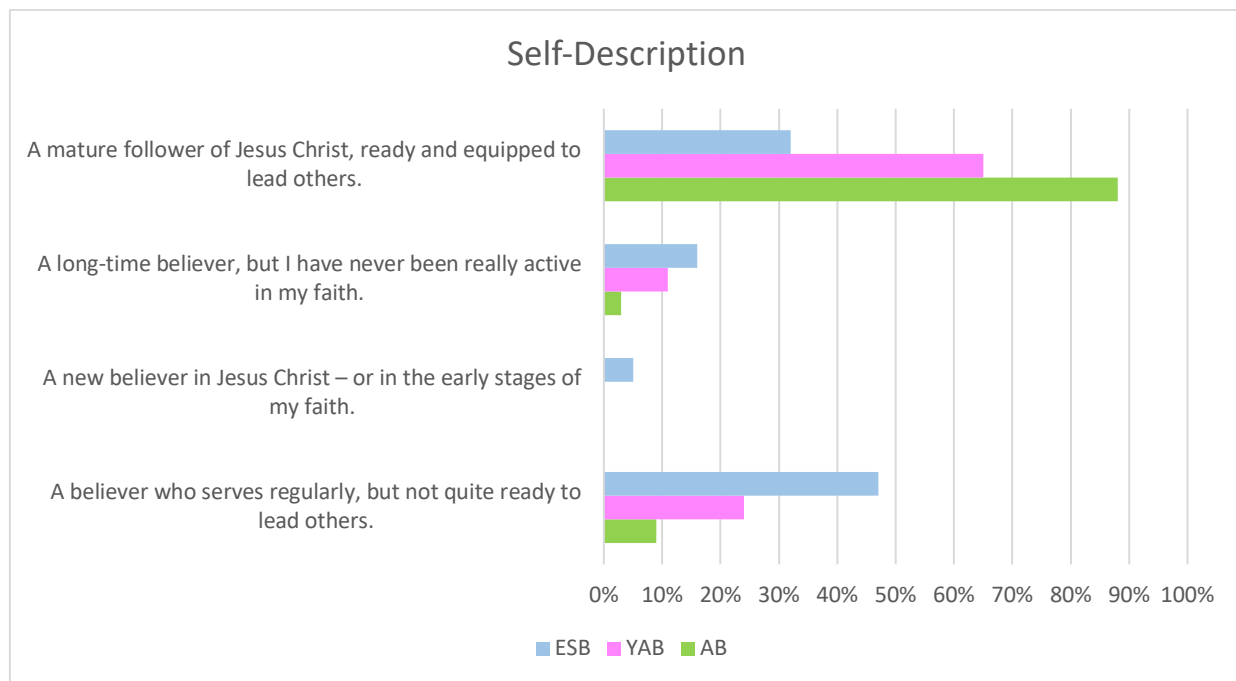


Figure 4.2. Self-Assessment: Self-Description Responses.

Eighty-eight percent of adult believers and 65% of young adult believers described themselves as mature followers of Jesus. This self-assessment question was one of the most predictive when compared to the measured assessment. An interesting number is the 32% of early-stage believers that described themselves as mature followers. One of the assumptions of this research was that believers could classify their level of spiritual maturity incorrectly. Jim

Putman states, “Many Christians have an inaccurate assessment of their own level of spiritual maturity as well as the level of those around them.”²¹⁰ The responses from early-stage believers that they were mature followers may be an overstatement or misunderstanding what maturity is.

Four questions in the self-assessment asked the participants to identify their discipleship habits of Bible reading, serving, prayer, and tithing. These are essential measures of maturity and also a growth focus of the *Rooted* experience. Each of these spiritual disciplines is emphasized specifically during at least one whole week during *Rooted*.

Table 4.2

My Bible reading...	All	AB	YAB	ESB
I read my Bible every day.	65%	86%	52%	50%
I prefer someone leading me through the Bible.	8%	2%	14%	16%
I read my Bible occasionally on my own.	25%	10%	32%	32%
I rarely read my Bible.	2%	2%	2%	2%

Of all participants, 65% responded that they read their Bible every day. One of the more prominent predictors of spiritual maturity is 86% daily Bible reading in adult believers.

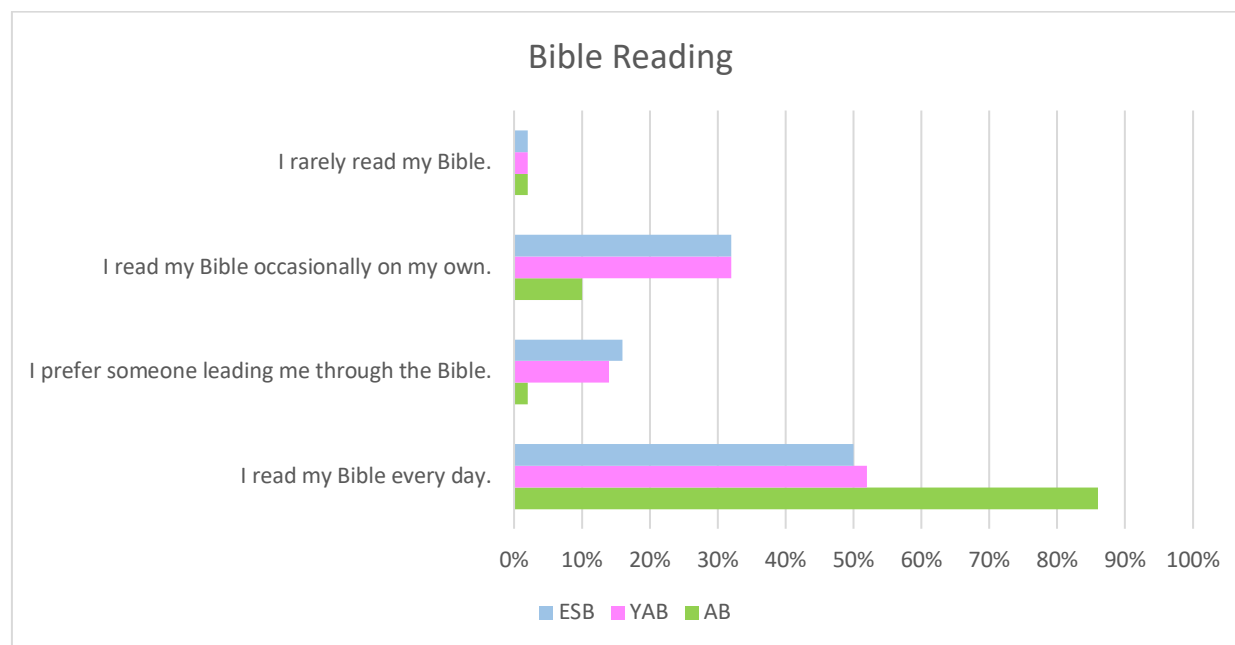


Figure 4.3. Self-Assessment: Bible Reading Disciplines.

²¹⁰ Jim Putman, *Real Life Discipleship*. Chapter 3.

One predictor in young adult believers and early-stage believers is reading their Bible occasionally (AB and ESB both responded with 32%). Daily Bible reading versus occasional Bible reading appears to be a consistent predictor of spiritual maturity.

Table 4.3

My serving...	All	AB	YAB	ESB
I don't serve very often.	16%	7%	17%	26%
I often serve in church-arranged events.	30%	30%	32%	34%
I would serve more regularly, but I'm too busy right now.	15%	5%	19%	26%
I serve often, and I invite others to serve with me.	39%	58%	32%	13%

Serving habits of participants provided a wide distribution of responses. Of adult believers, 58% responded that they served often and invited others to serve with them and 30% of answered that they often served at church-arranged events.

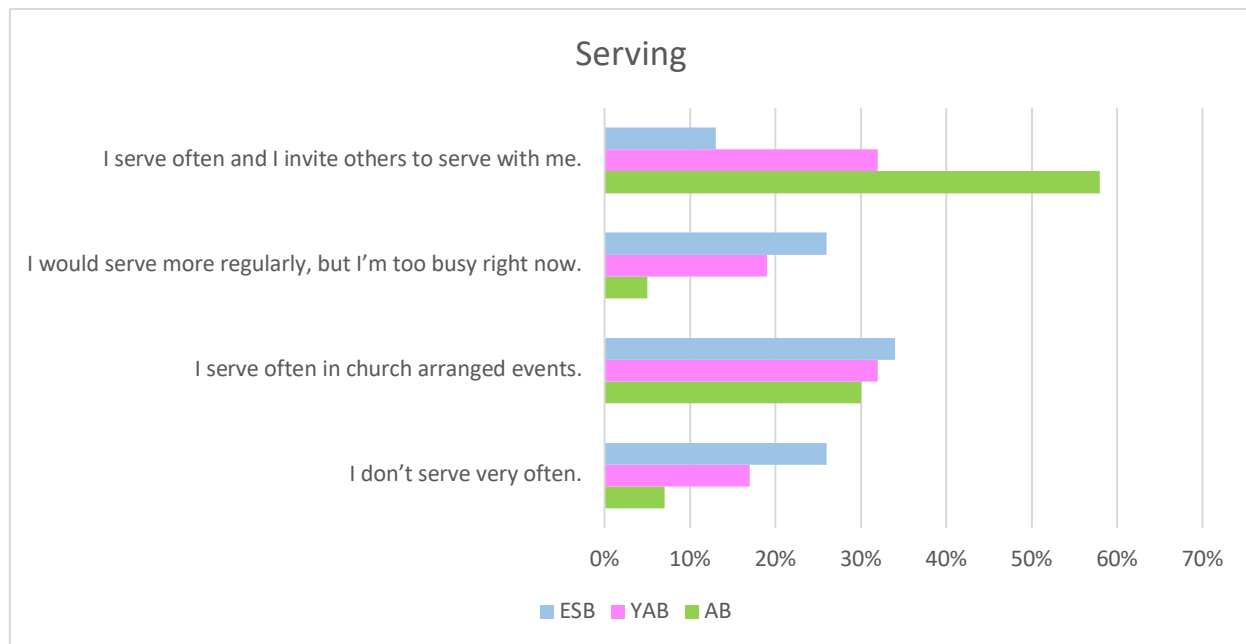


Figure 4.4. Self-Assessment: Serving Disciplines.

One of the predictors for an early-stage believer is only 13% responded they invite others to serve. Inviting others to serve would indicate a more spiritually mature stage. Inviting others increases to 32% in young adult believers and 58% in adult believers. Serving in church-

arranged events is consistent for all maturity levels and not necessarily a predictor of spiritual maturity.

Table 4.4

About prayer...	All	AB	YAB	ESB
I don't pray very often.	1%	0%	0%	5%
I pray mostly before meals.	1%	0%	0%	3%
I pray when I need to talk to God.	17%	8%	14%	34%
I pray often and feel like something is missing when I don't pray.	81%	92%	86%	58%

The spiritual discipline of prayer was a significant predictor of the adult believer and the young adult believer stages. Praying often and feeling like something is missing without prayer increases from 58% in early-stage believers to 86% in young adult stage believers and 92% in adult stage believers.

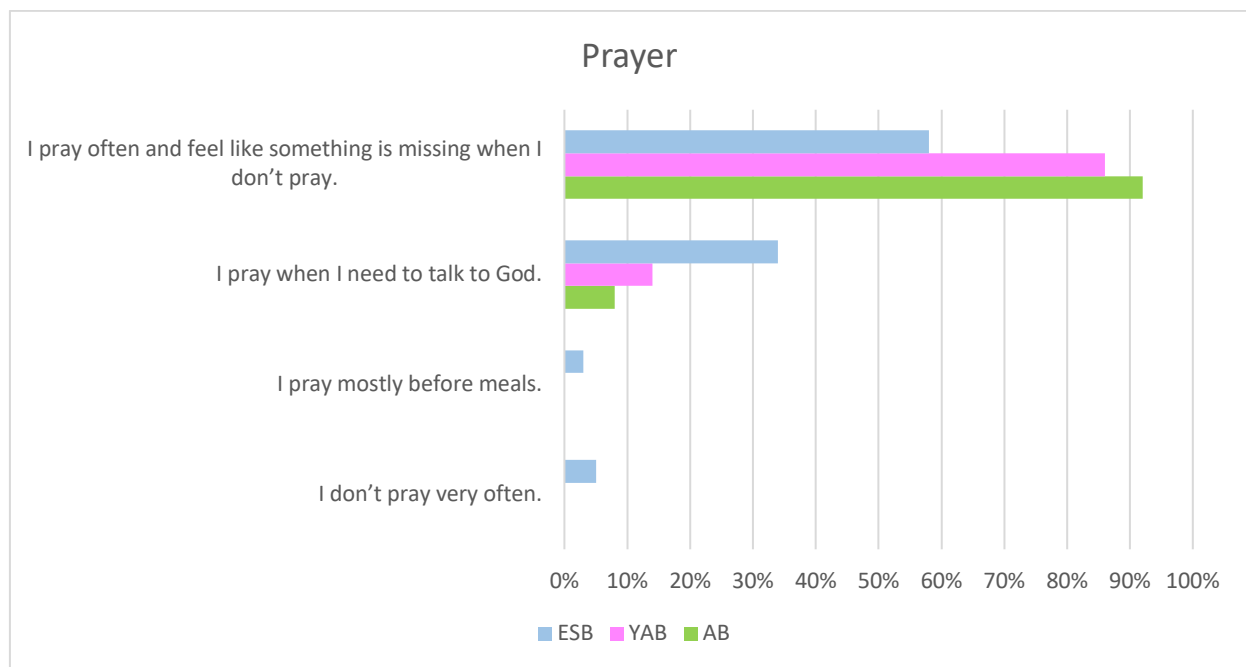


Figure 4.5. Self-Assessment: Prayer Disciplines.

Of early-stage believers, 34% responded that they prayed when they needed to talk to God. This response indicates that young adult believers feel a need to communicate with God

often. Paul commands believers in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to “pray without ceasing,” indicating followers of Jesus should be inconsistent and have continuous communication with God.

Table 4.5

About giving...	All	AB	YAB	ESB
I regularly give to the church and/or other Christian causes.	47%	34%	35%	60%
The church doesn't need my money.	1%	0%	3%	1%
I tithe 10% or more to the church or other Christian causes.	48%	66%	57%	29%
I would give, but I can't afford to at this time.	4%	0%	5%	10%

Responses regarding giving disciplines provided interesting insights into spiritual maturity. Although a subtle wording difference, tithing 10% versus giving regularly differentiates early-stage believers from more mature believers. Only 29% of early-stage

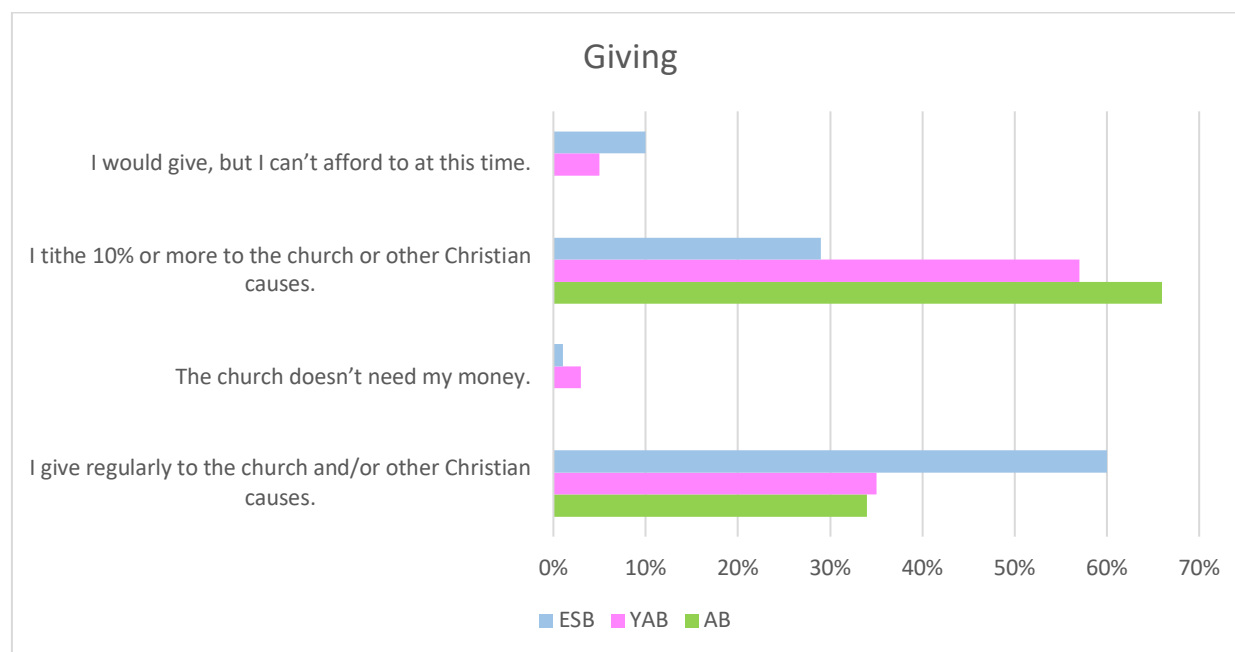


Figure 4.6. Self-Assessment: Giving Disciplines.

believers responded that they tithed 10% compared to 57% of young adult believers and 66% of adult believers. It should be noted the *Rooted* experience focuses on stewarding resources as a manager of what God provides to us. Tithing 10% is not discussed in *Rooted* groups, but instead, the focus is generous giving, trusting God, and freedom from debt. Although it has been taught over the years, tithing 10% is also not focused on at Southwest Church. Southwest Church and

the teaching materials in the *Rooted* experience largely agree with Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and all those who dwell therein.”

Self-Assessment - Open-Ended Questions

The self-assessment section included six open-ended questions that required the participants to respond in their own words (own voice):

1. In your own words, how does someone become a Christian?
2. What is your view on money (generally), savings, and debt?
3. Are you currently serving at the church or in ministry? Do you know where you serve best?
4. Are you aware of any areas in your life that you haven’t fully surrendered to God?
5. Are there areas that you need to grow spiritually? Were these revealed during *Rooted*?
6. After *Rooted*, describe any changes in your life in the areas of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control.

Open-ended answers were analyzed for words, speech, and actions typical for the spiritual maturity stages. Language and behavior characteristics were categorized from the information presented in previous sections of this research. The following sections contain ten representative samples of the 134 participants’ responses for adult, young adult, and early-stage believers copied verbatim from the survey responses (note: the researcher corrected some spelling and grammar errors that did not affect the meaning or tone of the response).

Table 4.6

In your own words, how does someone become a Christian?		
AB	YAB	ESB
By placing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and believing he died in my place for my sins. I cannot earn salvation; it is a gift from God.	By accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior and believing that he died for our sins.	Pray to Jesus to forgive me of my sins; profess my belief in him and ask him to come into my heart.
Accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.	By faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.	Truly accept Jesus as the Messiah.

Acceptance of Jesus Christ as the only way to heaven. Repent of sins and seek forgiveness for them. Commit to follow Jesus all the days of your life and tell others about him.	Acknowledge my sin and that I need a Savior. Believe that Jesus paid the price and died for my sins, and he rose again and conquered death.	By accepting Jesus Christ into my heart. By following Jesus. By trusting in Jesus.
Through putting their faith and trust in Jesus and what he did for you on the cross.	Ask Jesus into your life for a personal relationship.	Learn who Jesus is; then accept him as Lord.
Believe and confess that Jesus is the Son of God; repent of their sin and be determined to follow him.	By studying and being in small Bible groups, attending church regularly, and by accepting Christ.	By believing Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again that all who believe will have eternal salvation.
By acknowledging that I am a sinner and believing that Jesus Christ died for my sins and rose again. As Acts 16:31 says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."	By confessing we fall short of God's plans, and we need a Savior; we come before the one who saves and ask him to come into our lives so that we can follow biblical teachings.	However, they came to this specific moment in time; they accepted that Jesus died on the cross for them, and in their hearts, believed and accepted Jesus as their Savior forsaking all others.
By realizing we are all sinners. By confessing that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. By asking Jesus into your heart to be Lord of your life.	Die to yourself and give your life to Christ.	I believe that someone becomes a Christian by believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and to live our lives according to his teachings which are all in the Bible.
One becomes a Christian by believing that Jesus died for their sins and he is our Lord and Savior and our Redeemer.	Must be born again by the Holy Spirit through trust and faith in God through Jesus the Messiah.	They pray to God for the forgiveness of their sins. They express their desire to be with him in eternity.
Trusting in Jesus as the only way to a relationship with God. Trust includes faith in Jesus and a commitment to obey him in everything.	By reading the Word of God and attending church to understand the Bible and to stay in the community of fellow Christians.	By confessing your sin to Jesus and asking him to be your Lord and Savior.
By accepting Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and trusting him with my entire life.	Accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior; believe in the Trinity and the resurrection.	Repentance; accept Christ and his gift of grace.
Agree with God that they are a sinner. Believe that God sent his one and only son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin, live a sinless life, die on the cross for my sins, and on the third day, he rose again. I confess my sin and put my trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of my sin. Surrender my life to him. He promises to cleanse us from sin and make us his own. A new creation.	By recognizing that I am a sinner and Jesus paid the price for my sins on the cross and shed his blood for me. When I accepted that his sacrifice is the only atonement for my sins and surrendered my life to him, I became born again, and the Holy Spirit entered my life.	Believing in Jesus as the one true God and Son of Man, belief in the Trinity and that Christ died for our sins and was resurrected and sits aside the Father. Accepting Jesus as their personal Savior/spiritually accepting Christ and then publicly declaring their faith through baptism.

Generally, all of the participants understood how someone comes to faith in Christ and becomes a Christian. The answers from early-stage believers were focused on the personal acceptance of Jesus as Lord. As disciples matured into the adult stage of maturity, statements included a commitment to following Jesus and obedience to the Word. Overall, there wasn't an extensive differentiation between the answers of early-stage, young adult, and adult stage believers in these responses.

Table 4.7

What is your view on money (generally), savings, and debt?		
AB	YAB	ESB
I try to be a good steward of my money. I tithe and save and live debt-free.	Savings are critical for security and growth. Debt is beneficial when applied to achieving long-term goals for family and church.	Need to have enough for the basics.
God is the true owner of our resources.	It all belongs to God, and we are to be good stewards of what he has given to us.	Live on what you earn, save some, donate some, minimize debt.
God is our provider who entrusts us with finances and teaches us through his Word to steward it well and prioritize the things that will bring him glory and advance his kingdom.	My money is not mine but a gift from God to be used not just for my welfare but to promote the welfare of others. My tithe to the church is giving back to the one who owns it all.	Money is not bad or good, but it can be used as a tool. Lack of money can cause extreme stress and depression. Debt is not good, and it's important to save.
Everything I have is from God, and he has called me to steward/manage all I have in a way that honors and glorifies him. It's all his.	All my money and possessions are gifts from God on loan to me. Jesus' disciples are to be good stewards of money, living responsibly and generously.	Although I have to say I don't follow it all the time, I believe, as a believer, we should have little or no debt. We should have reserves in savings to help when a crisis arrives.
Be wise with what he has given you—being good stewards and avoiding being in debt.	We are to steward resources and respect money by saving, eliminating debt, and living within our means.	It is a necessary evil.
It's given by God, and I should steward it well. A healthy savings account is smart, and debt is a ball and chain.	I believe in being debt-free as best as possible; being responsible in saving and spending; be thankful to God each day for his blessings.	80, 10, 10: Save 10, tithe 10, and give to other charitable causes. The rest is to live on. But giving more of the 80 is my end goal.
If you can't afford it, don't buy it.	Make all you can, save moderately, and give generously.	Want to live a comfortable life.

Everything belongs to God!	All belongs to God, and he gives me a portion to live on.	That my money is from God.
Stewardship of God's provision, spend wisely, tithe 10%+, save 10%; if possible, be debt-free other than mortgage/auto.	I think it's important to save for my future. I also believe that it's wrong to be in debt. I pay off all credit cards each month.	Being retired, money and savings are a security blanket for our future.
I am a steward of the money I have earned. I have learned to save for the future. Pay off credit immediately. It is our joy to be able to give generously.	I think you should try to put money aside for your retirement, and also for a "rainy day." Debt can cause a lot of heartaches and problems with relationships.	We save when we can; we give to those in need when we can. I am not motivated to earn all I can, but when we pray for help, God provides what we need.
I'm a manager only.	My view now is I should have planned better for retirement.	Try to stay out of debt.

Rooted teaches and reminds believers that God owns everything, that individual Christians are merely stewards and managers, and that God retains ownership. Discussions during the *Rooted* experience include the dangers and avoidance of debt. *Rooted* terminology and language are visible in the responses to this question. However, the focus on early-stage believer responses mainly was on their behavior and view of money. In contrast, young adult and adult stage believer responses included more language about God's ownership and being stewards.

Table 4.8

Are you currently serving at the church or in ministry? Do you know where you serve best?		
AB	YAB	ESB
Yes, and I am confident in my ability and participation in the areas of ministry in which I serve.	I am actively trying various service activities sponsored by [the church] in order to find my place in routine service.	Would like to-can't find my place. As a helper or teacher.
Yes, wherever I'm needed, but I enjoy helping others navigate getting plugged into Southwest.	Yes, I serve with the worship team, and I believe that is where I serve best.	I am going to volunteer at a homeless shelter.
I love discipling new believers and small groups at women's Bible studies. Occasionally, I have taught.	Yes. I serve in the area of prayer, at church, and home.	Yes, I currently serve regularly in the Children's Ministry.
Sporadically. No, not certain where I can serve best.	No, I really don't know where I would do my best to serve our Lord.	I serve as a leader in Celebrate Recovery.
Yes, and yes.	Mostly women and children's ministries. And missions.	No. Yes, in the background helping in various ministries.

I will help wherever I am needed.	Not much. My gifts are presently not in demand.	I am not currently serving as I have been very busy. I do love serving, though.
Yes, I serve best as a teacher and disciple-maker.	Yes. I am currently serving in several ministries on a regular basis.	Yes. Hospitality and small group leadership.
I lead a men's Bible study as an offshoot from our <i>Rooted</i> group. I serve best in a teaching apologetic mode.	Yes - but I attend seasonally (snowbird), so generally, I serve at church-organized events.	I occasionally serve at church... I serve God through my career as a teacher as well on a daily basis.
Yes. Table leader for women's Bible study/ <i>Rooted</i> . Discipleship coach.	I'm not serving presently. I have led women's Bible studies, volunteered where needed, led <i>Rooted</i> .	I am on the greeter's team - 8:00 service.
Yes. We were new to the church when COVID hit and have not gotten as involved yet, but we serve in the food ministry. My strength is definitely in teaching. I have worked in children's ministry and women's ministry for most of my life.	Serving at the Thrift Store and Find Food Bank. I lead a small group Bible study of both married and single people in our neighborhood. I believe I am serving well in all these areas with my time and energy.	Until recently, I was very active in the children's ministry but have stopped to spend more time with my wife and work on our marriage.
Yes, I'm an Elder Board member, and I serve as a host on Sundays or at events other than just Sundays.	New to this church, so not yet serving. Still Covid safe, so not wanting to be in large groups.	No, I am not serving. I hope to; I have just recently been meeting more people and engaging in the church. However, I have not found my place to serve yet.

Responses to serving showed some differentiation between early-stage believers and others. It was more common for participants to state they were actively serving at the young adult and adult stages. Also, language in the early-stage responses described where the participant was planning to serve in the future and not where they were currently serving. Young adult and adult stage believers generally had more specific responses to knowing where they fit and how God had gifted them to serve.

Table 4.9

Are you aware of any areas in your life that you haven't fully surrendered to God?		
AB	YAB	ESB
I do have an area that I wrestle with self-control in and that I sometimes take back from God.	Still struggling with the money aspect and fully surrendering that area.	Addictions to soda/sugar.

I ask God to show me those areas so I can surrender them to him.	Selfishness.	Over my life, I opened more areas of my life to him...and pray that he shows me if there are areas I have not surrendered to him.
Money.	I have strongholds that were revealed during <i>Rooted</i> .	I try to be Christian-like and kind to people I meet.
I think trusting God with financial stability will always be tough for me, but it got easier after <i>Rooted</i> to see why it was so important.	Most likely worry and still wanting to control life's circumstances.	I feel like surrendering is an ongoing process because I sometimes fall back into old habits that might not be so godly.
Tough to completely surrender my children.	I am trying to control outcomes, fear.	Yes, I find as I study the Bible more, there are things that I haven't released to the Lord.
I certainly come to Jesus often asking forgiveness for pride and better stewardship of my time, talent, treasure.	Yes, total money picture and thought life.	Still struggle with sexual issues like lust and pornography but continually ask God to change my heart and desires.
I need to keep my eyes pure.	Yes. Gossiping.	Still working on some areas of control.
Not that I am clearly aware of.	At the present, no.	Not at this present time.
Sometimes I find it hard to forgive certain people even though God calls me to forgive them in particular.	Not clearly. I tend not to like to look at my darker issues closely.	Right now, I'm struggling with forgiveness and find myself repeatedly giving it back to him when I want to hold on to it.
Stewarding my time well is something I struggle with. It is continuous submitting to him.	My anger sometimes gets the best of me. I constantly have to let go of my anger and ask God to forgive me and forgive those who wrong me.	Yes, I still rely on myself for financial and material things. I also feel I have some underlying feelings that I use food to cope with rather than let God handle those emotions.
I watch too much TV!	I'm a work in progress. Finances are a struggle, self-centered, bringing others to Christ.	I feel like surrendering is an ongoing process because I sometimes fall back into old habits that might not be so godly.

Rooted focuses an entire week of devotions and teaching on the area of spiritual strongholds. Individuals are encouraged to search for places they have not surrendered to God and sin in their lives that may hinder their growth as believers. Overall, the responses from all spiritual stages consistently state areas that the participant needs to surrender. Generally, believers from all stages were specific in their responses and identified a stronghold present in

their spiritual life. However, the responses revealed that some believers at all stages could be unaware of spiritual strongholds, or they are not ready or are unwilling to deal with them.

Table 4.10

Are there areas that you need to grow spiritually? Were these revealed during <i>Rooted</i>?		
AB	YAB	ESB
Yes. I need to disciple others. It's easy to allow other things to crowd out time to pour into others.	Yes. More study and <i>Rooted</i> revealed that.	Yes, I found I need to be more consistent with my Bible reading and study.
I need to grow in my time spent in the Word. This was revealed during <i>Rooted</i> .	Yes, but not revealed during <i>Rooted</i> .	Daily Bible reading so I can hear God better.
I believe spiritual growth is constantly evolving in my life. Yes, when we went through the section on strongholds, it was difficult to admit my weaknesses.	I loved the hour of prayer and know I don't devote large enough blocks of uninterrupted time to prayer. I pray daily but often not long enough.	Struggle with prayer and Bible reading. Listen to more sermons than I read Scripture. <i>Rooted</i> got me back into a better habit and desire to read the Bible and study.
I am aware but knew before <i>Rooted</i> .	I am sure there are, and no, they were not revealed.	Yes - but they were not revealed in <i>Rooted</i> .
Yes. my daily prayer life. My motivation to "jump in" to serve in unfamiliar areas.	Letting go of things I can't control. Yes, revealed during <i>Rooted</i> .	<i>Rooted</i> opened my eyes to everything in my faith journey.
Going through <i>Rooted</i> showed me that no matter how long someone has been a "Christian," we all have an area where we can grow. For me, it was sharing my story, I'm not a writer, entertainer and I don't like being the center of attention. But I know it's important to help others and to give glory to God!	Most likely, yes. <i>Rooted</i> didn't reveal anything new that I didn't already know, understand or believe.	I did grow very much in <i>Rooted</i> ; I struggle with fear at times and <i>Rooted</i> helped me profoundly. It is still a challenge, but I pray a lot, read my Bible a lot and have been in a season of reading a lot of Christian books to work on areas of growth. The more I lean into God in these areas, the more he helps me grow.
I will always be in need of growth. Specifically, trusting in God's timing and work despite the circumstances. No, <i>Rooted</i> wasn't helpful in that regard.	A lot of what I learned is what I already knew. However, it is a good reminder. I had to grow in patience with other people who did things differently than I would do it.	Yes. I could grow more in prayer and faith. I didn't really learn this from <i>Rooted</i> , but I love how <i>Rooted</i> addresses this.
I struggle with prayer. Sometimes I do great, and other times it is a struggle. The prayer section of <i>Rooted</i> was very beneficial and powerful.	Always. Yes, <i>Rooted</i> was great and helped identify areas for growth.	I need to know more about the Bible and feel more comfortable sharing my faith with nonbelievers.

Oh, yes! <i>Rooted</i> revealed the areas in my life I glossed over and explained away with excuses!	A Christian never quits growing. Yes, <i>Rooted</i> revealed some areas where I am lacking.	Yes. Need to be more available to serve.
Yes. I need to disciple others. It's easy to allow other things to crowd out time to pour into others.	Yes. More study and <i>Rooted</i> revealed that.	Yes, I found I need to be more consistent with my Bible reading and study.
I need to grow in my time spent in the Word. This was revealed during <i>Rooted</i> .	Yes, but not revealed during <i>Rooted</i> .	Daily Bible reading so I can hear God better.

Almost all participants identified the need to grow as vital to the Christian life and stated a specific growth area. The responses were pretty even as to whether *Rooted* revealed any needed growth areas for the participants. Many early-stage believers credited *Rooted* for revealing areas of need. As believers mature through the young adult and adult stages, they are increasingly more likely to state they already knew or were reminded of areas of needed growth during *Rooted*.

Table 4.11

After <i>Rooted</i>, describe any changes in your life in the areas of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control.		
AB	YAB	ESB
I took <i>Rooted</i> [only] to become a member of the church and to participate in different ministries.	After <i>Rooted</i> , I felt kindness became a huge focus for me.	I am trusting Jesus to guide my steps/more at peace/ showing more patience.
Many of those things had become second nature to me from 50+ years of walking with Jesus. The areas in which <i>Rooted</i> helped me grow most were in the areas of gentleness with others and self-control.	I'm more at peace and more content in life and marriage. Frankly, it was the continued journey AFTER <i>Rooted</i> that is making the difference, although <i>Rooted</i> was the catalyst.	The <i>Rooted</i> experience gave me a better understanding of the journey of other believers. I would say that I became more compassionate toward their trials.
The fruit of the Spirit was not more evident in my life as a result of <i>Rooted</i> .	I have experienced more joy and peace. It was wonderful to spend time with others who love Jesus and want to grow in that.	I have become more peaceful even with the ensuing chaos in the culture.
I have been going through the process of growing in these areas long before <i>Rooted</i> .	I am not sure that <i>Rooted</i> directly contributed to these areas changing in my life; I have	Peace came for sure, and strength. Goodness as well. It opened me up to be much more

<i>Rooted</i> just reaffirmed a lot of things for me.	completed similar studies to <i>Rooted</i> earlier in my walk that likely dealt with these first.	cognizant of others and caring for my neighbors more.
<i>Rooted</i> was transformational. My life priorities have changed as a result of my focus on things of God, how to obey and serve him well, seeking growth in the fruits of the Spirit in my life.	I saw <i>Rooted</i> as more of an encouragement and a tool to examine my life more closely, and it did help me to focus in those areas. The Holy Spirit over the years has caused the fruit of the Spirit to grow, and I need to come to God daily to continue to grow.	I have always stood on the sidelines of churches. <i>Rooted</i> allowed me to meet others, become a member and feel connected. I am now in a women's group and growing in my faith daily. I can't point to it increasing a particular area as stated above (although I am sure it did), but it allowed me to find a community to continue to grow in, which is where I see these changes more distinctly.
Kindness and understanding toward others have increased since <i>Rooted</i> .	I experienced more peace and realized we all strive to be better together. I learned we could count on others to help us through the hard times and the good times.	I believe I have grown in areas of gentleness and self-control as a result of <i>Rooted</i> .
Before <i>Rooted</i> , these fruits were already a part of my life. After <i>Rooted</i> , I believe I saw a little bump in each of those fruits in my daily life.	I was filled with more joy and peace within myself. It helped to bring me out of my insecurities of not being good enough.	I learned those principles before <i>Rooted</i> , but <i>Rooted</i> solidified and reminded me of the importance of it.
I think I have more patience with the journey people are on to know more of the Lord.	Peace and gentleness, patience with my husband's children and parents.	<i>Rooted</i> reaffirmed my faith, and God's love has given me peace during this political upheaval.
My actual group and fellowship with those ladies have changed my life. We bonded, and that was the most valuable part. <i>Rooted</i> requires openness and vulnerability that bonds us.	I enjoyed the opportunity to fellowship with others and witness remarkable growth in a few members of our group.	After <i>Rooted</i> , I felt a strong sense of community, serving others and being a light for others who may not know Christ. I have not stayed strong in that walk and commitment. I will say Covid did play a role in my inactivity.
All fruits of the Spirit have been strengthened since <i>Rooted</i> .	Patience and self-control.	Goodness.
<i>Rooted</i> really did not help me in any of these areas.	No real changes.	No great changes in any of these areas.

The final open-ended question asks the participant if they had noticed increased Fruit of the Spirit in their life following *Rooted*. Almost all participants reported an increased fruit in

their lives, specifically mentioned multiple times: peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. However, a few responses indicate no growth in fruit of the Spirit due to *Rooted*, with some only joining *Rooted* because it was a church requirement.

Measured Assessment Summary

As stated previously in this section, the spiritual maturity self-assessment and the measured assessment identified the 134 participants maturity as follows:

- 59 Adult Believer (AB) participants
- 37 Young Adult Believer (YAB) participants
- 38 Early-Stage Believer (ESB) participants.

The measured assessment of spiritual maturity was comprised of twenty-six questions in an either-or response format. These questions are shown in their entirety in Appendix B of this research. This summary will focus on the questions that provided the most diverse responses and appear pivotal in determining the spiritual growth stage of the participant. This summary will also reveal the questions that did not differentiate well between the growth stages and solicited inconclusive responses from the participants.

The measured assessment was accomplished by organizing the participant responses into a standardized evaluation process and sorting them by their targeted spiritual maturity stage. There were fifteen targeted responses per stage for infant, child, and young adult stages, while the adult stage had six targeted responses. The purpose of the variation was to attempt to provide more significant differentiation in the earlier stages. The targeted responses per maturity stage were weighted for analysis as shown in Table 4.12:

Table 4.12

Maturity Weighted Scoring				
	Infant (15 Questions)	Child (15 Questions)	Young Adult (15 Questions)	Adult (6 Questions)
	ESB		YAB	AB
	Max	Max	Min	Min
Adult Stage	20%	60%	87%	83%
Young Adult Stage	20%	67%	73%	67%
<i>All others would be considered Early-Stage Believers.</i>				

To be considered a young adult or adult stage believer for this research, the participant must have the minimum percentages shown in YAB and AB columns and no more than the maximum shown in either ESB column. For this research, the focus was to determine if using language and behavior characteristics could determine spiritual maturity. Through improvements to the questions and the pairings, future versions of this measured assessment may measure spiritual maturity using this method more precisely.

All 134 participant responses were measured and classified similarly, using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and graphing the results. Sample results for each maturity stage are provided for clarity in the following three sections.

Adult Stage Believer: Sample Measured Assessment

The assessment for an adult stage believer required a minimum of 5 of 6 responses (83%) from the adult-targeted responses and 13 of 15 (87%) from the young adult target responses. The adult stage category also required a maximum of 3 of 15 (20%) infant targeted responses and 9 of 15 (60%) child-targeted responses.



Figure 4.7. Measured Assessment: Adult Stage Believer (Participant #5).

In the measured assessment in Figure 4.7 above, the participant was classified an adult stage believer due to 83% adult stage, 93% young adult stage, 33% child stage, and 13% infant stage responses.

Young Adult Stage Believer – Sample Measured Assessment

The assessment for a young adult stage believer required a minimum of 4 of 6 responses (67%) from the adult-targeted responses and 11 of 15 (87%) from the young adult target responses. The young adult stage category also required a maximum of 3 of 15 (20%) infant targeted responses and 10 of 15 (67%) child-targeted responses.



Figure 4.8. Measured Assessment: Young Adult Stage Believer (Participant #17).

In the measured assessment in Figure 4.8 above, the participant was classified as a young adult stage believer due to 67% adult stage, 80% young adult stage, 60% child stage, and 7% infant stage responses.

Early-Stage Believer – Sample Measured Assessment

In the assessment for an early-stage believer, responses fall below (67%) from the adult-targeted responses, below (73%) from the young adult target church responses, and exceed (20%) infant targeted responses or (67%) child-targeted responses.



Figure 4.9. Measured Assessment: Early-Stage Believer (Participant #53).

In the measured assessment in Figure 4.9 above, the participant was classified an early-stage believer due to 53% young adult stage, 50% adult stage, 53% child stage, and 47% infant stage responses.

Pivotal Either-Or Response Pairs

Seven of the twenty-six either-or pairs provided the most significant distinction between participants. Broadly, these sets of pairs differentiated participants who were focused more on themselves as opposed to caring for others. They also revealed views on money, ideas on church membership, and ministry service. Very telling was whether the participant desired to be fed the

Word of God, become a self-feeder, or wanted to feed others. The researcher admits the imperfect nature of each answer pair and the possibility of misunderstanding or improper wording. However, the response pairs provide a starting point for the measured assessment with pairings and vocabulary that will improve over time. The questions asked the participant to choose the response they most agreed with (i.e. was most true for them).

Three response pairs relate to a participant's preference for self-focus over the concern for others. As believers move into more mature stages of discipleship, they should become more interested in relationships with other believers and more concerned for the salvation of others.

Pivotal Pair #1: Being Invited -vs.- Inviting Others

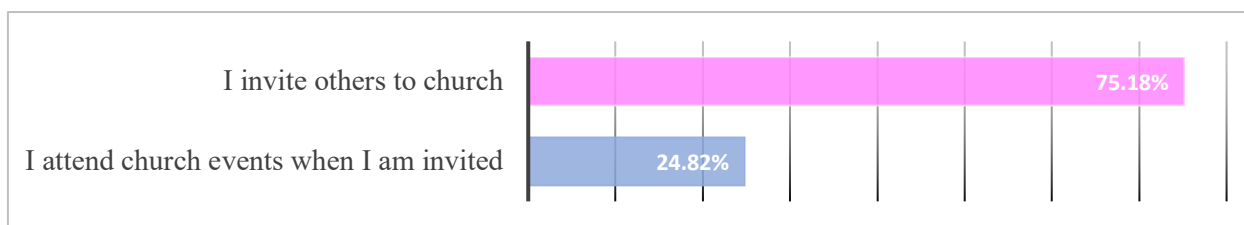


Figure 4.10. Pivotal Pair #1.

This question is based on the assumption that more mature believers will invite others instead of being invited. The response of inviting others was considered at least a young adult stage selection due to the other-focused nature of the response. This pairing differentiated between young adult believers (75%) and early-stage believers (25%).

Pivotal Pair #2: God Loves Me -vs.- Salvation of Others

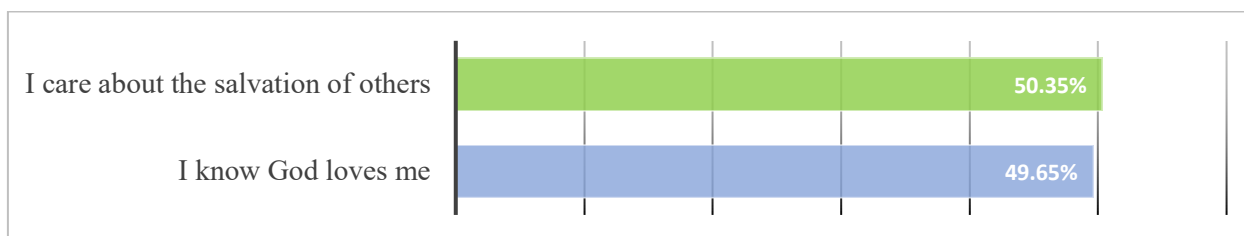


Figure 4.11. Pivotal Pair #2.

This pairing provided a significant number of participants that agreed more that God loved them versus caring for the salvation of others. Care for another's salvation is a pivotal predictor of adult stage believers. Although the responses are equal in the pairing, 50% of the participants chose the more mature option of caring about the salvation of others.

Pivotal Pair #3: Private with Faith -vs.- Sharing Their Story with Others

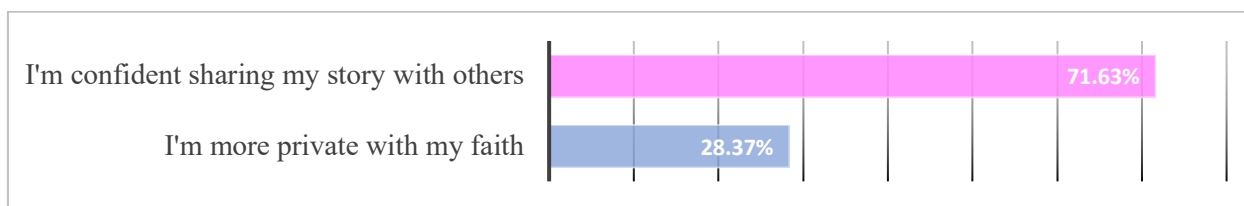


Figure 4.12. Pivotal Pair #3.

This pairing revealed 28% of participants were more private with their faith, compared to 72% that were confident sharing their story with others. The more mature response would be sharing their story and would indicate a young believer's response understanding the importance of their story (testimony) and concern for others.

Pivotal Pair #4: Being Fed, Self-Feeding, or Feeding Others

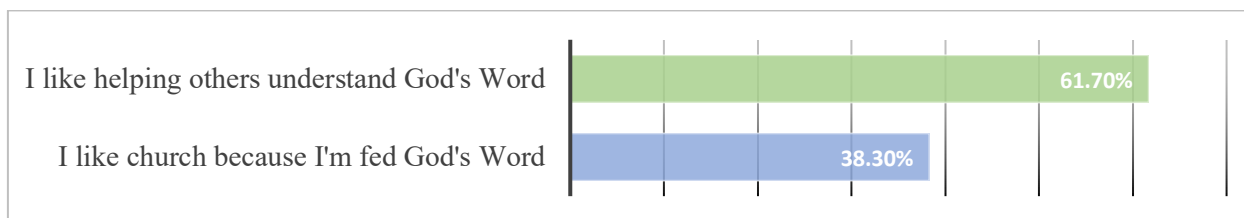


Figure 4.13. Pivotal Pair #4.

Of all participants, 38% preferred to be fed God's word while 62% liked helping others understand God's Word. The desire to help others understand God's Word is the mark of an adult believer who has progressed from being fed into self-feeding and feeding others.

Pivotal Pair #5: Being Fed, Self-Feeding, or Feeding Others

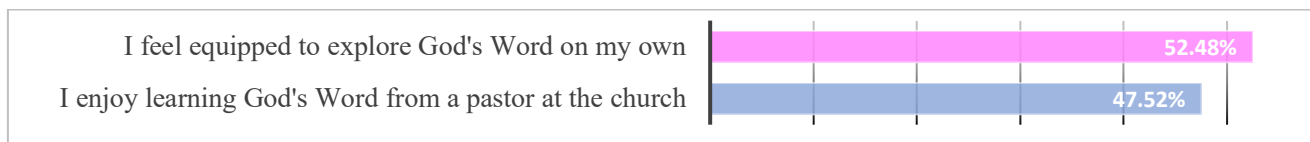


Figure 4.14. Pivotal Pair #5.

Fifty-two percent of participants responded that they felt equipped to explore God's Word independently, indicating that they have matured past the need to be fed and have become self-feeders. While learning from a pastor is something all believers will do throughout our Christian journey, more mature disciples should aspire to be self-feeders and ultimately leaders who feed others.

Pivotal Pair #6: Church Member -vs.- Servant.

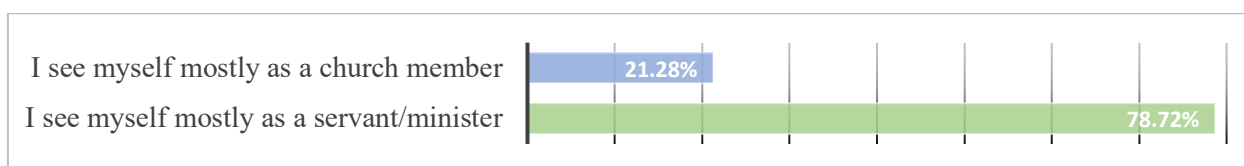


Figure 4.15. Pivotal Pair #6.

Of all participants, 79% responded that they considered themselves servants or ministers, which is a specific emphasis of *Rooted*. The church commissions each *Rooted* graduate as a servant minister in a graduation celebration. Another complicating factor is that Southwest Church is located in a resort and country club area where the word membership is loaded with privilege. Servants and ministers tend to focus more on responsibility and less on their rights and benefits as members.

Pivotal Pair #7: Time -vs.- Money

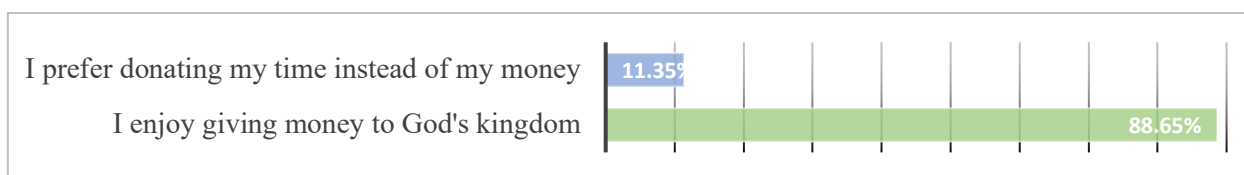


Figure 4.16. Pivotal Pair #7.

A specific emphasis of *Rooted* was to help participants understand that God owns everything and we are managers. Eighty-nine percent stated that they enjoyed giving money to God's kingdom, reinforcing the principles discussed during *Rooted*. The 11% of participants who preferred to give time instead of money have a less mature view of biblical stewardship.

Inconclusive Either-Or Response Pairs

The majority of either-or response pairs produced good differentiation between the spiritual maturity stage of participants. However, ten pairs received responses above 90% in agreement and are shown below in Figure 4.17:

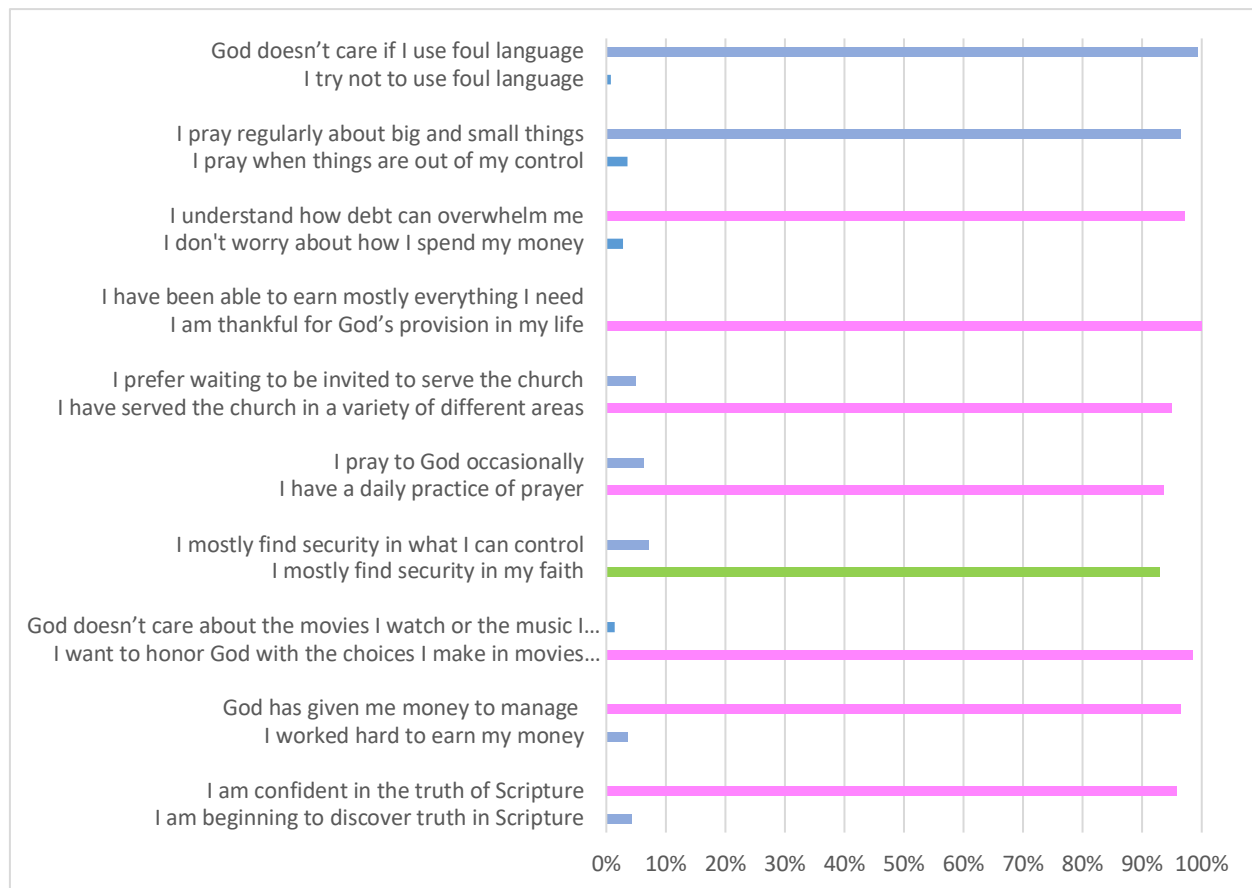


Figure 4.17. Inconclusive Either-Or Response Pairs.

The inconclusive response pairs appear to have provided either a too obvious choice or a poor alternative option. In all cases, the responses selected by the survey participants were overwhelmingly from the more spiritually mature stage.

Rooted Effectiveness Summary

Participants were requested to provide their perspectives on the *Rooted* experience. The feedback prompts centered on five areas that were core to the rhythms of the *Rooted* experience: prayer, Bible reading, giving, serving, and sharing their story. Participants were asked to respond using *before Rooted* and *after Rooted* perspectives. This section will focus on the overall results for all participants and the results for early-stage believers. Responses for adult stage and young adult stage believers, as well as additional detailed breakdowns by *Rooted* session, are included in Appendix C of this research. *Rooted* group leader surveys have been combined in the general summaries that follow.

Prayer

All participants stated that the importance of prayer increased by an average of 1.27 points (+16%), and the importance of prayer increased for early-stage believers by an average of 1.4 points (+18%). For all participants, time spent in prayer increased by an average of 0.81 hours (48.6 minutes) per week, a 30% increase. Time spent in prayer increased for early-stage believers by an average of 0.67 hours (40.2 minutes) per week, also a 30% increase.

Table 4.13

Prayer – All Participants		
<i>134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is prayer? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.16	9.43
How would you measure your prayer life? <i>Hours spent each week in prayer. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.72	3.53
Check all boxes that describe your prayer life...		
I pray about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>		62 (46%)
I am praying more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>		51 (38%)
Praying seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>		48 (36%)
I pray more for other people after <i>Rooted</i>		68 (49%)
I didn't pray at all before, now I pray some		0
I am listening to God more after <i>Rooted</i>		59 (44%)

Table 4.14

Prayer – Early-Stage Believers		
<i>ESB = 38 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is prayer? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	7.63	9.03
How would you measure your prayer life? <i>Hours spent each week in prayer. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.3	2.97
Check all boxes that describe your prayer life...		
I pray about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>		16 (42%)
I am praying more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>		12 (32%)
Praying seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>		14 (37%)
I pray more for other people after <i>Rooted</i>		21 (55%)
I didn't pray at all before, now I pray some		0
I am listening to God more after <i>Rooted</i>		16 (42%)

When all participants described their prayer life, a significant number stated that they are praying more for others (49%) and listening to God more (44%) after *Rooted*. Of early-stage believers, 55% responded that they are praying for others more. Generally, all participants reported the *Rooted* experience positively impacted their prayer lives.

Bible Reading

All participants stated the importance of Bible reading increased by an average of 1.77 points (+24.5%), and the importance of prayer increased for early-stage believers by an average of 1.65 points (+18%).

Table 4.15

Bible Reading – All Participants		
<i>134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important is Bible reading to you? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	7.22	8.99
How would you measure your personal Bible reading? <i>Hours spent each week reading the Bible. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.57	3.58
Check all boxes that describe your Bible reading since <i>Rooted</i> ...		
I read my Bible about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>		58 (43%)
I read my Bible more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>		54 (40%)
Reading my Bible seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>		40 (30%)
I desire to read my Bible more often after <i>Rooted</i>		58 (43%)
I didn't read my Bible at all before, now I read some		6 (5%)
I understand the Bible better after <i>Rooted</i>		34 (25%)

Table 4.16

Bible Reading – Early-Stage Believers		
<i>ESB = 38 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important is Bible reading to you? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	6.61	8.26
How would you measure your personal Bible reading? <i>Hours spent each week reading the Bible. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.03	2.84
Check all boxes that describe your Bible reading since <i>Rooted</i> ...		
I read my Bible about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>		17 (45%)
I read my Bible more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>		17 (35%)
Reading my Bible seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>		15 (39%)
I desire to read my Bible more often after <i>Rooted</i>		14 (37%)
I didn't read my Bible at all before, now I read some		3 (8%)
I understand the Bible better after <i>Rooted</i>		11 (29%)

For all participants, time spent reading the Bible increased by an average of 1.01 hours (60.6 minutes) per week, a 39.2% increase. Time spent in prayer increased for early-stage believers by an average of 0.81 hours (48.6 minutes) per week, a 40% increase.

When all participants described their Bible reading, 43% reported an increased desire to read their Bible, and 40% responded reading their Bible more consistently after *Rooted*. Of early-stage believers 39%, responded reading their Bible seems more natural, and 29% understand the Bible better after *Rooted*. Generally, all participants reported a positive influence of their Bible reading through the *Rooted* experience.

Giving

All participants stated that the importance of giving increased by an average of 0.82 points (+10%), and the importance of giving increased for early-stage believers by an average of 0.49 points (+6.5%).

When describing the practical impact on their giving, all participants responded that their giving was about the same (36%), or they already had the practice of tithing before *Rooted*

(32%). Early-stage believers stated that 50% of their giving was about the same, and 21% were already in the practice of tithing.

Table 4.17

Giving – All Participants		
<i>134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you are giving and generosity? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.18	9.00
Has your actual giving and generosity changed since <i>Rooted</i> ?		
I am giving a little more after <i>Rooted</i>		24 (18%)
I give about the same after <i>Rooted</i>		48 (36%)
I am giving significantly more after <i>Rooted</i>		18 (13%)
I was already in the practice of tithing 10% or more before <i>Rooted</i>		43 (32%)

Table 4.18

Giving – Early-Stage Believers		
<i>ESB = 38 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you are giving and generosity? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	7.51	8.00
Has your actual giving and generosity changed since <i>Rooted</i> ?		
I am giving a little more after <i>Rooted</i>		7 (18%)
I give about the same after <i>Rooted</i>		19 (50%)
I am giving significantly more after <i>Rooted</i>		4 (10%)
I was already in the practice of tithing 10% or more before <i>Rooted</i>		8 (21%)

Eighteen percent of all participants responded that they are giving a little more, and 13% answered that they are giving significantly more after *Rooted*. Eighteen percent of early-stage believers are also giving a little more, and 10% responded that they are giving significantly more after *Rooted*. While all participants reported an increase in the importance of giving, the increasing levels were marginal compared to the increases in other spiritual disciplines.

Serving

All participants stated that the importance of serving increased by an average of 1.00 point (+12.5%), and the importance of serving increased for early-stage believers by an average of 1.31 points (+20%). For all participants, time spent serving after *Rooted* increased slightly by

Table 4.19

Serving – All Participants		
<i>134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is serving others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.02	9.02
How would you measure your personal time serving? <i>Hours spent serving each week. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.94	3.25

Table 4.20

Serving – Early-Stage Believers		
<i>ESB = 38 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is serving others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	6.66	7.97
How would you measure your personal time serving? <i>Hours spent serving each week. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.32	2.62

0.31 hours (18.6 minutes), and early-stage believers responded that their serving increased by 0.30 hours (18 minutes). The increased time spent serving was lower in proportion to the stated importance of serving the participants. All participants were already serving between two to three hours per week before *Rooted*. Therefore, the modest increase may be related to the diminished serving opportunities available during the COVID-19 ministry season.

Sharing Your Story

All participants stated that the importance of sharing their personal story of faith increased significantly by an average of 2.02 points (+34%), and the importance of serving increased even more for early-stage believers by an average of 2.53 points (+48%). For all participants, the likelihood of sharing their story after *Rooted* increased by 2.35 points (47%), and for early-stage believers, the increased likelihood of sharing their story was a dramatic 3.0 points (72%). The *Rooted* impact on participants sharing their personal story of faith was the most significant of all the spiritual disciplines measured in this research.

Table 4.21

Sharing Your Story – All Participants		
<i>134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is sharing your story with others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	5.87	7.89
How likely are you to share your personal story of faith? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	5.38	7.73

Table 4.22

Sharing Your Story – Early-Stage Believers		
<i>ESB = 38 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is sharing your story with others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	4.86	7.21
How likely are you to share your personal story of faith? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	4.19	7.19

Quantitative Giving and Serving Data

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, church attendance, church giving, and serving were dramatically affected during the period covered by this research. For example, church attendance dropped from 3,000 total in-person weekend attendees to 1,500 in-person weekend attendees during 2020 and 2021. The number of households giving to Southwest Church (tracked as giving units) dropped from a weekly average of 790 to a weekly average of 400. Serving numbers were dramatically affected due to the church being physically closed for in-person gatherings for much of 2020 and COVID-19 restrictions and concerns continuing into 2021.

As a result, the researcher determined before and after *Rooted* giving and serving data to be unhelpful to this research project. The researcher maintains the importance of confirming qualitative responses with quantitative data and recommends incorporating actual giving and serving data in future evaluations of the *Rooted* experience.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Problem and Purpose Revisited

The problem addressed by this research is that Southwest Church has the responsibility to disciple large numbers of adult believers in the early discipleship stages of their faith journey. The challenge of discipling large numbers of adult, early-stage disciples is common in the megachurch context. This research embraced the existence of the megachurch and endeavored to provide measurements to improve discipleship within this context.

The purpose of this research is to positively affect the discipleship development of early-stage adult believers at Southwest Church by assessing the effectiveness and recommending improvements to the *Rooted* discipleship experience. *Rooted* is the single front door to the discipleship pathway at Southwest Church, and for that reason, it is essential to know the effectiveness of *Rooted* in early-stage believers.

Thesis Statement Revisited

The thesis statement for this project is if Southwest Church implements the *Rooted* experience effectively, then individual adult believers will be developed, encouraged, and equipped as disciples of Jesus Christ. Although individual believers will experience different spiritual development levels, there will be measurable individual results, and new believers and early-stage disciples will take necessary spiritual growth steps.

This research measured all participants, regardless of spiritual maturity stage, but focused on the effect of the *Rooted* experience on early-stage believers. The summary and conclusions that follow in this section will focus primarily on early-stage believers but will compare when applicable to adult and young adult stage believers. Self-assessment and measured assessment tools were created to differentiate between the spiritual maturity stages of participants.

Evaluation

How well does everything work? Is *Rooted* effective in developing early-stage disciples? Do the tools designed for this project accurately measure a disciple's spiritual maturity? This summary and conclusions will present evaluations of the spiritual maturity assessment tools, appraisal of the effectiveness of the *Rooted* experience, and other lessons learned, and observations revealed in the research.

Spiritual Maturity Self-Assessment

Self-Assessment: Self-Description

The self-description question was inconclusive and not predictive of participants' measured maturity stage. When asked to describe themselves, 66% of all participants considered themselves adult stage believers, while the measured assessment revealed only 44% adult stage believers. The 22% disconnect between these numbers was significant and suggested that believers can overstate their spiritual maturity. The researcher's opinion for the overstatement is that most believers don't fully understand the stages of discipleship development. Discipleship in the church, and Southwest Church specifically, should include explaining the normal development process. Disciples of all maturity stages could benefit from understanding the information presented in Table 2.1 of this research.

The question seems to have good answer choices. Five percent of early-stage believers selected that they were new believers, and 47% considered themselves Christians who like to serve but are not ready to lead others. These responses indicate that early-stage believers with an accurate self-assessment of their spiritual maturity had options to reflect them.

Self-Assessment: Spiritual Discipline Questions

Overall, the multiple-choice self-assessment questions worked as designed to predict participants' behaviors at their measured spiritual maturity stage. As described in the following detail, the self-assessments on prayer, Bible reading, giving, and serving were effective.

Prayer

The frequency of prayer was a good gauge of spiritual maturity. The distinction between *feeling something is missing if disciples are not praying often -vs.- praying only when needing to talk to God* provided an interesting difference for early-stage believers. Thirty-four percent of measured early-stage believers responded that they prayed only when they needed to talk to God, while only 8% of measured adult stage believers responded the same.

Bible Reading

Occasional Bible reading was a good indicator of less mature participants, with 32% of early-stage believers reading their Bible occasionally, compared to only 10% of adult stage believers. Eighty-six percent of measured adult believers responded in the self-assessment that they read their Bible every day compared to only 50% of measured early-stage believers.

Giving

The self-assessment giving responses were predictive of the spiritual stage of the participant. As disciples measured increasingly more spiritually mature, their self-assessments in giving followed, revealing 29% early-stage believers, 57% young adult believers, and 66% adult stage believers tithing 10% or more. Also, disciples who stated that they couldn't afford to give tracked decreasingly, with 10% early-stage believers, 5% young adult believers, and 0% adult stage believer responses.

Serving

The desire to serve and invite others to serve was a significant predictor of maturity in the self-assessment. Only 13% of early-stage believers stated that they invited others to serve with them. At the heart of inviting others to serve are the care for others (not only self) and a desire to see spiritual growth in another person. When included in a more extensive assessment, care for others' spiritual growth can indicate marks of a believer in the young adult and adult stages of discipleship.

Multiple-Choice Questions: Recommended Improvements

The self-assessment responses to spiritual disciplines and behaviors provided good differentiation and were good questions to predict the measured assessments that would follow. Improvement to provide a more significant distinction between participants can be made for future self-assessments by increasing the number of answer choices from four to five and providing a balanced five-step progression.

The three multiple-choice questions (*Who I say Jesus is, What I believe about Christianity, What I believe about truth*) that did not provide differentiation between participants should be reworded if they remain in the self-assessment. A focus group would be helpful to determine what five responses would best provide differentiation between the maturity stages.

Self-Assessment: Open-Ended Questions

The open-ended questions were less predictive of maturity than anticipated. The open-ended self-assessment questions were included to detect language attributed to a specific spiritual maturity stage. Overall, the representative responses presented in Tables 4.6 to 4.11 revealed speech associated with the maturity stages. However, the language was far from predictive and similar language was used across all the maturity stages. Also missing from the language

characteristics are tone of voice and body language, so the written responses revealed a limited amount of what the participant could communicate in a face-to-face conversation.

The researcher maintains that language characteristics can predict spiritual maturity but weren't as revealing in this research due to the written survey format. Observing believers in the ordinary course of daily life (18 holes of golf, experiencing stress at work, etc.) would be more revealing than a written survey response. Also, feedback from group leaders and more mature believers in the course of a ten-week *Rooted* session could provide additional insights into the language characteristics of the participants.

The open-ended questions were helpful to this research to credit areas where *Rooted* positively impacted the participants. Many participants wrote that *Rooted* helped them grow spiritually and revealed areas that they need to grow. Although the questions did not produce the outcome the researcher had hoped for, the questions provided the participants an opportunity to articulate their beliefs on becoming a Christian, views on money, their unique fit to serve, and expressing areas they need to grow spiritually.

Spiritual Maturity: Measured Assessment

The measured spiritual maturity assessment tools worked very well to categorize believers by stage. The either-or format responses provided good differentiation of the participants and a good distribution of results. The pivotal either-or pairs detailed in Chapter 4 provide the ideal standard for establishing response pairs in future assessments. While the either-or responses worked as the researcher had designed, the following improvements are recommended to expand the assessment, reduce the number of inconclusive either-or pairs, and provide more significant differentiation in the participant responses:

- Develop an even number of either-or responses for stages one through five and increase the number of pairs and responses to maximize the combinations and reactions desired.

Table 5.1

Recommended Either-Or Response Matrix				
1A – 2A	2A – 1G	3A – 1E	4A – 1C	5A – 1B
1B – 3A	2B – 3C	3B – 2C	4B – 2E	5B – 2G
1C – 4G	2C – 4E	3C – 4C	4C – 3E	5C – 3G
1D – 5A	2D – 5C	3D – 5E	4D – 5G	5D – 4A
1E – 2B	2E – 1H	3E – 1F	4E – 1D	5E – 1A
1F – 3B	2F – 3D	3F – 2D	4F – 2F	5F – 2H
1G – 4H	2G – 4F	3G – 4D	4G – 3F	5G – 3H
1H – 5B	2H – 5D	3H – 5F	4H – 5H	5H – 4B

- The even number of pairs for each maturity stage will avoid weighted results. A sample matrix is shown in Table 5.1, with each response presented twice, paired with a different alternate from a different maturity stage.
- Convene two focus groups, one group of church staff and one group comprised of a range of church members, to review the statements and ensure clarity.

The recommended improvements to the either-or responses will provide the opportunity to show a specific response strategically paired against two different choices, providing increased differentiation in the assessment. The improvements may also allow a more significant distinction between the infant and child stages in early-stage believers.

Rooted Experience Effectiveness

The participant responses for the effectiveness of the *Rooted* experience overwhelmingly revealed its effectiveness at encouraging and equipping early-stage adult believers. Observations are presented below following five essential rhythms of *Rooted*: prayer, Bible reading, giving, serving, and sharing your story.

Prayer

Rooted had a positive effect on the prayer life of early-stage believers:

- 18% increase in their view of the importance of prayer.
- 32% of early-stage believers stated they pray more consistently.
- 55% reported they pray for others more after *Rooted*.
- 40-minute weekly increase in prayer time following *Rooted*.

Bill Hull reminded us earlier in this research that “a disciple abides in Christ through the Word and prayer.”²¹¹ Jesus modeled a prayer life for us: “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”²¹² A disciple should spend time in prayer following Jesus’ model, and *Rooted* helped people understand the importance of prayer and practice it as a discipline.

Bible Reading

Rooted increased the importance and weekly Bible reading time with early-stage believers.

- 39% of early-stage believers responding reading their Bible seems more natural.
- 29% understand the Bible better after *Rooted*.
- 35% read the Bible more consistently after *Rooted*.

These quotes from participants were included in the spiritual maturity self-assessment and characterized the positive impact *Rooted* had on the prayer lives of early-stage believers:

- “I found I need to be more consistent with my Bible reading and study.”
- “*Rooted* got me back into a better habit and desire to read the Bible and study.”
- “I want to focus on daily Bible reading so I can hear God better.”

²¹¹ Hull, *Complete Book of Discipleship*, 46.

²¹² Mark 1:35.

Klaus Issler reminded us of the importance of Bible reading in the life of a disciple: “Through scripture our worldview can become aligned with God’s view of reality...The Bible provides an exclusive set of truth claims about key matters of life and reality itself that we can find nowhere else.”²¹³

The daily devotional time during *Rooted* develops a habit of daily time with God over the ten-week experience. For early-stage believers, forming a consistent everyday time in the word is a foundational discipleship habit that will benefit them for a lifetime of following Jesus.

Giving

Giving practices of early-stage believers were marginally increased after *Rooted*. Of all spiritual disciplines measured by this research, increases in giving showed the smallest increase.

- 18% of early-stage believers are giving a little more after *Rooted*.
- 10% of early-stage believers are giving significantly more after *Rooted*.

Results were similar with all believers concerning giving practices. The church should look at how it conducts the weeklong focus on giving (week eight) to determine more compelling ways to communicate the importance of giving and generosity.

Important to note is that the period studied by this research included the COVID-19 shutdown of churches and businesses. The possible negative impact on the personal finances of many participants could be considered a likely component of the giving responses. The research questions did not allow the participants to explain changes to their giving practices.

²¹³ Issler, 142.

Serving

Rooted positively influenced the importance of serving others in early-stage believers, although the practical increase in serving time was low.

- Early-stage believers reported a 20% increase in the importance of serving.
- Early-stage believers responded their serving increased from 2.9 to 3.25 hours per week.

The increased time spent serving was lower in proportion to the participant's stated importance of serving. The modest increase may be related to the diminished serving opportunities available during the COVID-19 ministry season.

A maturity question was posed earlier in this research: Does a disciple spend time serving others? As disciples mature, they should desire to spend time in service to others, understanding their role in serving the body of Christ. James states, our faith must be lived out: "...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."²¹⁴ To be more effectual, the church should ensure compelling serving opportunities provided during the two weeks that focus on serving others (*Rooted* weeks 6 and 7).

Sharing Your Story

The *Rooted* experience helped people to share their faith stories. The most dramatic increase in early-stage believers was the increased importance and willingness to share their personal stories of faith.

- 48% increase in the importance of sharing their story.
- 72% increase in the likelihood of sharing their story.

²¹⁴ James 1:21b-22.

During *Rooted*, one or two participants are asked to share their testimony each week within the group. For early-stage believers, this is often the first time they have ever told their story, and this can give them the confidence to share their story in the future. *Rooted* helps people to live out Peter's command: "...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."²¹⁵

Other Observations

Observation on Participants

More adult stage believers (59) responded to the research survey than early-stage believers (38). It is understandable to the researcher that adult stage believers would have more desire to help make the church and its discipleship systems better. Future assessments with all participants immediately following each *Rooted* session should provide opportunities to gather more information from early-stage believers. Through conversations with *Rooted* leaders, known early-stage believers can be specifically encouraged to participate in future survey assessments.

Observation on Time

This research measured the effect of *Rooted* on participants across two years. The researcher contends that this provided a more accurate assessment of lasting *Rooted* effectiveness that could be done immediately following a *Rooted* session. If *Rooted* sessions are assessed immediately following their completion, the *Rooted* team should have follow-up discussions after one year to verify a lasting impact.

²¹⁵ 1 Peter 3:15b.

Research Conclusions

The *Rooted* experience is effective, and the spiritual stage measurement tools developed for this project worked. This research realized its purpose to positively affect the discipleship development of early-stage adult believers at Southwest Church by assessing the effectiveness and recommending improvements to the *Rooted* discipleship experience. The product of this intervention is the church has new spiritual maturity measurement tools and suggestions to improve elements of the *Rooted* experience for future participants.

Spiritual Maturity Measurement

Believers develop through stages of maturity, and this research demonstrated that those stages could be measured using properly designed self-assessment and measured assessment tools. Hawkins and Parkinson asked: “Is it possible to measure the heart?”²¹⁶ Because of the subjective nature of this measurement, this research endeavored to identify observable behavior and language characteristics to evaluate a disciple’s maturity. The measurement tools developed for this project provide a foundation that can be continuously adapted, improved, and used in the future for the discipleship ministries of the church.

Rooted Experience

A standard for effectiveness in a discipleship system was seen in Wesley's simple dual standard for excellence: "Is it scriptural, and does it work."²¹⁷ *Rooted* introduces and develops the spiritual practices of Bible reading, prayer, serving, giving, and sharing personal testimony. The *Rooted* experience works to scripturally develop, encourage, and equip early-stage believers in their discipleship journey.

²¹⁶ Hawkins and Parkinson. 12.

²¹⁷ Henderson, 113.

The single *Rooted* front door to the discipleship pathway will continue developing early-stage believers at Southwest Church. Through continuous observation, evaluation, and innovation of the *Rooted* experience, Southwest Church will positively affect the early discipleship development of early-stage adult believers, introducing them to the practice of vital spiritual disciplines.

Bibliography

- Barna, George. *Growing True Disciples. New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001.
- Bevins, Winfield. *Marks of a Movement. What the Church Can Learn Today from the Wesleyan Revival*. New York: Harper Collins, 2019.
- Blanchard, Ken, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry. *Lead Like Jesus. Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York, NY: Macmillan Co., 1960.
- Bruce, Alexander Balmain. *Training of the Twelve*. iBooks.
<https://books.apple.com/us/book/the-training-of-the-twelve/id1382826351>.
- Burggraff, Andrew. "Developing Discipleship Curriculum: Applying the Systems Approach Model for Designing Instruction by Dick, Carey, and Carey to the Construction of Church Discipleship Courses." *Christian Education Journal* 12, no. 2 (Fall, 2015): 397-414.
<http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fdeveloping-discipleship-curriculum-applying%2Fdocview%2F1725036343%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.
- Chan, Francis. *Forgotten God. Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*. iBooks.
<https://books.apple.com/us/book/forgotten-god/id490713941>.
- Chan, Francis, and Mark Beuving. *Multiply. Disciples Making Disciples*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012.
- Du Plessis, Isak J. "Discipleship According to Luke's Gospel." *Religion & Theology* 2, no. 1 (1995) 58–71.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001020613&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Earley, Dave, and Rod Dempsey. *Disciple-Making Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2013.
- Ferguson, Dave and Jon Ferguson. *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Francis, Leslie J., Bruce G. Fawcett, Tracy Freeze, Renee Embree, and David W. Lankshear. "What Helps Young Christians Grow in Discipleship? Exploring Connections between Discipleship Pathways and Psychological Type." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print, 2020.

- Gitau, Wanjiru M. *Megachurch Christianity Reconsidered: Millennials and Social Change in African Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018. ProQuest E-book Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5557263>.
- Graham, Elaine. "Luther's Legacy: Rethinking the Theology of Lay Discipleship 500 Years after the Reformation." *Ecclesiology*. 13, no. 3 (2017): 324–348.
- Hawkins, Greg L., and Cally Parkinson. *Move, What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Hellerman, Joseph. *When the Church Was a Family. Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2009.
- Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley's Class Meeting. A Model for Making Disciples*. Whitmore, KY: Rafiki Books, 2016.
- Henry, Matthew. *Commentary on the Whole Bible. Volume V. - Matthew to John*. New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1935.
- Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016.
- Hull, Bill. *Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker*. iBooks.
<https://books.apple.com/us/book/jesus-christ-disciplemaker/id439746417>.
- Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006.
- Hull, Bill. *The Disciple-Making Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010.
- Isaac, Gordon. "Lecture 3: Early Church and the Middle Ages."
<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/early-church-and-middle-ages/church-history>.
- Issler, Klaue. *Living Into the Life of Jesus. The Formation of Christian Character*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Jackson, T. Ryan. "A Pauline Strategy for Challenging Cultural Liturgies: Making Corinthian Disciples." *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* 3 (2016): 65–85.
<https://searchebshostcom.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAIiGEV171007000438&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Johnson, Michael. "Stages in Disciple-Growing: There's Not One-Best-Way for Everyone to Grow in Christ." *Network* (blog).
<https://network.crcna.org/small-groups/stages-disciple-growing-theres-not-one-best-way-everyone-grow-christ>.
- Johnson, Paul. *Disciple Making Stages*. Canadian National Baptist Convention.
<https://disciplemakingstages.com/portfolio/stages-explained/>. Accessed 2/5/2021.

- Koessler, John. *True Discipleship. The Art of Following Jesus*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003.
- Labberton, Mark. *Called. The Crisis and Promise of Following Jesus Today*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014.
- Mariners Church. *Rooted. Connect with God, the Church, and Your Purpose*. Mariners Church, 2011.
- Maynard, Phil. *EMC³ Ministry Coaching*. <https://emc3coaching.com/>. Accessed 2/5/2021.
- Maynard, Phil. *Shift 2.0. Helping Congregations Back into the Effective Game of Ministry*. Knoxville, TN: Markey Square Publishing, 2018.
- McClendon, Adam. *Paul's Spirituality on Galatians. A Critique of Contemporary Christian Spiritualities*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015.
- McDonald, Glenn. *The Disciple-Making Church. From Dry Bones to Spiritual Vitality*. Lima, OH: Faith Walk Publishing, 2007.
- Ministry Labs. "A Discussion on Discipleship with Thom Rainer." September 19, 2017. <https://resources.churchcommunitybuilder.com/articles/discipleship-webinar-thom-rainer>.
- Mounce, William D. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- Ogden, Greg. *Discipleship Essentials. A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship, Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- Ogden, Greg. *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.
- Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Pettit, Paul. *Foundations of Spiritual Formation. A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008.
- Platt, David. *Follow Me. A Call to Die. A Call to Live*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009.
- Putman, Jim. "A Better Way to Make Disciples." *Outreach*, September 5, 2015. <https://outreachmagazine.com/features/4838-jim-putman-needed-shifts-in-making-disciples.html>

- Putman, Jim. *Real-Life Discipleship*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010.
- Rengstorf, K. H., G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, and G. Friedrich (Eds.) δοῦλος, σύνδουλος, δούλη, δουλεύω, δουλεία, δουλόω, καταδουλόω, δουλαγωγέω, ὀφθαλμοδουλία, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 2, p. 261). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. *Spiritual Discipleship. Principles of Following Christ for Every Believer*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1994.
- Shelley, Bruce L. *Church History in Plain Language*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008.
- Stanley, Andy. *Deep and Wide. Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Stetzer, Ed. "Laypeople and the Mission of God, Part I." *Christianity Today*. July 17, 2012. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/july/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-1--killing-clergy.html>.
- Stott, Jeff. "5 Stages of Spiritual Growth." *Truth Applied* (blog). 2014. <http://truthappliedjs.com/5-stages-of-spiritual-growth/>
- Stott, John R. W. *The Message to the Ephesians*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.
- Swindoll, Charles. *The Church Awakening. An Urgent Call For Renewal*. New York, NY: FaithWords, 2010.
- Thayer and Smith. *NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon*. δοῦλος. Accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/>.
- Thumma, Scott and Dave Travis. *Beyond Megachurch Myths. What We Can Learn From America's Largest Churches*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Waggoner, Brad J. *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.
- Yount, Rick. "The Mind: Discipleship that Forms the Thoughts of Christians—Reflections on Dallas Willard's Thinking on the Mind (Thoughts)." *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 1 (04, 2019): 51-65. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fmind-discipleship-that-forms-thoughts-christians%2Fdocview%2F2184330260%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

Appendix A

EFCA Statement of Faith

Ten Primary Beliefs

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled, and renewed.

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him, they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the Gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor, and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the Gospel in word and deed.

Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily, and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service, and energetic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the Gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

Appendix B

Participant Survey

Name (optional) _____ *Rooted* Session: _____

e-mail (optional) _____ Date _____

*Providing your name is optional. If you provide your name, Pastor Kim Harrell may contact you with some follow-up questions to help us better understand how we can improve the **Rooted** experience and how we can help people grow spiritually.*

All responses to all questionnaires, feedback surveys, and interviews will be strictly confidential.

Please select the response I that is most true for you:

- 2) I would describe myself as...
 - a) A believer who serves regularly, but not quite ready to lead others.
 - b) A new believer in Jesus Christ – or in the early stages of my faith.
 - c) A believer for a long time, but I have never been really active in my faith.
 - d) A mature follower of Jesus Christ, ready and equipped to lead others.

- 3) My Bible reading...
 - a) I read my Bible every day.
 - b) I prefer someone leading me through the Bible.
 - c) I read my Bible occasionally on my own.
 - d) I rarely read my Bible.

- 4) My Serving...
 - a) I don't serve very often.
 - b) I serve often in church arranged events.
 - c) I would serve more regularly, but I'm too busy right now.
 - d) I serve often and I invite others to serve with me.

- 5) Who I say Jesus is...
 - a) Jesus was a great moral teacher.
 - b) I am confident that Jesus is the only way to heaven.
 - c) Jesus is one of the ways to get to heaven.
 - d) I'm still learning who Jesus was.

- 6) What I believe about Christianity...
 - a) Christianity is one of the great world religions.
 - b) Christianity teaches good moral behaviors.
 - c) Christianity is the only true faith.
 - d) Christianity is largely based on other religions.

- 7) What I believe about truth...
 - a) I believe in what is visible and verifiable.
 - b) I believe the Bible contains real truth.
 - c) Truth can be known, but it can be different for each person.
 - d) There is no absolute right and wrong.

- 8) About prayer...
 - a) I don't pray very often.
 - b) I pray mostly before meals.
 - c) I pray when I need to talk to God.
 - d) I pray often and feel like something is missing when I don't pray.
- 9) About giving...
 - a) I give regularly to the church and/or other Christian causes.
 - b) The church doesn't need my money.
 - c) I tithe 10% or more to the church or other Christian causes.
 - d) I would give, but I can't afford to at this time.

Please answer the following questions in your own words:

- 10) In your own words, how does someone become a Christian?
- 11) What is your view on money (generally), savings, and debt?
- 12) Are you currently serving at the church or in ministry? Do you know where you serve best?
- 13) Are you aware of any areas in your life that you haven't fully surrendered to God?
- 14) Are there areas that you need to grow spiritually? Were these revealed during *Rooted*?
- 14) After *Rooted*, describe any changes in your life in the areas of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control.

For the following pairs of statements, check the statement that you most agree with:

<input type="checkbox"/> I like church because I'm learning more about God <input type="checkbox"/> I like church because of the way it makes me feel	<input type="checkbox"/> Attending church every week is important to me <input type="checkbox"/> Small Group relationships are important to me
<input type="checkbox"/> I attend church events when I am invited <input type="checkbox"/> I invite others to church	<input type="checkbox"/> I give some of my money to the church and/or Christian causes <input type="checkbox"/> I give generously to the church and/or Christian causes
<input type="checkbox"/> I am beginning to discover truth in scripture <input type="checkbox"/> I am confident in the truth of scripture	<input type="checkbox"/> I have served in a variety of different areas of the church <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer waiting to be invited to serve the church
<input type="checkbox"/> The Bible is excellent moral teaching <input type="checkbox"/> I want to know God's better	<input type="checkbox"/> I am thankful for God's provision in my life <input type="checkbox"/> I have been able to earn mostly everything I need
<input type="checkbox"/> I read my Bible for my small group study <input type="checkbox"/> I read my Bible as part of my devotional time	<input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy learning God's word from a pastor at the church <input type="checkbox"/> I feel equipped to explore God's word on my own
<input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy giving money to God's kingdom <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer donating my time instead of money	<input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy church because I feel like I belong <input type="checkbox"/> I try to make others feel welcome at church
<input type="checkbox"/> I know God loves me <input type="checkbox"/> I care about the salvation of others	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't worry about how I spend my money <input type="checkbox"/> I understand how debt can overwhelm me
<input type="checkbox"/> Jesus is the only way to eternal life <input type="checkbox"/> Jesus is one possible way to eternal life	<input type="checkbox"/> I take regular quiet times with God <input type="checkbox"/> I often allow other things to take priority over my quiet times
<input type="checkbox"/> I worked hard to earn my money <input type="checkbox"/> God has given me money to manage	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm more private with my faith <input type="checkbox"/> I'm confident sharing my story with others
<input type="checkbox"/> I like church because I'm fed God's word <input type="checkbox"/> I like helping others understand God's word	<input type="checkbox"/> I pray when things are out of my control <input type="checkbox"/> I pray regularly about big and small things
<input type="checkbox"/> I want to honor God with the choices I make in movies and music <input type="checkbox"/> God doesn't care about the movies I watch or the music I listen to	<input type="checkbox"/> I volunteer to serve where I am needed <input type="checkbox"/> I volunteer to serve where I am invited
<input type="checkbox"/> I mostly find security in what I can control <input type="checkbox"/> My security is in my faith	<input type="checkbox"/> I try to not to use foul language <input type="checkbox"/> God doesn't care if I use foul language
<input type="checkbox"/> I have a daily practice of prayer <input type="checkbox"/> I pray to God occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/> I see myself mostly as a servant/minister <input type="checkbox"/> I see myself mostly as a church member

52 statements
26 pairs

Dead
Seeker
☐ = 1

Infant
Believer
☐ = 15

Child
Learner
☐ = 15

Young Adult
Server
☐ = 15

Adult
Leader
☐ = 6

Prayer = 2 Generosity = 4 Security = 3 Serving = 3 Bible = 4 Devotion = 3 Church = 4 Witness = 2 Gratitude = 1

For the following questions, please select the option that best represents you.

Prayer

How important to you is prayer? (on a scale of 1 to 10)

Your view before *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your view after *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you measure your personal prayer life?

Hours spent per week in prayer before *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5+

Hours spent per week in prayer after *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5+

Check all the boxes that describe your prayer life since *Rooted*:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I pray about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> I pray more for other people after <i>Rooted</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am praying more consistently after <i>Rooted</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> I didn't pray at all before, now I pray some |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Praying seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> I am listening to God more after <i>Rooted</i> |

Bible Reading

How important is Bible reading to you? (on a scale of 1 to 10)

Your view before *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your view after *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you measure your personal Bible reading?

Hours per week spent in the Bible before *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5+

Hours per week spent in the Bible after *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5+

Check all the boxes that describe your Bible reading since *Rooted*:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I read about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> I desire to read the Bible more after <i>Rooted</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I read my Bible more after <i>Rooted</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> I didn't read at all before, now I read some |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading seems easier after <i>Rooted</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> I understand the Bible better after <i>Rooted</i> |

Giving (Generosity)

This includes giving to the church and other Christian causes.

How important to you is giving and generosity? (on a scale of 1 to 10)

Your view before *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your view after *Rooted*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Has your actual giving and generosity changed since *Rooted*? (circle one)

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. I am giving a little more after <i>Rooted</i> . | c. I am giving significantly more after <i>Rooted</i> . |
| b. I am giving about the same after <i>Rooted</i> . | d. I was already tithing 10% before <i>Rooted</i> . |

Serving

How important to you is serving others? (on a scale of 1 to 10)

Your view before *Rooted***Your view after *Rooted***

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you measure your personal time spent serving?

Hours spent serving per week before *Rooted***Hours spent serving per week after *Rooted***

0 1 2 3 4 5+

0 1 2 3 4 5+

Sharing Your Story

How important to you is sharing your story with others? (on a scale of 1 to 10)

Your view before *Rooted***Your view after *Rooted***

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How likely are you to share your personal story of faith?

Before *Rooted***After *Rooted****Not likely**Very Likely**Not likely**Very Likely*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Cardboard Testimonies

During our *Rooted* celebrations, we have the opportunity to share life change through “cardboard testimonies.” The front of the cardboard has a few words describing how you felt before *Rooted* and the cardboard is turned around to reveal a few words describing the life change that occurred during *Rooted*.

Examples: Before: Lonely, Disconnected
 Before: Tired of church
 Before: Marriage was over
 Before: Bible reading was a chore

After: I found my church Family
 After: Renewed life and love for ministry
 After: Found love with each other again
 After: Rediscovered my love for God’s word

Please describe in your own words one area that *Rooted* has helped you personally.**Before *Rooted*****After *Rooted***

--	--

Rooted Leader Feedback

Name _____ *Rooted Session:* _____

e-mail _____ Date _____

*Thank you for helping us to better understand how we can improve the **Rooted** experience and how we can better help people grow spiritually. The following questions relate to your observations about members of your Rooted group.*

All responses to all questionnaires, feedback surveys, and interviews will be strictly confidential.

1. Please describe life change that you witnessed in your group. (without mentioning names)

Examples: One couple in my group was considering divorce, and now they are reconciling.

One member of my group started to pray regularly for others.

2. Describe any visible behavior or attitude changes that presented in the forms of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control. (without mentioning names)

Examples: I witnessed one couple in my group speaking more kindly to each other.

One member of my group seemed more joyful as the Rooted session went on.

3. Looking back over the 10 weeks of *Rooted*, what would you change to make the *Rooted* experience better? (include thoughts on *Rooted* materials and/or the way we implemented *Rooted*)

Prompts: Did you feel prepared as a leader? What can we do better in the leader huddle?

Did we celebrate well? What would you change about serve week? How was the meeting venue?

Appendix C

Survey Questionnaire Results - Additional Data for AB, YAB, and sorted by *Rooted* session.

Note: Percentages rounded to the nearest full percent.

1. Prayer

Table C.1

Prayer – Adult Stage Believers (AB)		
<i>AB = 59 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is prayer? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.58	9.69
How would you measure your prayer life? <i>Hours spent each week in prayer. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.97	3.80
Check all boxes that describe your prayer life...		
I pray about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>		24 (41%)
I am praying more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>		28 (47%)
Praying seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>		19 (32%)
I pray more for other people after <i>Rooted</i>		29 (49%)
I didn't pray at all before, now I pray some		0
I am listening to God more after <i>Rooted</i>		25 (42%)

Table C.2

Prayer – Young Adult Stage Believers (YAB)		
<i>YAB = 37 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is prayer? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.03	9.41
How would you measure your prayer life? <i>Hours spent each week in prayer. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.76	3.65
Check all boxes that describe your prayer life...		
I pray about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>		22 (59%)
I am praying more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>		11 (28%)
Praying seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>		15 (41%)
I pray more for other people after <i>Rooted</i>		18 (49%)
I didn't pray at all before, now I pray some		0
I am listening to God more after <i>Rooted</i>		18 (49%)

Table C.3

Prayer – By Rooted Session					
	<i>Before Rooted/After Rooted</i>				
	2019 Pilot <i>19 of 134</i>	2019 Staff <i>16 of 134</i>	2019 Fall <i>70 of 134</i>	2020 Spring <i>10 of 134</i>	2020 Fall <i>19 of 134</i>
How important to you is prayer? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.31/ 9.19	8.44/ 9.81	7.94/ 9.28	8.40/ 9.30	8.32/ 9.89
How would you measure your prayer life? <i>Hours spent each week in prayer. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.56/ 3.06	2.38/ 3.50	2.78/ 3.57	3.00/ 3.60	2.79/ 3.79
Check all boxes that describe your prayer life...					
I pray about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>	7 (37%)	6 (37%)	33 (47%)	4 (40%)	11 (58%)
I am praying more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>	7 (37%)	6 (37%)	26 (37%)	3 (30%)	7 (37%)
Praying seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>	6 (32%)	6 (37%)	24 (34%)	7 (70%)	5 (26%)
I pray more for other people after <i>Rooted</i>	8 (42%)	7 (44%)	38 (54%)	5 (50%)	9 (47%)
I didn't pray at all before, now I pray some	0	0	0	0	0
I am listening to God more after <i>Rooted</i>	7 (37%)	8 (50%)	29 (41%)	7 (70%)	7 (37%)

2. Bible Reading

Table C.4

Bible Reading – Adult Stage Believers (AB)		
<i>AB = 59 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important is Bible reading to you? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.07	9.61
How would you measure your personal Bible reading? <i>Hours spent each week reading the Bible. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	3.02	4.03
Check all boxes that describe your Bible reading since <i>Rooted</i> ...		
I read my Bible about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>		28 (47%)
I read my Bible more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>		24 (40%)
Reading my Bible seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>		13 (22%)
I desire to read my Bible more often after <i>Rooted</i>		27 (45%)
I didn't read my Bible at all before, now I read some		0
I understand the Bible better after <i>Rooted</i>		14 (24%)

Table C.5

Bible Reading – Young Adult Stage Believers (YAB)		
<i>YAB = 37 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important is Bible reading to you? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	6.51	8.76
How would you measure your personal Bible reading? <i>Hours spent each week reading the Bible. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.39	3.63
Check all boxes that describe your Bible reading since <i>Rooted</i> ...		
I read my Bible about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>		13 (35%)
I read my Bible more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>		13 (35%)
Reading my Bible seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>		12 (32%)
I desire to read my Bible more often after <i>Rooted</i>		17 (46%)
I didn't read my Bible at all before, now I read some		3 (8%)
I understand the Bible better after <i>Rooted</i>		9 (24%)

Table C.6

Bible Reading – By Rooted Session					
	Before Rooted/After Rooted				
	2019 Pilot <i>19 of 134</i>	2019 Staff <i>16 of 134</i>	2019 Fall <i>70 of 134</i>	2020 Spring <i>10 of 134</i>	2020 Fall <i>19 of 134</i>
How important is Bible reading to you? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	7.50/ 8.88	7.13/ 9.63	6.96/ 8.79	7.40/ 8.60	7.58/ 9.37
How would you measure your personal Bible reading? <i>Hours spent each week reading the Bible. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	2.87/ 3.67	2.50/ 3.94	2.53/ 3.57	2.20/ 3.00	2.61/ 3.58
Check all boxes that describe your Bible reading since <i>Rooted</i> ...					
I read my Bible about the same amount after <i>Rooted</i>	9 (47%)	6 (37%)	28 (40%)	4 (40%)	9 (47%)
I read my Bible more consistently after <i>Rooted</i>	4 (21%)	7 (44%)	30 (43%)	4 (40%)	8 (42%)
Reading my Bible seems more natural after <i>Rooted</i>	4 (21%)	6 (37%)	19 (27%)	4 (40%)	7 (37%)
I desire to read my Bible more often after <i>Rooted</i>	5 (26%)	9 (56%)	31 (44%)	6 (60%)	6 (32%)
I didn't read my Bible at all before, now I read some	0	0	3 (4%)	1 (10%)	2 (11%)
I understand the Bible better after <i>Rooted</i>	5 (26%)	4 (25%)	16 (23%)	2 (20%)	7 (37%)

3. Giving

Table C.7

Giving – Adult Stage Believers (AB)		
<i>AB = 59 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is giving and generosity? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.47	9.49
Has your actual giving and generosity changed since <i>Rooted</i> ?		
I am giving a little more after <i>Rooted</i>		10 (17%)
I give about the same after <i>Rooted</i>		17 (29%)
I am giving significantly more after <i>Rooted</i>		8 (14%)
I was already in the practice of tithing 10% or more before <i>Rooted</i>		24 (41%)

Table C.8

Giving – Young Adult Stage Believers (YAB)		
<i>YAB = 37 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is giving and generosity? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.38	9.24
Has your actual giving and generosity changed since <i>Rooted</i> ?		
I am giving a little more after <i>Rooted</i>		17 (46%)
I give about the same after <i>Rooted</i>		12 (32%)
I am giving significantly more after <i>Rooted</i>		6 (16%)
I was already in the practice of tithing 10% or more before <i>Rooted</i>		11 (30%)

Table C.8

Giving – By Rooted Session					
	<i>Before Rooted/After Rooted</i>				
	2019 Pilot <i>19 of 134</i>	2019 Staff <i>16 of 134</i>	2019 Fall <i>70 of 134</i>	2020 Spring <i>10 of 134</i>	2020 Fall <i>19 of 134</i>
How important to you is giving and generosity? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.94/ 9.50	8.44/ 9.31	8.04/ 8.90	7.30/ 8.80	8.00/ 8.63
Has your actual giving and generosity changed since <i>Rooted</i> ?					
I am giving a little more after <i>Rooted</i>	2 (11%)	4 (25%)	12 (17%)	4 (40%)	2 (11%)
I give about the same after <i>Rooted</i>	0	0	27 (39%)	0	0
I am giving significantly more after <i>Rooted</i>	2 (11%)	1 (6%)	9 (13%)	2 (20%)	4 (21%)
I was already tithing 10% or more before <i>Rooted</i>	8 (42%)	6 (37%)	21 (30%)	2 (20%)	5 (26%)

4. Serving

Table C.10

Serving – Adult Stage Believers (AB)		
<i>AB = 59 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is serving others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.79	9.55
How would you measure your personal time serving? <i>Hours spent serving each week. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	3.29	3.63

Table C.11

Serving – Young Adult Stage Believers (YAB)		
<i>YAB = 37 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is serving others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.19	9.24
How would you measure your personal time serving? <i>Hours spent serving each week. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	3.03	3.27

Table C.12

Serving – By Rooted Session					
	<i>Before Rooted/After Rooted</i>				
	<i>2019 Pilot 19 of 134</i>	<i>2019 Staff 16 of 134</i>	<i>2019 Fall 70 of 134</i>	<i>2020 Spring 10 of 134</i>	<i>2020 Fall 19 of 134</i>
How important to you is serving others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	8.33/ 9.25	8.25/ 9.06	8.21/ 8.91	6.70/ 9.30	7.32/ 8.95
How would you measure your personal time serving? <i>Hours spent serving each week. Scale from 1 to 5</i>	3.07/ 3.25	3.93/ 4.31	2.96/ 3.17	3.00/ 3.40	1.95/ 2.53

5. Sharing Your Story

Table C.13

Sharing Your Story – Adult Stage Believers (AB)		
<i>AB = 59 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is sharing your story with others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	6.71	8.47
How likely are you to share your personal story of faith? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	6.34	8.27

Table C.14

Sharing Your Story – Young Adult Stage Believers (YAB)		
<i>YAB = 37 of 134 participants</i>	<i>Before Rooted</i>	<i>After Rooted</i>
How important to you is sharing your story with others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	5.78	7.65
How likely are you to share your personal story of faith? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	4.97	7.41

Table C.15

Sharing Your Story – By Rooted Session					
	<i>Before Rooted/After Rooted</i>				
	<i>2019 Pilot 19 of 134</i>	<i>2019 Staff 16 of 134</i>	<i>2019 Fall 70 of 134</i>	<i>2020 Spring 10 of 134</i>	<i>2020 Fall 19 of 134</i>
How important to you is sharing your story with others? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	6.38/ 8.44	7.13/ 8.88	5.53/ 7.64	3.70/ 6.60	6.56/ 8.16
How likely are you to share your personal story of faith? <i>Scale from 1 to 10</i>	5.87/ 8.13	6.25/ 8.81	5.19/ 7.49	2.89/ 6.56	5.89/ 7.95

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 28, 2021

Kim Harrell
Clifford Hartley

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-1019 Measuring the Effectiveness of Large-Scale Discipleship Methods in Adult Believers: A Study of the Southwest Church Rooted Experience.

Dear Kim Harrell and Clifford Hartley,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) 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 does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office