

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY  
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**Church Stigma: Healing a Wounded Reputation in the Community**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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MWBC developed a pernicious stigma in their community that consumed their reputation, making it virtually impossible to witness because of the negativity encompassing the church. If the stigma was not remedied, it was apparent that the church would struggle to be a light for Christ in the community and keep its doors open. The methodology of this research project successfully designed a model that revived the church and restored its reputation in the community. Sources on revitalization are abundant, but unearthing sources on how a church might restore a stigma or wounded reputation in the community to a holy character are scarce. Suppose a church has offended a community through ungodly actions such as church splits, mediocre leadership, or an immature congregation. In that case, winning them back is immensely problematic because surmounting offended contentions are hard as bars of a castle (Pro 18:19). This research project designed a model that would both revive the church and restore its reputation in the community. The methodology has nineteen detailed steps which describe how to accomplish these goals. This pragmatic model fits every church, small or large, revived or needing revitalization, and primarily focuses on producing a holy character in the community, which will cause the locals to want to attend the church. The construction of the model came from seven fundamental biblical principles, combined with parts of revitalization and evangelical models, with one special ingredient: a revelation from the Lord about evangelizing for the church in one's local community.

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## Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
MWBC	<i>Mineral Wells Baptist Church</i>
GBC	<i>Grace Baptist Church</i>
SWOT	<i>Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat</i>
FWR	<i>Fellowship Weekend Revival</i>
DOM	<i>Director of Missions</i>
INTVW	<i>Interviewee</i>



## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter briefly summarizes the history of Mineral Wells Baptist Church (MWBC), including its establishment, the accomplishments achieved by the church, the community in which it resides, and its reputation in the local neighborhood. The church, in its infancy, started strong and, through the efficacy of excellent leadership, became a light and beacon of hope in their community. MWBC, through their surplus, has become a blessing in other communities, such as building another church and homeless shelter in two communities other than their own. MWBC was a thriving church that enjoyed magnificent prestige in the community for many years. As in all things, a tainted reputation can happen virtually overnight. After much growth with various accomplishments, MWBC developed a stigma in the community, which has lingered for over fifteen years. The problem, purpose, and thesis statements will examine what actions caused the stigma to form and evaluate what the church can do to eradicate the blemish in the Mineral Wells community.

### **Ministry Context**

MWBC has ministered in their community and surrounding communities for over thirty-four years with several accomplishments. MWBC has significantly facilitated the poor in their community, aided others in surrounding communities for years, and financially assisted three Filipino missionaries. The church still strives to serve the community, though it struggles with a stigma that keeps lingering about the church. This ministry context will be organized into seven sections, including the church's establishment, church denomination, church accomplishments, church community, church society, church leadership, and church reputation.

### Church Establishment

A small group of unsatisfied folks attending Mount Zion Baptist, which is of the American Baptist denomination, started gathering in the local community building. This small group gathered in the local community building for some time, partnered with Grace Baptist Church (GBC), and established the MWBC. Through pledges by these faithful men and women and aid from GBC, the modest group took a step of faith, purchased a lot, and erected a church. There was a Southern Baptist Church from North Carolina that immensely helped with the erection of the church through mission work. God was undoubtedly the leading force behind the establishment of the church as He caused the church to flourish, even from its infancy. This small group of charter members is now gone. Only one member in the church has been at MWBC from the beginning, but she was not on the official charter member list.

### Church Denomination

After establishing MWBC via GBC's financial aid and support, the congregation feels their beliefs and practices are particularly close to those of the Southern Baptist denomination. Therefore, MWBC joined the Southern Baptist denomination, becoming part of the local association in April 1987. From that time forward, MWBC has always remained active in supporting both the local Southern Baptist Association (Immanuel Baptist Association) and the West Virginia State Association.

### Church Accomplishments

The accomplishments of MWBC for its size in its thirty-five-year ministry are astounding. There are too many accomplishments to list, but here are some things the Lord has blessed this church to achieve. Through pledges from its members, the modest congregation went from meeting once a week in the community building to purchasing a large lot and

building a church where the sanctuary could hold over one hundred people. Through pledges and the leadership of a wise pastor, the church then built an activity building with a full gymnasium, with all new classrooms for all the Awana children and youth groups. After much growth, MWBC had to remodel and expand the sanctuary. The sanctuary will now fit about two hundred people comfortably. MWBC, in a time of prosperity and growth, then felt led by the Lord to participate in mothering a church in a nearby community. Elizabeth Baptist Church is now a thriving daughter church of MWBC. MWBC also has a great heart for the homeless in Mineral Wells and the much larger neighboring city, Parkersburg, West Virginia. Members from the church sought the homeless and aided them for a couple of years before finally finding a deal on a large, abandoned warehouse. After spending much time and money bringing the homeless shelter together, it now functions independently and no longer needs the church to make up its board members and the primary financial aid for the shelter, for it can now sustain itself without the aid of MWBC. There are many other activities MWBC partakes in, such as supporting three different missionaries, providing a food pantry for the community, and maintaining a benevolence fund that aids the poor in the community struggling to pay all their bills.

### Church Community

MWBC is located in Mineral Wells, West Virginia, a community of about two thousand people. Mineral Wells is a small community on the outskirts of Parkersburg, West Virginia. The Mineral Wells community comprises hard-working, successful people, making it a desirable place to live, but as with every small community, word-of-mouth gossip spreads almost overnight. With all the accomplishments of MWBC, the church, through word of mouth, almost outgrew itself. After MWBC developed a stigma in the community, it lost over fifty percent of

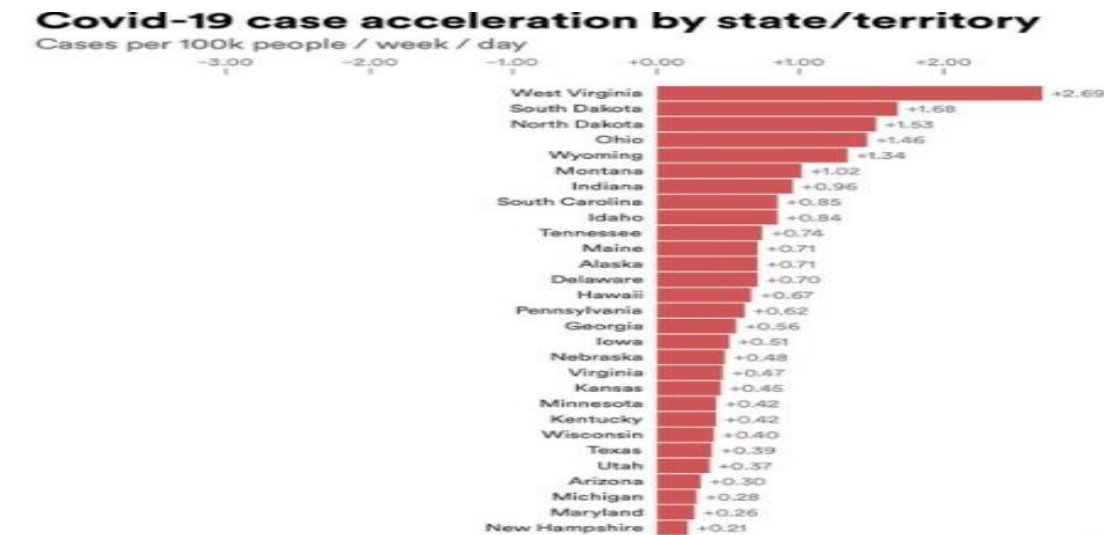
its membership. The attendance fifteen years ago was between one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty on Sunday morning, sometimes pushing close to two hundred. After the stigma took hold of the church in the community, the numbers on Sunday morning worship went below fifty. The numbers have fluctuated up and down and stayed in the fifties and sixties for over ten years.

### Church Society

The current congregation of MWBC is united and healthier than it has been in years. After the previous pastor resigned seven years ago, the church became exceedingly carnal and divided. MWBC was called a spiritual nursery by several pastors in the association. Sanctifying this debacle is and has been no simple task, but MWBC has come a substantially long way to get to the spiritual maturity that they presently have. Preaching and teaching strongly on the grace of God, the congregation has learned to love and forgive one another. The carnally divided church lost about half of its members in less than two years after the present ministry took over, but in that time, they have gained more than they have lost. The congregation was about fifty-five and lost twenty-three members in less than two years because they did not want to follow the grace, love, and forgiveness messages that the pastor was preaching. Though many left, many more came, and the church has grown to its most prominent place in about ten years. The congregation pre-covid numbered about ninety, and it appeared that it would continue to grow, but most of this growth came from outside the Mineral Wells community. With no current divisions, cliques, or unforgiveness in the congregation, spiritual maturity is at its highest in the past ten years, according to several members.

Several have reported that the congregation is more peaceful now than at any time they can remember. Though covid has restricted the attendance and growth, it has not restricted the

love and grace that MWBC is now experiencing. MWBC currently has virtually no tension, and the church's growth continued until covid. Covid rapidly overwhelmed West Virginia more than any other state in 2021. According to Metro News. “West Virginia is blowing past the rest of the nation for how quickly the number of covid cases are accelerating.”<sup>1</sup> McElhinny adds, “Right now, West Virginia leads the nation in the acceleration of new cases.”<sup>2</sup>



After going through covid in 2020, MWBC closed almost all services except online services for several months. During this time, a couple of church members die from the virus. MWBC rebounded when the mandates lifted, and attendance was back to the seventies and over eighty at times. Then in September of 2021, covid inundated the Mineral Wells Parkersburg area, and the severity of the situation was so devastating that the church had to cancel most services for two and a half months once again. The church opened back up on November 8, which was the first time the church had Sunday School and morning worship church service in

<sup>1</sup> [Brad McElhinny](https://wvmetronews.com/2021/09/07/west-virginia-leads-nation-in-covid-acceleration-straining-hospitals/), West Virginia leads nation in covid acceleration, straining hospitals, *WV. Metro News*, September 7, 2021. <https://wvmetronews.com/2021/09/07/west-virginia-leads-nation-in-covid-acceleration-straining-hospitals/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the sanctuary in over two months. Twenty-one of MWBC members had the coronavirus from mid-September to November 2021. Surprisingly, MWBC had about sixty people in the morning worship service on November 8, with forty-one in Sunday school. Once again, sixteen tested positive the second week of January 2022, and services were canceled because of the Omicron surge. This time the church lost another sister to the Covid virus. The church is going to start regular services on February 6. Attempting to rectify the church stigma during this covid onslaught is a grueling task, but through the enablement of the Lord's Spirit, MWBC can and will overcome it by faith.

#### Church leadership

The deacon board and pastor primarily handled the church leadership and guidance, which has advantages and disadvantages. Having a board of elders is a plus. However, the MWBC bylaws do not ordain elders but deacons; therefore, the pastor and deacon board guide the church instead of the pastor and a presbytery. Most deacons (unlike elders who must be able to teach Scripture and sound doctrine I Tim 3:2; II Tim 2:24) unfortunately only know their church constitution, bylaws, and policies. It is rare for a church to have deacons who know the Scriptures and understand the biblical doctrines of how to govern a church. Therefore, it is incredibly challenging to direct a church through a group of deacons who know not the philosophical doctrines of Christ and the apostles. However, it is more proficient than having a church meeting twice every month where the church is laity-led, which caused many of MWBC's problems, divisions, and stigma. When a carnal church is laity-led, the meetings pit the unmaturing members against one another. It is not, nor has it ever been, the responsibility of the members to lead or dictate the church by popular vote, yet many churches do this to their own destruction. Though the bylaws of MWBC are a laity-led policy, it is not as significant as a

problem as most laity-led churches because MWBC, now through the teaching of the current ministry, expects the leaders to be leaders. The pastor and others want a more biblically-based leadership through a Presbytery of ordained elders, which is how God established Israel and the New Testament church, but pushing for this may cause tension, and attempting to lead two of the deacon brothers into this biblical structure might be like leading a horse to water that does not want to drink. Therefore, this idea is in a state of abeyance for now. Before this current ministry, they were twenty-four meetings a year, not counting all the committee meetings. The pastor has changed this to four meetings a year unless there is a need for an emergency meeting. The meeting in July has on the agenda the personnel for the upcoming year, and the meeting in August has the approval vote. There is a budget meeting in November and the approval vote in December. Besides this, the pastor and deacon board usually meet twice a month to make nearly all church decisions. Mediocre leadership is assumed to be the primary cause of the stigma problem. Therefore, the pastor feels compelled to teach the deacons and leaders of the church how to be spiritually mature leaders of this congregation.

#### Church Reputation

The reputation of the church was exceptional for several years. MWBC had an excellent and wise pastor who led and grew the church in numbers and prosperity. Through his leadership, the church became a bright light in the community, reaching the lost and the youth. The church started a camp for the youth every summer, bringing hundreds of children, and leading several to Christ. The healthy reputation and growth of the church continued for several years, but the wise pastor left. After the wise pastor with many accomplishments left, the church had a schism, which began a downward spiral for many years.

For over a decade, the church's reputation in the community has not been up to par with most other church reputations. With all that MWBC has accomplished in the community and surrounding areas, it is a shame that they have lost their trustworthy reputation for many years. Even though some people in the community have written off MWBC's excellent moniker and reputable status, the unfeigned truth is that this congregation still has a great heart, which eagerly and cheerfully desires to serve the Mineral Wells community. MWBC has served with a loving heart in this community for many years, but it only takes a few negatives to give a church a black eye and stigma. Though the church is not entirely innocent, it still has unselfishly served this community for over thirty years and deserves to be recognized for all that God has done and is doing through MWBC instead of possessing and keeping a stigma from past ministries. Just as MWBC had a noble name in the community twenty years ago through all their accomplishments, they can once again rectify their reputation through more accomplishments in the future.

### **Problem Presented**

The problem is that a stigma in the community from previous splits, lack of discipleship, and evangelism have stunted MWBC growth. MWBC was a flourishing church in the community twenty years ago. The church increased the sanctuary's size because of growth and constructed a gymnasium for the enlarging youth groups, but the church veered off into a downward spiral over fifteen years ago. The church had multiple schisms in a short time frame, which was when the stigma emerged. The first split was over a confrontation between the pastor and many in the congregation. The information received is that the pastor wanted to keep expanding the church by force against the congregation's will and pushing them according to his pride. MWBC felt it was not ready to take on more growth; therefore, he pushed the church into



a split instead of an expansion in his efforts to enlarge it. If this information is accurate, then it can be explicitly seen that he was more of a pusher instead of a leader, which caused the church to miscarry (Gen 33:13-14).

The second split was over a short-tempered pastor. Many witnessed his sinful temperament, which became a problem for the majority of the congregation; therefore, he was asked to resign but refused. He continued to serve as pastor as long as possible, which caused a major division in the church that ultimately ended in another split. Because of the two schisms, several members relinquished their membership and started gossiping about how the church had offended them because of the two splits.

They elected a new pastor after the schisms and a period of pastor-less presence, which is an inexorably problematic trial for a church. The pastor was not a suitable fit for the church. He lacked charisma, and the efficacy of his communication skills was deficient. For about two years, he was the pastor and abruptly resigned, bequeathing the church in a substandard condition contrasted to his arrival. After this, the church accepted a new pastor, a tremendously gifted speaker with excellent charisma. The church started rallying behind him, and the congregation appeared to have a radiant future. Wistfully, the brilliant preacher claimed he was snake bit when caught having an affair with a married lady member of the church. This affair provoked several to withdraw from the church and spread gossip through the community. The church went through another term of pastor-less existence, and the congregation became extremely carnal instead of spiritual. MWBC received a new pastor, and he dealt with church disputations for five consecutive years before resigning. This pastor temporarily added to the church's growth through the homeless shelter ministry, which eventually caused him much grief. Several in the church did not like the homeless people filling the pews every Sunday.

Prior to his resignation, one preacher, who was also the Sunday school youth teacher, was arrested for drug trafficking and distribution, and the growth of the stigma in the community continues. The director of missions (DOM) and friend of the former pastor who just resigned expressed that the church was so carnal that it became likened to a spiritual nursery. When the current ministry took over about six and a half years ago, this teacher/preacher was still attending occasionally and was on work release serving his prison sentence on the weekends. Before completing his sentence, the correctional officer caught him smuggling narcotics into the prison, which was all over the local news adding to the unkemptness of this growing stigma fiasco.

Six years have now come and gone, and the congregation has matured considerably. Various carnal disruptive members have withdrawn, leaving the congregation limited in numbers, but the church now enjoys a presence of tranquility. The cliques and power struggles in the church are resolved, and several have taken membership, with a few baptisms. MWBC now feels like a church experiencing and increasing in the grace of God. Unfortunately, virtually all the baptisms and membership success are from individuals outside the MWBC community. The church still possesses some complications, such as spiritual maturity, evangelizing the community, and specifically the stigma on the church over the past fifteen years.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) action research is to construct evangelistic/discipleship programs that redeem MWBC's reputation and lead to gospel-centered growth. MWBC is a loving and compassionate congregation that obtains a wonderful spirit enhancing spiritual health. Now that the congregation is gradually maturing, it is time that they

develop into disciples of Christ individually and likewise as a body of Christ in the community. MWBC, such as the apostle Paul, cannot change the past and must forget what is behind them and reach pressing forward for the mark of their high calling in Christ (Phil 3:13-14) to magnify God in their community.

The church's various methods to approach discipleship are small groups, personal devotionals, discipleship training, and ministry interaction. Jesus said, in Luke 9:62b, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”<sup>3</sup> Genuine motives for becoming a disciple of Christ must exceed all other motives. To take hold of the gospel plow, one must renounce this world bearing their cross, concentrating on their calling, and expect to be disciples of Christ above all things, hence becoming the gospel of Christ to the world. The glory of Christ consists in that He makes His disciples both willing and able to bear their cross after him.<sup>4</sup> The cross was Jesus’ conception of discipleship, which the modern church has apparently discontinued. Today’s evangelicals have lost the concept of discipleship, which is the primary dilemma the contemporary church is currently facing.<sup>5</sup> Optimistically, MWBC will take hold of the gospel plow and become disciples of Christ willing to be subservient in all matters, bearing about the reproach of Christ in their body. The disciple-aspirant does not have the right to call Jesus “Lord” and then impose limits on his lordship.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 9:62, King James Version (KJV). Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this thesis project will be from the King James Version of the Bible.

<sup>4</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2020), 35.

<sup>5</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: HarperOne, an Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2019), 160.

<sup>6</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/Apollos, 2015), 258.

New Testament never teaches nor implies that discipleship is compatible with a life dedicated to one's achievements, accomplishments, happiness, luxury, or liberty from trials and tribulations.<sup>7</sup>

Examining the apostles' lives, one can unambiguously perceive what the call of discipleship cost them. Peter, Andrew, James, and John left their fishing business and families to be disciples of Christ. They, and the rest of the apostles, were beaten, imprisoned, and martyred except for John. Jesus teaches a disciple should first count the cost of what it takes to be a disciple, and after a brief parable, Jesus says, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). The cost of discipleship is that one must sacrifice all: the pleasures of sin, self-righteous pride, ease, and worldliness. Yes, all of these and more must be sacrificed.<sup>8</sup> The apostles of Christ were extremely special, and though the lay members of a local church will never come to this level, some discipleship can take place, making a significant difference in the church and community. If the church leaves the realm of lasciviousness, not dedicating their life to the personal image of achievements, accomplishments, and worldly success, it will impact the community. MWBC must understand that the church body is the body of Christ and, therefore, should seek to be Christlike in their community displaying the image and love of Christ to all. Indeed, some offended by the church enjoy being offended and, through a grudge, relish gossiping about MWBC, hoping their gossip will exacerbate it. However, for the rest of the Mineral Wells community, the stigma can and will vanish if the congregation yearns to disciple themselves in the love of Christ, preferring others and the will of Christ above the reputation and lust of the

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<sup>7</sup> Michael J.Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2020), 379.

<sup>8</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Bible Commentary: The Gospel of Luke* (Grupo Oxiênio Ltda-ME, 2015), 239. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6432101>. Created from liberty on 2021-11-16 08:33:09.

world. “Paul encourages the church to live out the gospel pattern of *kenosis* (self-emptying) in imitation of Jesus, the king.”<sup>9</sup> Discipling oneself in the love of Christ is no easy task for an individual and even more difficult for an entire congregation to do in unison. The number one reason for pastor resignations is the lack of unity in the congregation.<sup>10</sup> Every wise pastor understands that visions and goals are difficult to achieve if they do not unite the congregation in godliness.

### **Basic Assumptions**

Prior to the research of this thesis project, some assumptions are made that will lead the research process. The church developed a stigma over fifteen years ago that has continued until now. The present ministry was not a part of the church when the stigma occurred and started circulating throughout the community; therefore, assumptions must be made when analytical thinking starts this research process. Hopefully, as the research develops and this DMIN action launches, some assumptions will diminish, and facts will emerge. However, assumptions are supposed at the commencement of this DMIN research action. Why is the stigma here? How did it get here? When members left several years ago, and their gossip spread throughout the community, how much is reliable and truthful? What are the rumors about past pastors, ministries, and events that have promoted or brought disgrace to the church? At the onset of this research, much of what is said may be truthful or somewhat misleading. The initial assumption is that the information received will be considered factual until otherwise observed. Where the information leads is where this research will go in an attempt to understand the exact causes of

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group 2019), 208.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Henard, *Reclaimed Church: How Churches Grow, Decline, and Experience Revitalization* (B & H Books, 2018), 35.

the church stigma and how the church should now respond. At the inception of research for this DMIN action, the information exhibits that MWBC's leadership has significantly failed this congregation. Inadequate leadership brings forth a carnally divided congregation where everyone does what is right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25), "which means that every man did what evil he liked."<sup>11</sup> At the onset of this DMIN action research, the assumption is that poor or mediocre leadership led MWBC to become a spiritually immature congregation whose actions led to many decisions over the years, which caused a stigma to form in the Mineral Wells community and thus remain on MWBC.

### **Definitions**

This DMIN action research's primary interest regards the congregation and ministry of Mineral Wells Baptist Church in the Mineral Wells community. Some terms are often used throughout this research and design to depict the fundamental nature of church health and spiritual maturity. These terms, such as discipleship and evangelism, are knit together and hinge upon one another. Evangelism will never be effective without some form of discipleship; therefore, these terms overlap and depend upon one another. The delineating terminology used in this DMIN action research consists of church stigma, church health, church vision, discipleship, evangelism, becoming the gospel, spiritual formation, revitalization, and leadership. This terminology will ubiquitously be observed throughout this thesis project, and it will be apparent that these terms overlap and must join with each other to bring forth the desired results.

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Devotional Commentary* (Power Bible CD. Copywrite @2010 Phil Linder, Online Publishing, Inc), Judges 17:6 note.

*Church Stigma* or removing the stigma from a church is the emphasis of this research; therefore, it needs to be defined, but unlike the terminology of the other definitions, this is a definition that this project must clearly define since it is not mentioned in modern scholarly writings. According to Christianity, stigmata refers to visible wounds, scars, and pains that correspond to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ. When Paul says in Galatians 6:17, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” the word “marks” is the Greek word *stigma*. Stigmata and stigma have nearly the exact definition, which is marks or scars of disgrace, which is the definition that will describe *church stigma* or *stigmata*. MWBC has marks and scars of disgrace from previous ministries in the community of Mineral Wells. When this DMIN action uses the term stigma or stigmata, this will always be the meaning. It will never mean visible, literal marks in a specific person which typify the wounds of Christ but will always represent marks or scars that MWBC fell victim to in the community through a tainted reputation.

Several protestants referring to the Catholic Church during the reformation use the terminology of a church possessing a stigma. Jesuit Alcazar inaugurated the “Preterist School”. His theory was first presented as a complete scheme in his Apocalypse, which appeared in A. D. 1614. According to this scheme’s purpose, the papal church was to be relieved from the stigma of being called the “Harlot Church” and the Pope from being called the “Antichrist.”<sup>12</sup> The Biblical Illustrator Commentary also speaks about how carnal living will bring a stigma to an individual and church. The negative consistency, seen in the event of outbursts of wicked

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<sup>12</sup> Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth: Gods Plan and Purpose in the Ages* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2021), 5.

temper, the violation of truth and justice, malicious speaking, and cruel slander, brings stigma to both the individual and the Church.<sup>13</sup>

*Church Health* describes the spiritual maturity of the church. An unhealthy church is a church that necessitates revitalization, but “healthy churches are vibrant, community-oriented, and growing spiritually and/or numerically.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, church revitalization is an effective means for growing churches because church health is necessary, and a healthy church is a congregation experiencing or continuing in constant revival.<sup>15</sup>

*Church Vision* is a mission statement of a goal that is presented to a church in hopes of uniting the body to reach or fulfill the said goal. The vision must begin with the mission statement because it is imperative that the church first understand what God intends to accomplish.<sup>16</sup> The pastor or church leaders should be sure of the vision through prayer and peace from the spirit of God before presenting the concept to the church as a calling from God. In addition to a vision for change, it is essential for the church to embrace an attitude of vulnerability, openness, attentiveness, and a strong commitment to listen and follow.<sup>17</sup>

*Discipleship* is the calling of Christ to every believer, and Christ defines it as bearing a cross and following Him (Luke 14:27). Discipleship can possess a vast sum of topics and ideas, all of which encompass a biblical discipline model. Though Jesus defines discipleship as one

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<sup>13</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 23.

<sup>14</sup> R.D.Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the inside out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 20.

<sup>15</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 23.

<sup>16</sup> Harry L. Reeder, and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 77.

<sup>17</sup> Tim Conder, and Dan Rhodes, *Organizing Church: Grassroots Practices for Embodying Change in Your Congregation, Your Community, and Our World* (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2017), 64.



who bears their cross, other Scriptures also suggest attributes that describe what discipleship looks like as well. One notable passage is when Jesus gave the apostles the great commission. A believer is a disciple or discipled when he/she becomes sufficiently proficient in the faith that they can disciple others.<sup>18</sup>

*Evangelism* is sharing the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ with unbelievers or unconverted people. “Evangelicalism is known for at least two words: gospel and (personal) salvation. Behind the word gospel is the Greek word *euangelion* and *evangel*, from which words we get evangelicalism and evangelism.”<sup>19</sup> To evangelize is to share the gospel message of Jesus Christ, resulting in the salvation of the hearer via the act of faith in the finished work of Christ. Evangelizing or proclaiming Christ publicly is incredibly powerful for discipleship and unites Christian institutions within communities, but the evangelistic act in and of itself<sup>20</sup> is meant to bring about salvation to those who place their faith in Christ the Lord.

*Becoming the Gospel* is a term frequently used by Dr. Michael Gorman in his book *The Gospel and Our Culture Series: Becoming the Gospel*. Gorman believes the Christian is not to proclaim the gospel of Christ merely but to become the gospel of Christ via the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, thus becoming or embodying the gospel. “Paul wanted the communities he

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<sup>18</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 124.

<sup>19</sup> Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 29.

<sup>20</sup> Lon Allison, and Mark Anderson, *Going Public with the Gospel: Reviving Evangelistic Proclamation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 85.

addressed not merely to believe the gospel but to become the gospel, and in so doing to participate in the very life and mission of God.”<sup>21</sup>

*Spiritual Formation* is a broad concept that incorporates any type of spiritual growth by an individual or a church body. “Spiritual formation possesses (1) an agent—the Spirit; (2) a dynamic—growth in the context of community identification; and (3) a goal—holiness in the context of mission.”<sup>22</sup> The goal of spiritual formation is to mature the believer or the church in the Holy character of Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit, which indwells the believer. Christians cannot bring themselves to spiritual maturity via their own merits. Spiritual formation is enhanced through the Holy Ghost's work and the believer's submission.

*Church Revitalization* is the revival of a deficient church in spirituality, stagnating, dying, and ready to close. Essentially, church revitalization is the reviving of a church that has become cold or sensuous in its faith, and the method of revitalization begins with preaching God’s Word and the subsequent movement of the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup> “If a church seems stagnant and dying, it needs reviving, first by ensuring that the gospel is preached, and second by having the elders disciple those whom the Lord has entrusted to their care.”<sup>24</sup>

*Leadership* is the person or group that guides the church through the sound doctrine of Scripture and the sensitive following of the Holy Spirit. Different churches have various types of leadership. Some churches have an episcopal structure, some have a presbytery (elder-led),

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<sup>21</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series: Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, a Division of Kregel, 2008), 103.

<sup>23</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 12.

<sup>24</sup> R.D.Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the inside out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 33.

the deacons lead some churches, and many are laity-led. This thesis project will often speak in detail about leadership since inadequate leadership has produced much of the stigma problem in the church. The leadership of the church is also called shepherdology. “Spiritual shepherdology demands a godly, gifted, multiskilled man of integrity, and if the pastor or other leaders fail to meet God’s high standards of godliness, authenticity, and spiritual maturity, the church will also fail.”<sup>25</sup> The biblical standards of a governing position in the church are high, and the requirements are challenging. Everyone does not meet the credentials, and of those who meet them, few excel at the job.<sup>26</sup>

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this DMIN research thesis project are MWBC leadership, MWBC congregation, and the Mineral Wells community. The assumption is that excellent leadership will lead the MWBC congregation to a place of revitalization, spiritual maturity, and discipleship by which they will evangelize the Mineral Wells community in genuine Christian love, which will cause most of the church stigma to dissipate. However, this DMIN action has no control over the leadership in many respects, such as if they will grow in their leadership skills, follow the guidance of this ministry, or are even capable of becoming excellent in leadership. Not everyone has the skill set to be an effective leader. This DMIN action has no control over the leadership of MWBC if they refuse to follow the research process.

This DMIN action research procedure also has no control over the congregation. If leadership matures and follows this action, this in no wise guarantees that the congregation must follow suit. All leadership can do is lead. It is up to the congregation to decide if they will

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<sup>25</sup> John MacArthur, *The Masters Plan for the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), xi.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

follow the leadership of this church. Unfortunately, many carnal churches will not follow respectable leaders but desire to be laity-led, refusing guidance from the leadership. Regrettably, these churches govern themselves through church politics instead of the Scriptures and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Lastly, this DMIN action certainly has no control over how the Mineral Wells community will receive this church, even if they do everything right and follow all the scholarly research and guidance of the Holy Scriptures. Scriptures teach that the offended are more challenging to win than a strong city (Pro 18:19). The gossip and bitterness may be so deep-rooted that the majority of the community will not at this time see past the current stigma to let MWBC shine the light of the glorious gospel of Christ.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations of this research activity are the length of time and problems related to the church's stigma. Events and issues that have transpired to the church or in the community several years ago are complications too challenging to research accurately and the wounds too old and scarred to be healed by any action done at this time. Therefore, the research and methodology will concentrate on what caused the stigma, correcting the congregation and leadership, and finding the proper response of MWBC for removing the stigma and commencing a fresh start in the community. The assumption is that unsatisfactory leadership skills from previous ministries led MWBC to have divisions become spiritually immature, and gossip spread throughout the community. This research will not try to re-live and examine all the adverse problems and events that led to this current stigma quandary, but rather it will focus on the leadership, spirituality of the congregation, and how MWBC might reclaim its once holy character by becoming the gospel to the Mineral Wells community.

## Thesis Statement

If MWBC evangelizes the community by becoming the gospel, the historic stigma will mainly vanish, causing church growth. Commitment to discipleship will generate an evangelical movement by MWBC that will manifest the Holy character of Christ into the community. Genuine discipleship occurs when the converted believer matures and leads others to faith in Christ.<sup>27</sup> If the leadership of MWBC will dedicate themselves to discipleship and lead by example, planning and activating discipleship in the congregation that produces enthusiastic evangelicalism, it will influence the congregation to follow suit. Discipline and discipleship are tools God uses to help the Christian attain maturity.<sup>28</sup> The grandest of discipleship programs is sheep reproducing sheep. Door-to-door evangelism and visitation nights are some ways to evangelize, but the most effective way for a congregation to reach the community is by having sheep who reproduce sheep—this way, the church does not need an instructional program.<sup>29</sup> If MWBC commits to discipleship and evangelism in authentic Christian love, then the stigma will unequivocally be overwhelmed via the love MWBC has for Christ and their community.

Excellent leadership is essential for producing or maintaining church success. Without proper leadership, the congregation may rapidly find itself in the same condition as the church of Corinth. There was a division at the church of Corinth, with some following Peter, some Paul, some Apollos, and some Christ (I Cor 1:12). Division and cliques led the church into a state of secularism that pursued its own interest instead of the cause of Christ. Paul had to conduct several visits to Corinth, send others there at seasons when he could not be, and write at

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<sup>27</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 124.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, a Division of Kregel, 2008), 105.

<sup>29</sup> John MacArthur, *The Masters Plan for the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 48.

least three epistles to them to edify them into a spiritual body. The critical problem that brought the church of Corinth to this sensuous state was improper leadership. Paul established the church by the gospel of grace, but after he left, others came and exalted themselves above Paul and led the church into lasciviousness through the subjugation of law preaching. MWBC leadership, such as the church of Corinth, must not point fingers at others but themselves. As go the leaders, so go the people. Outstanding leadership established MWBC and accomplished many projects and goals, such as building the church, the gymnasium, and mothering Elizabeth Baptist, but analyzing the recent history of MWBC, one can undoubtedly perceive that the church has endured a long while with inadequate leadership. First, the church split; second, the subsequent church schism; third, the pastor who did not connect with the congregation; fourth, the pastor who had an affair; fifth, the pastor who dealt with problems his entire five-year ministry; and sixth, the Sunday school youth leader and preacher in the church arrested for drug trafficking and distribution. If the leaders will disciple themselves and start acting like leaders, and if the flock follows disciplined leadership, then eliminating this stigma from the church should come naturally. Therefore, leaders should have integrity, honesty, and the fortitude to remain single-minded in their mission to make disciples. If churches have drifted from this goal, then church leaders should work to revitalize their congregations and rekindle their fervor for discipleship<sup>30</sup>, restoring the church's reputation in the community.

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<sup>30</sup> R.D.Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the inside out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 134.

## **CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework of this DMIN project aims to generate and append information and comprehension regarding churches that have a stigma or reputation impediment in their community. It is essential to evaluate and examine literature from previous studies. Therefore, there is an assortment of academic data concerning themes analogous to this issue to aid in the strategic method of problem-solving. This literature review research aims to analyze compatible themes to churches carrying a stigma problem because they are a gap in the literature that occurs in the modern compilation of theological works. Examining the pertinent themes from scholarly studies apposite to churches possessing a stigma in their community, the literature in the literature review brings concepts together in which one can strategize a way to fill the gap in the literature and construct ideas to embark on a discipleship program that rehabilitates the reputation of a church with a stigma.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review aims to accumulate literature that analyzes churches with a stigma problem in their local neighborhood or addresses how a church can salvage its once holy character in the community. The literature comprised in this literature review is predominantly modern sources with themes on church revitalization, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation. Community, personal revival, leadership, vision, and current and gospel cultures are subthemes. Subsequently, there is a sizeable gap in the literature with many scholarly works in spiritual formation, discipleship, church revitalization, evangelism, and a meager supply of sources that concentrate on the church reclaiming or surmounting a stigma in the community. Combining these complementary themes may form a strategy to fill the literature gap. Several

scholarly works exhibit brilliant ideas on ways to engage the church in the community, but the specific theme of a church stigma or recovering the church from a mediocre reputation in the community is seldom the focal point in modern theological works.

#### Church Stigma: Dealing with a Poor Reputation in the Community

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev 2:5).

In Revelation chapter two, Jesus instructs the church of Ephesus to repent for withdrawing from their first love. On various occasions, churches with a stigma in the community have a poor reputation simply because of a spiritual lacking in a particular area. The Church of Ephesus needed to refocus, repent, and recommit to their first love.<sup>31</sup> They had exceptional fervor and passion for Christ and deeply desired others to come to Him and know Him, but they lost their zeal and vision to make disciples for Christ. They must revive, especially in their love for Christ, to rejuvenate their vision to regain their purpose.<sup>32</sup> The absence of love will categorically impair the image of a church in the community. Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Adhering to the precepts, and having everything in its proper order, such as the church of Ephesus, cannot alone produce a church with an image reflecting Christ in their community. The solution for the church at Ephesus was repentance for a paucity of love for Christ, discipleship, and evangelism. Since exceptionally few scholars concentrate solely on churches

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<sup>31</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 251, Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, Revised* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 77.

<sup>32</sup> R.D.Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the inside out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 134.



with a stigma in the community, one must read between the lines in passages such as this text in Revelation to engender strategies through several scholarly sources which speak on themes relating to the stigmata of the church.

A church with an unpalatable reputation represents a dying church in the community. Others perceive a dying church differently than the church members. When a Church maintains a pattern of decline, the community regards it pessimistically, and the image and reputation of the church exacerbates.<sup>33</sup> The best way to find a solution to remedy a conundrum is to discover why the problem exists. The scarcity of love in the community is a significant hindrance to any church. Another significant problem comes from those who, for whatever reason, are offended by the church. These are the toughest to win back, as taught in Scripture. Proverbs 18:19 says, “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.” The recovery of a church suffering from a stigma impediment in the community is one of the most formidable obstacles to overcome. “The people who do the most damage in this regard are often the ones who have left the church and gone elsewhere. They find it difficult not to share their “inside” information and “horror stories” about the decline of the church, the lack of resources in the congregation, or their mistreatment by people in the body.”

The poison of gossip produces a tremendous hardship on the church, making it difficult to redeem its Christlike character, but it is still possible to gradually overcome the negativity in the community. Dr. Harry L. Reeder, the senior pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in

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<sup>33</sup> Harry L. Reeder, and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 14, C. Peter Wagner, Thom S. Rainer, and Elmer Towns, *The EVERYCHURCH Guide to Growth: How Any Plateaued Church Can Grow* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 72.

Birmingham, Alabama, shows signs of hope, winning back some offended in their community through love, humility, and asking forgiveness for any they had wronged. “And what we did also put an end to a lot of the negative talk about our church in the community — it’s harder to say bad things about someone who has asked for your forgiveness and prayers.”<sup>34</sup> Leadership is key to reforming the church’s status in the community. In Titus 1:5-8, Titus was to ordain leaders that were above reproach. Those who have excellent prestige in the community. Paul told Titus to ordain elders above reproach, tempered, and hospitable to others. The church must involve its godly leadership in the community in order to produce a holy character beyond criticism.<sup>35</sup>

#### Church Health Problems: Do-Nothing Approach

“Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?” (Luke 6:39).

Frequently, when problems in the church emerge, the leadership will take the do-nothing, afraid to offend anyone, approach. The do-nothing afraid to offend anyone approach is often what much of church leadership does, and mournfully, many believe this is the correct approach. First Corinthians 6:7 says, “Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” As with all Scripture, context is key, and the student of the Word must rightly divide the Word. The context is that the Corinthians do not have a prudent man who is adequate for judging, and it is better to suffer the wrong than to go before unbelievers. Jesus said to the apostles, “apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Since the spirit of Christ is always working and never apart from the apostles and Christians, therefore

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<sup>34</sup> Harry L. Reeder, and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

it would also be true to say, “If you do nothing, it will be without me.” Through the development of spiritual rectification under grace, “passivity does not exclude activity, and activity does not exclude passivity.”<sup>36</sup> When leadership does nothing, the congregation will follow suit, and the blind will lead the blind until both falls into the ditch. Endeavoring to eliminate conflict, leadership may unintentionally hold the congregation back, preventing them from becoming active and vibrant.<sup>37</sup> The Corinthians had the do-nothing approach to the fornicating brother. Paul said in I Corinthians 5:2, “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.” Instead of implementing consequences and repercussions for fornication, they took pride in doing nothing, as if tolerance is a means of grace. Though absent in the body but present in spirit, Paul determines to thrust out the transgressor delivering him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved (1Cor 5:5).<sup>38</sup> The do-nothing afraid of offending anyone approach is palpably wrong; therefore, the literature concentrates on the correct approach to problem-solving in the church.

#### Church Health Problems: Putting the Cart Before the Horse

“For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed” (Is 9:6).

Systematically, when troubles in the church occur, the leadership will immediately charge the issue head-on without prayer or remedy, which ends up causing chaos. Many church

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<sup>36</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: HarperOne, an Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2019), 144.

<sup>37</sup> Tim Conder, and Dan Rhodes, *Organizing Church: Grassroots Practices for Embodying Change in Your Congregation, Your Community, and Our World* (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2017), 80.

<sup>38</sup> B.J. Oropeza, *I Corinthians: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 66.

leaders are zealous for church growth today, but that is “putting the cart before the horse.” Leadership should be more concerned with church health, not growth, “because growth must proceed from health.”<sup>39</sup> Undertaking to repair the dilemma of suffering a stigma in the community, the church must start from within itself. The Southern Baptist is prodigiously laity-led, with only a few churches having a Presbytery (board of elders) that is apt to teach and ordained to govern the church; therefore, many deacons who generally know little about Scripture authority attempt to rectify complications through some sort of church meeting, which is in most instances unbiblical. Church health begins with leadership, and zealous leadership is contagious and infects the congregation.<sup>40</sup> Churches and leaders with a proven record found that revitalization begins with righteous leadership, commencing with the minister, and involving everyone in the church who holds a leadership position.<sup>41</sup> Many churches have schisms, and church splits are rampant in America, and much of it is because of poor leadership.

Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Leadership in many churches do what is right in their own eyes as an alternative to governing the church with the Word of God. The sheep should not be listening to the gossip of everyone’s troubles and disputes and then voting according to what is right in their eyes. The Lord does not want His church governed by man’s opinion or popular vote. God told Moses, “Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes” (Deu 12:8), but “to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy

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<sup>39</sup> Harry L. Reeder, and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 21.

<sup>40</sup> Mark Mittelburg, *Building a Contagious Church: and Do Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 92.

<sup>41</sup> Ed Stetzer, and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 54.

God.”(Deu 13:18). The elders should be spiritual, well studied, and tremendously bold through the fruit of meekness, leading the church and confronting the issues that need to be addressed while allowing the sheep to feed and grow. Leadership’s responsibility is to feed the sheep, not cause anxiety and division. If the pastor or leadership of the church is unsuccessful in meeting “God’s high standards of godliness, authenticity, and spiritual maturity, the church will also fail.”<sup>42</sup> Correcting the stigma impediment before rectifying leadership incompetence is like bandaging a scratch when another part of the body requires stitches. When the church leaders function well, the church becomes thoroughly skilled and encouraged to evangelize.<sup>43</sup> Efficient leadership will produce a healthy church, but striving to restore the character of the church in the community with mediocre leadership is putting the cart before the horse. Eradicating the Church’s stigma will never happen if the church remains unhealthy.

#### Church Vision: Leadership Acting Like Leaders

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

It is the task of the leaders to be led by the Spirit of God as they lead the church with a vision of God's perfect and acceptable will (Rom 12:2). The ordained leaders of the church are the Presbytery, which many churches unfortunately do not have. Paul describes the role of an elder on several occasions as overseeing a particular congregation. Elders and overseers are two titles used interchangeably throughout the New Testament.<sup>44</sup> The responsibility of a vision for

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<sup>42</sup> John MacArthur, *The Masters Plan for the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), xi.

<sup>43</sup> David E. Fitch, *Seven Practices for the Church on Mission* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 105. ProQuest Ebook Central. Accessed September 10, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> J. R. Briggs and Bob Hyatt, *Eldership and the Mission of God: Equipping Teams for Faithful Church Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 42, Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: Restoring the Eldership to Its Rightful Place in the Church* (Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, 2002), 10.

the church is unequivocally the obligation of the elders. The Paraclete should direct the Presbytery to reveal God's call for the local church. The outcomes ought to possess the church's best interests and lead the congregation with the gospel into the community. Deacons assist the elders' vision by representing them in official capacities and carrying out tasks delegated by overseers.<sup>45</sup>

The congregation expects to have leaders worth following who provide a vision and goals. Whenever leadership calls the people to actively commit to a strategy, they must also produce a vision. A vision plays an essential role in church revitalization.<sup>46</sup> The flock will stagnate without a vision or goals as taught in Proverbs 29:18, which says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." The flock's reassurance and ministry activation comes when they are following someone, some vision, or some teaching. The best way to present the vision is with a mission statement because the church first must know what God is calling them to do."<sup>47</sup> Identifying the mission statement is the business of leadership. Jesus always led the apostles through quintessential teachings or visions. The apostles also established a vision expounding on and committing to the great commission. They led the first-century church through hostile times of persecution, martyrdom, and extremely wicked leaders who were always attempting to apprehend them to make them a public example. Church leadership should know the culture of their community and be aware of the unique environment in which they are situated.<sup>48</sup> The flock

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<sup>45</sup> Alexander Strauch, *Study Guide for Paul's Vision for the Deacons: Assisting the Elders with the Care of God's Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 2017), 57.

<sup>46</sup> Ed Stetzer, and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 48, Bill Henard, *Reclaimed Church: How Churches Grow, Decline, and Experience Revitalization* (B & H Books, 2018), 20.

<sup>47</sup> Harry L. Reeder, and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 77, George Barna, *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Plan for Your Life and Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 26.

<sup>48</sup> Harry L. Reeder, and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 79.

needs examples to follow, such as a vision of hope or a vision with a goal. The congregation will not actively participate in evangelizing the community “until they have the vision to do so. Then, they will “go and tell” and invite their friends to “come and see.”<sup>49</sup> The flock should trust that the Lord will accept their heart’s desires and commitments to reflect Christ in the community and be a light in the name of Jesus. The completion of the vision may incorporate a particular event in the community, a task of some sort, or a program. God’s vision for a specific church must involve reactivating the congregation to serve the community.<sup>50</sup>

The church needs to comprehend that the gospel compels them to live their life for the one who died for them. Second Corinthians 5:15 says, “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” The church is not their own but bought with a price, even the blood of Christ the Lord, and now possesses the Spirit of Christ, which lives in and through them. Therefore, like Christ, the church ought to be about their Father’s business (Luke 2:49). Ephesians 4:12–16 teaches the church that the ministry is intimately related to “building up the body of Christ,” therefore, the flock should comprehend that they are called to contribute to the exertion of this building. The best means of grace one can bestow upon a church is building teams that enable the body to flourish.<sup>51</sup> The church’s leadership should provoke the congregation to be Christlike because “a

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<sup>49</sup> Ed Stetzer, and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 89.

<sup>50</sup> Ed Stetzer, and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 49.

<sup>51</sup> Tim Conder, and Dan Rhodes, *Organizing Church: Grassroots Practices for Embodying Change in Your Congregation, Your Community, and Our World* (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2017), 26, Cameron Trimble, *Piloting Church: Helping Your Congregation Take Flight* (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2019), 49.

vision for change must also be matched with a mode of vulnerability, openness, attentiveness, and deep commitment,”<sup>52</sup> which virtues are seen in Christ’s relationship with the Father.

### Church Health: Personal and Church Revitalization

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5).

The spiritual health of a Christian starts with a revival in one’s relationship with Christ. The most apparent sign of those who acknowledge knowing Christ but do not mature or grow into Christlikeness are those who refuse to take the time or apply measures for spiritual growth and formation.<sup>53</sup> The Christian must take time for holiness and spend time in solitude with God through prayer, devotions, and meditations, allowing the Spirit to mature the believer. Despite any recovery projects or techniques, one might follow, without the aid or enabling of the Holy Spirit, the endeavors of the disciple will be frustrating and fruitless.”<sup>54</sup> The Holy Spirit matures those actively in daily fellowship with Him and will add to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (II Pet 1:5-7). What is growing when a believer is growing in their relationship with Christ? The believer grows in faith by grace to the glory of God. The believer’s confidence in the Lord is magnified, and they become “confident that God is whom he says he is and will do what he has promised to do.”<sup>55</sup> Various

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<sup>52</sup> Tim Conder, and Dan Rhodes, *Organizing Church: Grassroots Practices for Embodying Change in Your Congregation, Your Community, and Our World* (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2017), 64.

<sup>53</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: HarperOne, an Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2019), 30, Kevin Harney and Bob Bouwer, *The U-Turn Church New Direction for Health and Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 67.

<sup>54</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 32, Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 128, Gary McIntosh, *Taking Your Church to the next Level: What Got You Here Won’t Get You There* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 128, Thom S. Rainer, and Rainier. *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles*. B&H Publishing Group, 1998. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=475574>. Created from liberty on 2022-02-14 04:16:41.

<sup>55</sup> Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend, Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 104.



Scriptures teach that a man and woman join as one flesh in times of intimacy. Likewise, the believer is intimately joined unto the Lord by one Spirit. First Corinthians 6:16b -17 says, “for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” Practicing private spiritual disciplines enhances the believer's faith walk, producing a sense of intimacy and accountability. Solitude with God through spiritual disciplines connects the hearts of the believers to the heart of God, which heightens the worshipper’s awareness of His presence.<sup>56</sup> Scriptures repeatedly teach that the just shall live by faith (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). Therefore, expanding one’s faith will contribute to spiritual maturity, and when the congregation is led to spiritual maturity, then they will be prepared to follow leadership into revitalization.<sup>57</sup> Spiritual formation is a faith foundation in which the believer may flourish in grace through the enablement of the Holy Spirit. The conclusion is summed up best by saying discipleship must be fashioned by the process of growing the disciple’s faith.<sup>58</sup> The disciples from the beginning believed in Christ, yet after three years of following Christ, watching Him heal the sick, open the deaf ears and blind eyes, raise the dead, and walk on water, they said to Jesus in John 16:30, “Now are we sure . . . that thou camest forth from God.” Jesus answered them in the next verse saying, “Do ye now believe?” Faith was the catalyst for the disciple’s growth and spiritual maturity. The church's revitalization, such as the apostle’s experience, will be centered around expanding their faith.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend, Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 117.

<sup>57</sup> Ed Stetzer, and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 154.

<sup>58</sup> Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend, Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 106.

<sup>59</sup> C. John Miller and C. John Miller, *Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 1997), 96, John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries, The Gospel According to St. John, trans. T. H. L. Parker* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 1:23.

Church revitalization begins when the congregation revives personally and as a unified body built up together in the spirit of Christ. Peter declares that the church is a built-up “spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (I Pet 2:5). Through the spirit of God, the body of Christ should walk in harmony, embracing the leadership of the Paraclete. One should always be mindful of the fact that the power of the Holy Spirit brings about church revitalization, not the merits of the congregation.<sup>60</sup> Church revitalization removes nuances that might cause an impediment to growth or a stigma in the community. The church will never abolish the stigma problem until the congregation has true revival on the inside, and then outwardly, the church’s health and light will glisten in the community. Church revitalization necessitates church health. Therefore, revitalization is a viable means of church growth.<sup>61</sup> How does one go about reviving the church? The church's health begins with leadership, equipping the church as a spiritual example unto the flock.<sup>62</sup> A presbytery should govern the church. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead and care for the local church.<sup>63</sup> Having (at least some) appropriate leadership is a prerequisite to revitalizing the church, but the compelling gospel message proclaimed from the pulpit is more extensive. Growth, evangelism, and the church's expansion depend as much on a leader’s ability to develop an expansive infrastructure as on any other factor except prayer.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 33.

<sup>61</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 23.

<sup>62</sup> Charles Tidwell, *Church Administration: Effective Leadership for Ministry* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1985), 27.

<sup>63</sup> Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Lewis & Roth Pub, 1996), 16.

<sup>64</sup> Carl F. George, *How to Break Growth Barriers: Revise Your Role, Release Your People, and Capture Overlooked Opportunities for Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2017), 17, Bill M.Sullivan, *Ten Steps to Breaking the 200 Barrier* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1988). 99.

A pastor needs to be in tune with God, proclaiming the spiritual truths of Scripture with authority. Moses ascended into the mount, fellowshiping with God for forty days, and the people rebelled and made a golden calf. This event might at first appear to be a misguided approach to pastoring because the people erred when Moses was not present, but when Moses came down from the presence of God, his face shined, and he had the Word of God in His hand and with power Moses came into the presence of the congregation, which brought about repentance and revival. The New Testament church should boldly proclaim the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. Preaching the law (self-works) brings forth self-righteousness, self-condemnation, and self-failure, but preaching grace ushers in reconciliation, confidence, and revival. The gospel message of grace is the most significant component of the revitalization process. Grace produces the effect of seeing God's hand work in the lives of the believers and the church; therefore, strive to make it the primary emphasis and keep other concerns from outshining it.<sup>65</sup> Prayer and personal devotionals are powerful and pave the way for convicting sermons. The vibrant proclamation of the Word of truth will reach the congregation's heart like nothing else. "The preaching of Whitefield, Wesley, and others ushered in the First Great Awakening in Europe. These preachers were men of prayer, but the revival didn't come until they proclaimed."<sup>66</sup> The combination of convicting gospel preaching and excellent leadership, will reconcile the congregation instead of dividing them; this will weed out the tares and revive the church to a place of spiritual maturity and revitalization. If a church is stagnant and failing, then reviving the church is exceptionally needful, which is accomplished mainly by preaching

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<sup>65</sup> Harry L. Reeder, and David Swavely, *From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 41.

<sup>66</sup> Lon Allison, and Mark Anderson, *Going Public with the Gospel: Reviving Evangelistic Proclamation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 141.

grace, then adding to the message by having church leadership disciple those who need discipleship.<sup>67</sup> The reaction between Cleopas and the one(s) with Him while Jesus preached and opened the Scriptures unto them on the way to Emmaus is captivating. “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). The preaching of the Word caused their hearts to experience a warming sensation. The message inspired them to go and tell the account unto the apostles (Mark 16:12).<sup>68</sup> Jesus first withheld His appearance from them, providing for them a revelation of Himself through the Scriptures, which prophesied about His death, burial, and resurrection. This experience reveals the potency of preaching, for they said, “Did not our hearts burn within us?” Spirit-filled gospel preaching will ignite the heart of a church, enabling it to grow in faith and spiritual maturity, which will revive the church, positioning it for discipleship.

#### Church Discipleship: Will the Church be Made Whole

“When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?” (John 5:6).

When Adam sinned in the garden, he passed the buck, so to speak, saying, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Gen 3:12). Then Eve followed suit, saying, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Gen 3:13). When Jesus encountered the lame man, he did not just heal him but asked him, “wilt thou be made whole?” MWBC should ask this question themselves because passing the buck will be detrimental. “Wilt thou be made whole?” One may well put this question to all churches with a stigma problem, declining in numbers, or those who have sought church growth without success for years. A

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<sup>67</sup> R.D.Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the inside out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 33.

<sup>68</sup> Jared Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto against the Status Quo* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 78.

Church that is properly disciplined will bring forth fruit, and that fruit will remain, for this is the proof of discipleship.

Jesus said in John 15:8, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” A person or church that is fruitless is a person or church that is not adequately disciplined. Discipleship is a process of active altruism in one’s commitment to Christ. Discipline matures the congregation, placing them in a position for discipleship, and leadership ought to be committed to overseeing the church's discipleship.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, thus far, the focus has been on spiritual maturity and church revitalization. A church cannot and will not become disciplined until they are first growing in spiritual maturity and walking in daily fellowship with God. What is the purpose of discipleship? In antiquity, both Jew's and Gentiles’ primary goal in discipleship was to achieve “likeness to God.”<sup>70</sup> Discipleship is being godly or Christlike. If one pursues discipleship, they must also seek godliness because genuine “godliness requires that we discipline ourselves.”<sup>71</sup> A New Testament disciple is a believer who follows Jesus and is overflowing with the Spirit of Christ, thus imitating His example and reflecting His image. The life of a disciple should look exceptionally analogous to the life of Jesus. The life of a disciple is about following Jesus’ example and not simply getting a ticket into heaven.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, a Division of Kregel, 2008), 105, Jonathan Leeman, *Understanding Church Discipline* (Nashville, TN: B & H Books, 2016), 30.

<sup>70</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series: Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 265.

<sup>71</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Revised and Updated Edition* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2020), 119, D. A. Carson, “*The Purpose of Signs and Wonders in the New Testament*,” in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church*, ed. Michael Scott Horton (Chicago, IL: Moody publishing, 1992), 117.

<sup>72</sup> Tara Beth Leach, *Radiant Church: Restoring the Credibility of Our Witness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 78. ProQuest Ebook Central. Accessed September 10, 2021.

A spiritually maturing church in a state of revival is awe-inspiring, but that is not the same as a church that is disciplined. Personal revival and church revitalization are significant and precede discipleship because discipleship is the process of dying, dying to the world, success, family, friends, and even to self. Jesus clarifies that the way of discipleship is the route of the cross.<sup>73</sup> Jesus said in Luke 14:27, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” Jesus did not give an optional path that leads to discipleship but plainly stated that the cross is how one may become a disciple, and only those full of the love of God will bear a cross for Christ. Discipleship is not for the faint of heart but for those who will sacrifice their cause, will, and life to be about the will and cause of Christ. Unfortunately, this concept has been lost. The primary fundamental issue for modern-day evangelicals is that the church has lost the concept of true discipleship.<sup>74</sup> The church can and will be made whole through discipleship. If Jesus took twelve disciples and turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6), how much more shall He decimate a stigma through a church that is disciplined? The question facing the church is, “wilt thou be made whole” if so, there must be spiritual maturity, church revitalization, and discipleship.

True discipleship is not about promoting self but deciding to become living sacrifices (Rom 12:1), offering the church body as a holocaust to Christ and His will. Discipleship is “seeing our lives under the ownership of Christ and giving him more of that ownership every day,”<sup>75</sup> bearing the reproach and cross of Christ. Why the cross? In II Corinthians 12:10b, Paul

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<sup>73</sup> Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group 2019), 63.

<sup>74</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: HarperOne, an Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2019), 160.

<sup>75</sup> Ed Stetzer, and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), 106.

said, “for when I am weak, then am I strong.” Bearing the cross is the weakness of the believer and the church that God might become the strength of both. Paul said, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him [*symmorphizomenos*, “co-formed”] in his death” (Phil 3:10).<sup>76</sup> Following Christ is the path of the cross, for Christ said in Luke 22:42b “not my will, but thine, be done” as He humbled Himself and bore the cross of shame, spitting, and the sin of the world. Christ’s Spirit forming in the believer is the proper terminology of the process of imitation., which results in Christians being submissive to Christ and the cross He has for the believer to bear.<sup>77</sup> True discipleship is loving and preferring God’s will above self and loving and preferring others above self. Most churches never achieved full bloom in discipleship, which is why the churches in America are diminishing and closing their doors by the thousands every year. The scholarly works of this literature review are prepared to aid and guide leaders in the quest to revive the church and hopefully bring it to a place of discipleship. The stigma of the church will ultimately rectify itself if the church is made whole through discipleship.

#### Church Evangelism: Becoming the Gospel and Reaching the Community

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”

(John 13:35).

Evangelism means proclaiming the gospel of Christ like a herald<sup>78</sup>, which many pastors and church leaders consider the most prominent part of church growth but the most arduous task for the church to accomplish. This belief is untrue though it appears to be accurate. The

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<sup>76</sup> Michael J.Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2020), 45.

<sup>77</sup> Michael J.Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2020), 48.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 56.

discrepancy is that evangelism only works well through proper discipleship; Therefore, evangelism “must be restored to its primary place in life and ministry.”<sup>79</sup> Endeavoring to evangelize before discipleship is putting the cart before the horse. Evangelism and discipleship must work hand in hand to be effective. The church needs to be mission-minded and focused on the critical concern of discipleship instead of just attempting to lead someone to decide if they want to be a Christian or not.<sup>80</sup> Jesus taught that all men should know His disciples by the love they have for one another; therefore, the church's evangelism must always originate from love.<sup>81</sup> A great host of people are looking for godly men and women to follow that they trust, and when they perceive one is of the Lord, they will follow them.

Through discipleship love (which is bearing the cross of preferring God and others above self), the community will receive revelation, and they will know if the church is full of loyal disciples of Christ or not. Evangelism calls for the church to be on a mission every day.<sup>82</sup> The fundamental challenge with evangelism is first chaperoning the church into a healthy state of discipline. Many scholars teach that a healthy church will reproduce all by itself. The maturing evangelical church now comprehends “that all healthy things reproduce.”<sup>83</sup> Having a healthy,

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<sup>79</sup> Gary McIntosh, *Growing God's Church: How People Are Actually Coming to Faith Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 21, Alton Garrison, *A Spirit-Empowered Church: An Acts 2 Ministry Model* (Influence Resources, 2015), 24. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=2196903>. Created from liberty on 2022-02-14 06:26:02.

<sup>80</sup> Ed Stetzer, and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), 55.

<sup>81</sup> Tara Beth Leach, *Radiant Church: Restoring the Credibility of Our Witness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 142. *ProQuest Ebook Central*. Accessed September 10, 2021, Gene Getz, *Building up One Another* (Colorado Co: Published by David C. Cook 2002), 11.

<sup>82</sup> Tim Chester, and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church: Gospel Communities on Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 10.

<sup>83</sup> Ed Stetzer, and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), 56.



active church is much better than having a revival every six months. It is far better to possess a church on a mission to their community daily, reflecting the holy character of God, than to have weekly revivals once or twice a year.<sup>84</sup> Enthusiasm and excitement from authentic discipleship are the best ways to evangelize a community. The church lives in a community, and disciples of the church will take the gospel to the community in which they live. Community events will only benefit if the church has a genuine spirit of discipleship that expresses the love of God through action and speech. A person's relationship with God, which motivates them to love those whom God loves, is the greatest motivation for evangelism.<sup>85</sup> The church becomes the gospel read and seen by all in the community. Paul intended to have the communities he addressed become the gospel and thereby advance the gospel rather than simply believe it.<sup>86</sup> The preaching of the gospel and the efficacy of leadership will change the perception of the gospel by the congregation, which in most cases will produce a healthy and thriving church. A productive and efficient church will occupy a persuasive influence in the community.<sup>87</sup> The book of Acts illustrates how the gospel through the apostles filled the entire community. The Jewish leaders were so upset by how fast the church grew that they told the apostles, "You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching" (Acts 5:28). Their gospel of grace permeated the entire community.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> John MacArthur, *The Masters Plan for the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 48, Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 40.

<sup>85</sup> Ed Stetzer, and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 89.

<sup>86</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *The Gospel and Our Culture Series: Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 297.

<sup>87</sup> John MacArthur, *The Masters Plan for the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 47.

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If discipleship significantly increases church growth, why are so few churches becoming discipleship churches? The Gospel culture of the first century is missing from the modern pulpits and churches today. The church created a “salvation culture” and mistakenly assumed it was a “gospel culture.”<sup>89</sup> The church has made the gospel and salvation message revolve around the believer instead of Christ. The first-century gospel message is they are a Kingdom not of this world, and Christ is the King of that Kingdom. One day Jesus is coming in the power of His kingdom to judge the earth in righteousness, and the gospel message is to repent and be absorbed in Christ’s Kingdom, denying self and seeking only to magnify and glorify Christ and His Glorious Kingdom. Something altered the gospel culture message, and the modern-day superficial observation of the gospel is merely a salvation message through one’s personal decision, which overshadows the “gospel culture” message preached by Jesus and the apostles.<sup>90</sup> In Philippians 2:5–9, Paul urges the church to live a life of humility, seeking the welfare of others above the cares of the world, imitating Jesus’ gospel pattern of kenosis.<sup>91</sup> The word emptying in the Philippians text originates from the English word kenosis. “Emptied is from *keno*, which means to empty completely.”<sup>92</sup> By following their Lord’s example, the believers need to empty themselves of everything that hinders their obedience and service to Him.<sup>93</sup> The gospel of Christ and His Kingdom must be the magnet, and then the gospel will work all by itself when placed in its proper context.

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<sup>89</sup> Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 29.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>91</sup> Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group 2019), 208.

<sup>92</sup> John MacArthur, *Philippians: MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 2001), 110.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

The vast misunderstanding of the gospel in modern-day church culture comes from a failure to appreciate that “Jesus is the king” and that His kingdom is the focal point of the message.<sup>94</sup> The “salvation culture” gospel message has constantly generated problems in the emphasis on discipleship.<sup>95</sup> Before the church can become the gospel and discipline itself by evangelizing the community, it must first proclaim the correct message, which emphatically teaches the gospel of grace which produces discipleship. The gospel lost its genuineness in some ways. Were the requirements so few and the conversation so seamless that many inquirers missed the whole gospel message? Is the church grabbing the world’s principles and philosophy in evangelism?<sup>96</sup> If the gospel message is distorted or delivered erroneously, the groups receiving the tainted messages will not yield the fruit Christ intended them to yield.

Typically, telling the average person influenced by today’s secular worldview that they can accept Christ into their hearts or rely on Christ to receive salvation, they will. However, they do not intend to change their lifestyles. If someone says, “God loves you and has a plan for your life,” they believe, “Of course God loves me; life is about me.”<sup>97</sup> The distinction between today's message in opposition to the gospel message of the first century is that discipleship was part of the gospel message then, but not so much today. In many contemporary churches, Christians who have been Christians for years still have not heard captivating messages about discipleship as a major gospel theme. Should the church tell believers, that they may still have

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<sup>94</sup> Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group 2019), 199.

<sup>95</sup> Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 33.

<sup>96</sup> Lon Allison, and Mark Anderson, *Going Public with the Gospel: Reviving Evangelistic Proclamation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>97</sup> Lon Allison, and Mark Anderson, *Going Public with the Gospel: Reviving Evangelistic Proclamation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 89.

peace with God without discipleship? Where in Holy Scripture can the church justify preaching such a message?<sup>98</sup> Christ and the apostles preached personal salvation and discipleship together as one message. Many Scriptures illustrate Jesus preaching discipleship to those listening to His gospel message. Despite the contemporary trend of separating discipleship and personal salvation, it is allegiance to Christ where they ultimately meet and embrace each other.<sup>99</sup> When discipleship is consistently preached as a major part of the gospel, like in the first-century church, the congregation will understand discipleship as part of the true gospel message. Discipleship can and will lead to a healthy, thriving church that effectively evangelizes the community. Leaders who lose sight of discipleship lead to churches withering, rendering them ineffective in presenting the gospel to their communities.<sup>100</sup>

### Conclusion

Churches occupied by a stigma in their community have not been concentrated on immensely in modern scholarly writings. However, as seen throughout this literature review, much information is given that will vastly aid the students in researching spiritual formation, discipleship, evangelism, and church revitalization. Likewise, there are no prominent examples of New Testament churches possessing and surmounting a stigma in their community. Scriptures often described the church as a single body with one mind, in one accord, as one man (Ezra 3:1; Acts 1:14; 2:1; 4:32; I Cor 1:10; Phil 2:2). Paul said in Romans 12:5, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another.” Using this approach, one may discover how removing a stigma may actually glorify God on a grander scale. Jesus may

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<sup>98</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2019), 10.

<sup>99</sup> Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group 2019), 206.

<sup>100</sup> R.D.Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the inside out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 133.

not have dealt with churches with a stigma in the community, but He certainly dealt with people with a stigma. Jesus frequently sought out the individual with the worst stigma in each city He visited. The woman at the well had a stigma of being married and divorced five times and living in fornication. Her stigma caused her not to go to the well simultaneously with the other women, yet Jesus' encounter with her is astonishingly delightful. Even with a stigma, she evangelized Samaria with such fervor and zeal that everyone hearing her came to see what influenced and created such a change in her (John 4:30). John 4:39a says, "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman." This efficacy of evangelism can be replicated via a church having a heart-changing experience like the woman at the well.

The man with the legion of demons also had a stigma problem in the community. The community loathed him, chaining him up to keep him from being such an annoyance (Mark 5:3-4), but after Jesus healed him, all people wondered at his testimony. Some churches and leadership might have thought, do not let him evangelize, he will do more damage than good, but the gentle savior said, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel" (Mark 5:19-20). Discipleship is more about selfless love for God and others than a training class with questions and answers. Do not neglect evangelism for new Christians; their zeal is contagious. This man's healed stigma problem became his most excellent tool of evangelism. Several other stories from Jesus' ministry exhibit similar results, such as Mary Magdalene or Zacchaeus, the chief publican of Jericho. Not to mention where Jesus brought the disciples from and what they accomplished. Jesus can heal any stigma and cause that weakness to become a strength. The

literature compiled in this review is the start of the strategic plan to trust the Lord to help MWBC overcome its stigma problem and to bring glory to God through this process. God's will for Israel and the Church is that they help people and spread the gospel to those in need in the city (Jer 29:4-7).<sup>101</sup> Teaching the church to be a disciplined active body of Christ is the action that will be presented to MWBC, and if "they are made whole" through church revitalization and discipleship, then the community will shortly also be evangelized by their testimony.

### **Theological Foundations**

In theory, some New Testament churches undoubtedly developed a stigma in their community and beyond, even though it is not manifestly expressed in Scripture. A stigma plagued several churches in Revelation, but the extent to which it permeated the community remains ambiguous. The stigma is there but were the errors of the church manifested in the community? They probably were, but Scripture does not elaborate on this, only that the church body knew of the errors, not the surrounding community. The only two churches that possess a stigma in the community that Scripture explicitly records are the church of Crete and Corinth. Though various churches occupied a stigma (whether known in the community or not), one can still proceed to Peter, Paul, John, and the words of Jesus to derive biblical instructions to compose an agenda designed to eradicate the stigma. Understanding a stigma from a biblical perspective is essential for this DMIN action research. Even though the term *church stigma* is not utilized in the Scriptures, there are many illustrations in which someone can indubitably observe a stigma. The DMIN action will analyze the words of Christ and the apostles to design a model to correct and hopefully remove the stigma of MWBC. This theological foundation will focus on people, churches, cities, and Israel, which all Biblically possessed a stigma.

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<sup>101</sup> R.D.Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the inside out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 137.

## Biblical Stigmas

The word “mark” in Scripture is a word that generally refers to a stigma on a person, city, church, or recalcitrant members of a congregation. “As a noun, the term ‘mark’ may signify, according to its various Hebrew and Greek origins, a sign, a target, an object of assault, a brand or stigma cut or burnt in the flesh, a goal or end in view, a stamp or imprinted or engraved sign.”<sup>102</sup> Though *church stigma* is not a term adopted copiously in scholarly literature, they utilize the term stigma throughout the church age in various books. Many phrases used the word stigma, such as the stigma of heresy, moral or character stigma, reproach, and infamy. Both the Catholic and Protestant churches have possessed a stigma. Before the reformation, they marked any who opposed the Catholic church with a stigma, but as the reformation gained strength, the Pope and Catholic church obtained the stigma of the harlot church and antichrist. Many famous protestants scholars of the reformation labeled the Catholic church with the stigma of the “mother of harlots” for martyring millions of Christians with different opinions than that of the Roman Church. Placing a stigma on a person, place, or group is theologically sound.

After Cain murdered his brother Abel, God marked him with a stigma causing him to be a fugitive and vagabond on the earth (Gen 4:15-16). This mark also served as a warning that God judges Cain; therefore, no one else may condemn him. Cain possessed and continues to maintain a stigma to this day. John records in I John 3:12, “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.”

God has established a mark on homosexuality through the annihilation of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim. Second Peter 2:6 states that God, “turning the cities of Sodom

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<sup>102</sup> G. W. Bromiley, *The International standard Bible encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1979), accessed in Swordsearcher 8.1 software program.

and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.” Interesting is the word “ensample” exploited by the King James Version of the Bible, which precisely indicates a visible example or exhibit. Ron Wyatt, an amateur archeologist, located four cities he believes are Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim. Many pictures of these ash cities and the most potent brimstone ever discovered can be witnessed through a simple internet search or at the Wyatt Museum in Marshall County, Tennessee. Fire and brimstone obliterated these four cities in Genesis 19 (Deu 29:23; Jude 1:7). Wyatt discovered that the four cities are yet standing with brimstone in the solidified ash walls and all over the ground throughout each city. There are hundreds of pictures of these cities, and the brimstone is ubiquitously all through them. Several pastors visit these ash cities to preach sermons from these sites. The brimstone can be plucked out of the ash walls, which is 98% pure brimstone. This purity of the brimstone is over forty percent purer than any other brimstone discovered. This discovery agrees with Josephus's description of the cities in his fourth book on, “*The wars of the Jews*” in the eighth chapter, where he acknowledges that ashes of the Divine fire remain and can be observed. These cities (if they are the correct location of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboaim) would show that God has forever marked them with a stigma and the sin of homosexuality. Jude 1:7 says, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” These five cities (Lot prayed for Zoar and God spared that city) that engaged in fornication going after strange flesh (homosexuality) would be a paradigm displayed if Ron Wyatt, in fact, rediscovered these cities. If so, these solidified ash cities are marks of the stigmatism they occupy to this today.



Marking disobedient church members is a scriptural exercise to which the church's leadership should adhere. Paul asserts in Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." Paul issues two instructions: mark them (identify them) and avoid them. The purpose of this is to be subservient to the Lord and to bear witness to others. A person's goal should not be to establish or maintain friends but to please God and sustain a coherent testimony.<sup>103</sup> Paul repeatedly instructs the church to avoid and refrain from fellowshiping with those living lascivious lifestyles. In I Corinthians 5:11, Paul says, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." The context displays an egregious stigma that is eminently public, which causes immense damage to the church in the community. When Christians refuse to eat with their fellow Christians guilty of such acts, they lose social ties and are also excluded from the Lord's Supper. This reversion to crude (and intolerant) separatism of the Pharisees may seem harsh, but unbelievers who are no different morally from believers blur the delineation between church and world, as well as their testimony to God's transforming power.<sup>104</sup> Paul understood his jurisdiction as an apostle to the Gentiles and commanded to mark those who disobey him or those he sent. In II Thessalonians 3:14, Paul writes, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Some other translations say "mark" instead of "note." Paul assigned the rest of the assembly to take special note of this

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<sup>103</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: The Complete New Testament in One Volume* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 452.

<sup>104</sup> David E. Garland, *I Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 167.

individual. The church should mark this individual out - the rest of the congregation was not to associate with him. Anyone who does not obey Paul's instructions in this letter is being sinfully obstinate because it was the third time Paul had addressed this issue.<sup>105</sup>

The famous apostle Paul possessed a stigma after the Lord converted him to Christianity for some time. God appeared to Ananias in a vision and ordered him to lay hands on Saul of Tarsus and pray for him to receive his sight. In Acts 9:13, Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:" Ananias, among many others, at first wanted nothing to do with Paul because he carried a stigma from oppressing Christians. After Paul's conversion, he immediately started preaching the gospel in Damascus, but many still avoided him, including the disciples, because of his previous reputation. Acts 9:26 states, "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." This event transpired three years after Paul's conversion. Having the beloved brethren apprehensive of his intentions must have been a painful experience for Paul. The stigma of Paul lasted more than three years.

Mark receives a stigma in Paul's eyes because he abandoned them on the first missionary journey. Paul refuses to let Mark continue with them on the next missionary journey; therefore, there was a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:38-39). Paul repudiated Mark on his next journey and took Silas instead when Barnabas was resolute to take Mark. Therefore, Paul and Barnabas separated, and the Scriptures do not record Paul and Barnabas ever journeying together after this incident.

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<sup>105</sup> John MacArthur, *1 & 2 Thessalonians MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2002). 290.

Two New Testament churches appear to possess a stigma in their community. The Cretians and the Corinthians. Paul writes to Titus, the pastor of the church of Crete, saying in Titus 1:12-13, “One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true.” The Cretians were liars, idle, and gluttonous in their community, which Paul affirms to be a reliable report. The Corinthians also had a stigma in their community, committing more graphic acts of fornication than the unconverted Gentiles. Paul declares in I Corinthians 5:1, “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.” The character of the Corinthians was subpar at best. The Corinthian Church was extremely sensuous and divided, committing lude acts of gross fornication. Paul stated that he could not speak spiritual unto them but carnal because they were still babes in Christ (I Cor. 3:1). In I Corinthians 3:3, Paul says, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” By failing to exemplify Christian love and virtuous behavior, they lose solidarity among themselves as a congregation and, among outsiders, they lose their influence and reputation.<sup>106</sup>

Practically every New Testament congregation in the Bible encountered dilemmas with sin in the church. Of the seven churches in the book of Revelation, Jesus rebuked six of them for some type of error in their faith. The trouble with employing these churches is that it is troublesome to connect their error or stigma outside of the church congregation with the Scriptures. Obviously, the churches had issues such as the Jezebel, who instructed the people to engage in fornication and adultery. It is highly probable that reports manifested their sins in the community, but Scripture does not clarify this; thus, it remains theoretical. Whether these

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<sup>106</sup> B. J. Oropeza, *1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 77.

churches occupied a stigma in the residential community or not, they certainly possessed a stigma among the Christian community, for this letter went to all seven churches; therefore, churches suffering from a stigma problem should make use of Jesus' words, which were meant to correct the seven churches of Asia Minor.

Israel is by far the best illustration of possessing a stigma in the Bible. Someone could effortlessly write an entire book about the stigma they have possessed in generation after generation throughout their history. Israel is a type or foreshadowing of the church. Stephen said in Acts 7:38 that Israel is "the church in the wilderness," which indicates a connection between Israel and the church. The Lord prophesied to Israel in Deuteronomy 28:37 that if they do not hearken unto Him, he will put a curse upon them, and they will become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword to all nations throughout the earth. In second Chronicles 7:20, Scripture shows God bringing this curse upon Israel when He brought them into Babylonian captivity. The psalmist writes in Psalms 44:14, "Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people." The Lord makes it apparent that his people have been "rejected" and humiliated. Their enemies have conquered them (v.10a), plundered them (v.10b), scattered them like sheep (v.11a), and enslaved them (vv.11b-12). Due to these disgraceful circumstances, the name of Israel, the people of God, had become a stigma to the nations (v.13; Deu 28:37; 1Ki 9:7; Jer 24:10).<sup>107</sup>

### **Resolving the Stigma**

The words of Christ and the apostles will be analyzed in this theological foundation and used to aid in constructing a model which will hopefully improve and eliminate the stigma of MWBC. This DMIN action research will endeavor to apply and implement the authoritative

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<sup>107</sup> Willem VanGemenen, *Psalms: The Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 463.

words of Christ and the apostles to formulate a quintessential design for MWBC in the Mineral Wells community. There are several Biblical examples of people, churches, cities, and nations possessing a stigma that would be exhaustive to allude to them all, specifically Israel's reoccurring stigma problem. Nothing is more challenging than removing a stigma from a person or church, especially with social media. Once something is labeled among the community, it is nearly impossible to reverse it. Scripture teaches that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches and is better than precious ointment (Pro 22; Ecc 7:1). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to undertake and eradicate the stigma from the church. The stigma of Sodom, Gomorrah, frequent acts of Israel at various times in their history, and the stigma and theoretical stigma of several churches, such as the church of Corinth, Crete, the churches of Galatia, Ephesus, and the lukewarm stigma of the church of Laodicea still circulates the Christian world to this day. Removing a stigma is onerous because people are quick to gossip and slow to forgive. It is easier to win an entire city than one offended person (Pro 18:19). Looking particularly at the stigma examples in the theological foundation, the commencement of the model design must possess a biblical foundation displaying stigma removal. The examples that are chosen in the theological foundation support some sort of resolution to facilitate the removal of a stigma or poor reputation.

The stigma upon Cain continued without removal, but they were two takeaways from the stigma that can be implemented in this model. First, before Cain murdered Abel, God gave Cain a chance to repent. God gives Cain the first lecture of repentance via the doctrine of a sin offering. God told Cain that if he did well, he would be accepted, and though he did not, a sin offering remained at the door. If Cain repents, there is the hope of pardon.<sup>108</sup> Even after Cain

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<sup>108</sup> John Trapp, *A Commentary of the Old and New Testaments* (Chicago, IL: Richard D. Dickinson, 1867), Genesis 4:7 note, assessed from Swordsearcher 8.1 program.

slew Abel, there is no remorse for his transgression. God places a mark on Cain, making him a fugitive and vagabond on the earth, and Cain's answer in verse thirteen is, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Cain refuses to repent, only thinking of himself. The lesson is that Cain continues in a downward spiral because he refuses to repent in the time that the Lord provided, such as the Jezebel of Revelation chapter 2. Jesus speaks to the church of Thyatira in Revelation 2:21, saying, "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." Jesus adds a harsh punishment to her, saying that He will cast her into great tribulation and kill her children with death if she does not repent. Notice in both accounts that there is a disregarded space provided to repent. The second takeaway is that stigma comes from a repudiation to repent, and the longer one goes without repentance, the worse the situation becomes. When applying this to the model for MWBC, the takeaway is that if the church does not repent, then the stigma will exacerbate, but if they produce repentance, then maybe God will restore MWBC's reputation and influence in the community.

Sodom and Gomorrah also never repented from their abominations; therefore, God took them away as He thought best (Eze 16:49-50). Jesus makes a remark that is arduous to grasp concerning Sodom. In Matthew 11:23, Jesus says, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." As shown in this verse, willful impenitence is exceedingly wicked. In the Day of Judgment, Christ declares, it will be "more tolerable" for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom than for those towns where His messages and miracles were heard but not repented.<sup>109</sup> Because Sodom lacked a spiritual message and work, it

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<sup>109</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Bible Commentary: The Gospel of Matthew* (Grupo Oxiênio Ltda-ME, 2015), 80. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6470351>. Created from liberty on 2021-11-16 08:33:09.

deteriorated into a place of enormous wickedness. God could not find even ten righteous in Sodom (Gen 18:32). Understanding this ought to be a warning for every church in their community. Each church is situated in a specific community to spread Christ's gospel message and perform spiritual works that glorify God, which shine a light to the lost in the community giving them the hope of salvation. MWBC, like all churches, has an enormous obligation to evangelize the community. The context of Jesus's words is repentance. Before He mentions Sodom, He says in verse 21, "if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." The takeaway is that the church should proclaim the gospel message and evangelize the community. Woefully, the cities Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had the miracles of Jesus and His gospel message, and ultimately, most of them would not repent of their sins.

The noting or marking of disobedient members is necessary for church health. If these members remain and influence or manipulate the church, then their stigma expands and develops into a church stigma. As James asserts, church leadership often has respect for the wealthy and not the poor (Jam 2:3-4). It is the nature of the wealthy to acquire influence in this world, but in the house of God, the Word and Spirit of God should have free course to govern the church; thus, any member, whether it is the wealthy, the deacon, or clergy, if they are recalcitrant, then mark them and avoid them. The extensive application is that the leadership is responsible for managing the church orderly, spiritually, and obediently via the Word of God. Paul instructed Timothy in II Timothy 4:2 "to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Paul did not instruct the church to carry this out, but Timothy, the church's pastor. Weak pastors wish to put this up on the church body, causing carnality, cliques, and divisions within the congregation when Paul said to Timothy, the church pastor, to do this. In I Timothy

5:20, Paul said, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” Timidity is why countless churches decline to a state of extreme carnality because the church's leadership is not bold with the Word of God rebuking sinful conduct. As Paul says in Galatians 5:9, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Some scholars believe that Jesus traveled through Israel about eight times in His three-year ministry, yet He did not rebuke the people for their sins, saying words like the son of man did not come to condemn or judge, but to save (John 3:17; 12:47). However, twice when Jesus came into the temple/house of God, He rebuked and drove out all that bought and sold and suffered not any man to carry a vessel in the house of God (Mark 11:15-16). Peter said in I Peter 4:17, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:” Jesus did not come to judge the world, but the church is not of the world (John 15:19). Leadership has the burden of properly, righteously, and impartially judging the Lord’s house through Scripture.

The stigma Paul possessed prevailed for over three years, even after his conversion. Eventually, the stigma dissipated, and Paul was reckoned as the apostle to the Gentiles, such as Peter was the apostle unto the Jews, but it only transpired after years of steadfast allegiance to the Christian faith. The book of Acts establishes that the Spirit of God was equally influential in Paul as He was in Peter. Luke appears to express that Paul was not behind Peter in any gift. Paul spent years of dedicated service to Christ prior to removing his stigma from the Christian community. The takeaway is that Paul finally overcame his stigma through his steadfastness in the faith.

Interestingly, Mark possessed a stigma in Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. According to some charts, Paul’s first missionary journey was in 48 A.D. His second missionary journey was in 51 A.D. There was about a three-year period in between the two journeys. Mark forsook



them on the first journey, and after about three years, Paul still refuses to take Mark on the second journey. Though Paul repeatedly taught in all his writings to love and forgive, he likewise taught to prove all things (I Thes 5:21). It took several years before Mark proved to Paul that they could trust him in the ministry. Mark eventually proved himself to Paul, and the two became incredibly close. Mark and Paul reconciled, but it took Mark years to remove his damaged reputation in the eyes of Paul. Many years later, Paul speaks highly of Mark as a part of his ministry on three separate occasions. In Second Timothy 4:11, Paul says, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” In the epistle of Philemon, when Paul was a prisoner, Paul said that Mark was his fellow laborer (Phlm 1:24). In Colossians 4:10, Paul’s faith is fully restored in Mark. Paul said, “Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)” The takeaway is that Mark, like Paul, experienced restoration through constant, steadfast faith and obedience unto the Lord.

What resolution was effective for Crete and Corinth, the two churches with a stigma in their community? Paul’s first letter to the church of Corinth edified the church, which resolved most of the stigma issues they possessed. Through sagacious and bold leadership, Paul determined not to hold back but spoke to their carnality and how their actions were a disgrace to the faith. This astucious leadership unequivocally succeeded because, in Second Corinthians, Paul boasts about their growth through repentance. First Corinthians made the church sorrowful unto repentance. Paul stated in II Corinthians 7:8, “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent.” Even though it pained Paul to audaciously proclaim their lasciviousness, he does not repent because it brought them unto repentance. In the next verse, Paul boasts of their repentance, saying in II Corinthians 7:9, “Now I rejoice, not that ye were

made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner. . .” He adds in the next verse that they had a godly sorrow that wrought repentance to salvation. After his jarring first epistle, Paul’s boasting of the Corinthians reveals that God has performed a work in the congregation through courageous leadership, the Word of God, and repentance by the church. There is no information in Scripture concerning the church of Crete and what ensued after Paul’s epistle to Titus.

One may perceive that the Cretians had a mediocre reputation in their community as liars, idle, and gluttonous, which Paul affirms to be true. Scripture gives no further information except the instruction that Paul gave Titus concerning the church's predicament. Paul says in Titus 1:13, “This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;” “Titus was to reprove them severely. Severely translates *apotomōs*, a compound adverb formed from the preposition *apo* and the verb *tennō*, which means “to cut,” as with a knife or ax. The reproof was to cut with penetrating force.”<sup>110</sup> Though the outcome is unknown according to Scripture, the approach is the same as with the church of Corinth. Titus, like Paul, was to rebuke and reprove with bold leadership, hoping that the congregation would receive the message with fruits of repentance.

Virtually all New Testament churches grappled with problems of sin in the church. It is uncertain if the other New Testament churches' stigma was circulating in the community, but they undoubtedly had issues that needed correction. Even though New Testament church reputations in their respective communities are unknown, the words of Christ and the apostles that were given for correction are. Jesus told six of the seven churches in Asia Minor to repent

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<sup>110</sup> John MacArthur, *Titus: MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 1996), 69.

from different errors in the faith. Jesus warned the church of Ephesus that without repentance, the repercussion would be the church's closure. Paul spoke harshly to the Galatians for their acceptance of law preaching, which he called a perversion of the gospel and placed a curse on any who preached the gospel of grace differently to them than the way he preached it to them (Gal 1:8-9). John rebukes the preeminence of Diotrephes (III John 1:9), Paul asserts to expel the fornicating brother out of the church and to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (I Cor 5:5), and Paul likewise delivers Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan (I Tim 1:20) that they may learn not to blaspheme. If they overcame their church troubles, the wisdom of Christ and the apostles is how they overcame them; therefore, this is an excellent source for designing a model for MWBC.

Israel is the best illustration of both possessing and resolving a stigma. In approximately every other generation, Israel turns from God and is afflicted with the Deuteronomy twenty-eight curses. Just in the book of the Judges, Israel sinned and became subjugated unto their enemies seven times. After becoming a disgrace for their sinful idolatry each time, they repented and cried unto the Lord, and God issued a deliverer. Each time they repented, God sent a deliverer and brought Israel out of a substandard reputation among the other nations. After Israel was rescued from Egypt at the Red Sea, they started murmuring against God and Moses in just three days. They tempted God ten times in the first two and one-half years (Num 14:22). Through their stiff-necked rebellion, God punished that generation with every male dying in the wilderness above the age of twenty over the next forty years except for the two men, Joshua and Caleb. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the next generation comes to the edge of the promised land and appears to repent for the errors of their fathers, reestablishing their covenant with God through circumcision. Joshua circumcised the people, bringing them back

into proper fellowship with God, which was just one of the omissions of their fathers. Joshua 5:9 says, “And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.” The Lord removed the stigma of their fathers through this act and allowed this generation to conquer the promised land. David was invariably conscious about someone bringing a reproach or stigma upon the nation of Israel because they were God’s representatives on the earth. When David fought Goliath, he said in I Samuel 17:26, “What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel?” Israel, like sheep, often performed well when they had righteous leadership, such as David, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah. For the past two thousand years, Israel has possessed the worst stigma of rejecting Jesus, the Kingly Messiah of Israel and son of the living God. The Lord, however, is always merciful to Israel and will once again resolve the stigma of Israel and fulfill His promise in Exodus 19:4-6, making them a kingdom of priests unto the world. Zechariah 12:10 says Israel “shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” God pours upon the house of Israel the spirit of grace, and Israel weeps for piercing Christ, their Messiah. In Romans 11:26, the Scripture says, “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:” After Israel repents, Christ will fight for them and set up a kingdom, and then Israel will become a kingdom of priests unto the world. Zechariah prophesied this saying in 8:23 “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.” Israel’s stigma will be removed at this time, but it comes after Israel repents for piercing the son of God.

## Conclusion

Righteous leaders almost invariably contribute to the congregation, drawing closer in fellowship with God through repentance. This theological foundation will aid in designing a model corresponding to the instructions delivered to the New Testament churches, Israel, and individuals who struggled with a stigma that had some resolution. Completely removing the stigma at MWBC is not the primary goal because some people like Ahithophel will always harbor bitter animosity against David. David was Israel's greatest king, and Israel prospered through the reign of David above all other neighboring nations. Why did Israel turn on David and receive Absalom? David said in Psalms 41:9, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." David's stigma was never eradicated though he was a man after God's own heart. Ahithophel, David's close friend and wise counselor, turned on David and promoted Absalom because of the stigma David had after the affair with Bathsheba and the assassination of Uriah. Though David repented with tears, Ahithophel remained bitter against David for the rest of his life. Ahithophel was probably bitter against David because he was Bathsheba's grandfather (II Sam 11:4; 23:34). David was seeking God with all his heart and bringing Israel into their most refined state of prosperity and expansion, yet Ahithophel despised David, and there was nothing that could transpire that would eliminate David's stigma from his eyes. The same is true with virtually every stigma or subpar reputation in every community. There will constantly and consistently be some that will prefer to be bitter. Therefore, this DMIN action will focus on repairing the church instead of any Ahithophel's in the community that will never accept MWBC as a representative of Christ.

They are a few common denominators found in the examples presented. Uninspired amateurish leadership produces a carnal congregation, and exemplary leadership produces a

healthy church. Another common denominator is that all who resolved a stigma problem started with a powerful message that brought about repentance, obedience, and steadfast commitment. This DMIN action will concentrate on fixing the errors that cause this stigma to form: mediocre leadership, a spiritually immature carnal congregation, a sound Biblical message of God's grace and love, and a call for repentance. This DMIN action must start with bringing the church into a close, intimate, spiritual, and biblically sound relationship with God, which starts with repentance, or it will not be successful in attempting to rectify its once Holy character. The model design through the theological foundation has seven steps. 1) Edifying the church leadership, 2) a powerful gospel message to the congregation, 3) becoming united in repentance, 4) becoming steadfast in the faith, which is how Mark and Paul resolved their stigma problem, 5) learning to always be obedient unto the Lord above thoughts, feelings, or church policy, 6) starting small groups and active fellowship, and 7) interaction with the community. God frequently acted with significant power in the Scriptures after true repentance. It is imperative for MWBC to have the Holy Spirit operating in and through the congregation to accomplish any goal. "In spite of any revitalization project or method that you might follow, without the Holy Spirit, our efforts are frustrating and will be fruitless."<sup>111</sup> The DMIN action will confront leadership boldly in Christian love with their prior mistakes, attempting to persuade them to develop into spiritual and biblical sound leaders instead of church policy officers. This is an obstacle that Jesus dealt with in city after city. In several Jewish synagogues, Jesus came in the power of the Spirit with the Word of God, and they repudiated him with the traditions of men (modern church policy). The idea is for leadership to lead the MWBC congregation with a gospel message of repentance, creating a fresh, clean slate and producing a vision of hopeful

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<sup>111</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 32.

expectations for reaching the Mineral Wells community with the gospel. If the leadership and congregation positively respond to the message, then after the church has increased some in faith and maturity, small groups and regular church activities will bond the congregation, uniting them in the faith. This unification process will spiritually reposition the church to inaugurate regular interaction with the community, walking in true fellowship with each other, which will prove that the church has matured. Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” The interaction will be sings, feasts, monthly food pantry, clothing ministry, assisting single parents with diapers and baby formula, car show, free rummage sale, and more. Some interaction will be monthly in the community and hopefully weekly so that the Mineral Wells area may experience the love of Christ via the MWBC congregation.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The theoretical foundation of this DMIN research action will examine the models of Bill Henard and Andy Stanley. Both models have pros and cons. This DMIN action will attempt to implement some of the pros of Henard’s and Stanley’s model in the methodology model to the seven biblical and foundational truths found in the theology of foundations portion of the DMIN project. Scripture is the foundation of theology; therefore, the Scriptures should not be compromised. Bill Henard’s and Andy Stanley’s models will be analyzed, and some of the pros of Henard’s church revitalization model and some of the pros of Andy Stanley’s model, which is making a church that unchurched people want to attend, will be consolidated in the methodology portion of this DMIN action.

### Pros and Cons of Bill Henard's Model

Henard's model is full of pros that will aid in revitalizing a church that is stagnating or declining. The chief idea behind Henard's model is for the church to do all they can but to trust the Holy Spirit for the results. A biblical example of this would be when Paul said in I Corinthians 3:6, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Henard has many features and ideas to revitalize a church, but he has two or three foundation stones that must be set as the basis for his model to be effective. First, the Holy Spirit must be the enabling force behind the model. Even with the best, most successful revitalization project or method a ministry might use, the efforts are cumbersome and will be futile without the Holy Spirit. Church revitalization occurs because of Holy Spirit empowerment, not because of research, models, or merits on behalf of the church.<sup>112</sup> Relying on the Holy Spirit is the first and foremost significant pro that Henard explicates and must be a foundation for any revitalization model. Secondly, Henard stresses that the pastor leading the church revitalization must also possess a zeal for God and the church's edification. Hennard gives six steps for the pastor to follow to prepare him for the task of revitalization. These steps keep the pastor focused daily on God and the revitalization task. Some ideas mentioned in this process involve daily devotion, beneficial and supportive literature, repentance, journaling, and personal revitalization. Henard believes that a pastor "cannot revitalize the church if personal pessimism becomes the norm;"<sup>113</sup> therefore, for a pastor to have a successful revitalization, the joy of the Lord is an effective tool that only comes through genuine spirituality. Henard stresses that the congregation must always have a vision or goals, or the church will lose sight of its calling in the neighborhood. Henard

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<sup>112</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015), 33.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.



teaches that leadership should know how to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Failing to identify these factors in the congregation will cause the leadership to lead in the wrong direction. Another essential pro that Henard brings out is waiting on God's timing. Many pastors and leaders, when they want spiritual maturity, revival, or church growth, get ahead of God and go and start fighting without HIM, such as King Saul. An excellent biblical example is to compare and contrast the behavior of Saul and David. Saul would attempt to obey God but through his own interpretation. Then, halfway following the Lord, he would make an effort to justify himself. David contrastingly would patiently wait upon the Lord, such as at the mulberry trees when fighting against the Philistines (II Sam 5:23-25).

Henard speaks about the significance of the church's appearance and how the community perceives it. He talks about several things, from landscaping to fresh paint and keeping the church's exterior clean and inviting. Along those same lines, Henard also teaches about the attention to detail inside the church, from maintenance to welcoming visitors. From cleanliness to a welcoming doorman or woman to handing out visitor's bags. Two more pros taken from Henard's book *Can These Bones Live* are his teachings on managing the church through inadequate ministry structures and the failure to enhance the influence of the ministry of the church. Depending on the leadership and those participating in this project, these pros may or may not be used.

Though this church revitalization model has many pros, it is still different from the problems that MWBC faces. MWBC may be approaching the end of this model because this congregation is quickly growing in grace and now striving to re-establish its once holy character in the community, but there is no model for that, else the research process has failed to produce it, or it could not be discovered through the research process. There are many pros to Henard's

model that five years ago would have been great for the church, but much revitalization has already taken place, and the dark cloud that currently lingers over MWBC is a stigma from previous ministries and the lack of perception by the community of the spirituality that MWBC presently possesses. The only cons in Henard's book is an exceptionally meticulous list of things for the church to do that would be cumbersome to get a church body in agreement. People do not like change, and his book lists well over a hundred changes to be made. It is hard to pass two or three changes in a church meeting; therefore, over one hundred changes may be more of a project for a pastor to accomplish over a ten-year ministry. Secondly, many of the ideas in this model only focus on the church's revitalization and not on repairing a stigma problem in the community. The current situation at MWBC seems to be unique, without any model that fits MWBC's current situation.

#### Pros and Cons of Andy Stanley's Model

John 1:17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." According to Stanley, nearly all churches develop either an all-truth or an all-grace model. Stanley believes neither of these is an effective strategy for a thriving church alone. Stanley claims that Jesus was full of grace and truth and formed his model, which he called a grace and truth model. Stanley's model claims that it intends to reach the community with the gospel, especially the unchurched people. His model focuses on creating a church that unchurched people want or love to attend. Since MWBC is seeking to reach their community and have their character restored, this seemed like a model that may help reach the unchurched in the Mineral Wells community.

Stanley feels that the church has a negative reputation among the unchurched world and, in various cases, rightly so. He wants to change the church's reputation in the community to

reach the unchurched. Stanley's model begins solid and congruent to the setup of this thesis. He initiates his model via inquiring questions and presenting ideas about who and what the church is and what it ought to become or accomplish.

- Are we moving or simply meeting?
- Are we making a measurable difference in our local communities or simply conducting services?
- Are we organized around a mission, or are we organized around an antiquated ministry model inherited from a previous generation?
- Are we allocating resources as if Jesus is the hope of the world, or are the squeaky wheels of church culture driving our budgeting decisions?
- Are we *ekklesia*, or have we settled for *kirche*?<sup>114</sup>

Stanley's model is built upon five Catalysts which are:

- Practical Teaching
- Private Disciplines
- Personal Ministry
- Providential Relationships
- Pivotal Circumstances<sup>115</sup>

In the practical teaching catalyst, they are three questions that the model proposes that one should both ask and answer, which are 1) "What do you want them to know? 2) What do you want them to do? 3) What can be done to create the next steps? All of this with the goal of growing people's faith."<sup>116</sup> Stanley teaches that there should be a rudimentary agenda. The ministry should realize what the congregation lacks, and practical teachings are essential since the average layperson is no theologian. Studying to figure out what the congregation ought to know and teaching them how to accomplish this is a vital goal and vision for the church. Then add to the vision, asking what can be done to complete this goal and what

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<sup>114</sup> Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend, Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 67.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

should be done after the objective is accomplished. After Stanley expounds on private disciplines, he says,

In your model, at what age do you begin teaching the importance of private spiritual disciplines? How and how often is this value reinforced with your students? What devotional and personal Bible study resources do you make available, and how accessible are they? How difficult is it for people in your church to get a Bible? When is the last time you did a weekend message on spiritual disciplines? How could you use the weekend to reinforce this value on a regular basis? What could you do to prioritize this in the mix of everything else you are doing? Are spiritual disciplines a priority in your life?<sup>117</sup>

Virtually every pastor in America understands that private discipleship and devotion to God are the incentive and faculty of the devotee and the church. Stanley suggests questions that every pastor should ask themselves to fuel this fire. Questions like, how is the church's leadership simplifying this for the congregation? Are they providing reviewed literature, or are they invariably teaching on discipleship, spiritual development, sanctification, and the effect of an intimate spiritual relationship with God? The third catalyst in Stanley's model is personal ministry.

How easy is it for new people and nonmembers to get involved in ministry in your model? Does your approach to equipping and training keep people out of ministry environments longer than necessary? Are there steps you could shorten or eliminate altogether? Are there areas where nonbelievers could be encouraged to serve?<sup>118</sup>

Almost all church leaders should be encouraged to undertake and accomplish personal ministries. Activating and engaging the congregation in the community with some type of personal ministry is essential for the health and growth of the church. The church should also

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<sup>117</sup> Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend, Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 123.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

make the unbelieving visitors feel welcome and loved. The fourth catalyst is providential relationships. Stanley believes Christians should be making friends and strong relationships with people in the community to lead them to the church. Questions Stanley suggests for the church who wants to engage in their community.

Does your ministry model connect people quickly and keep them connected? Does your model have easy, obvious steps into community? Is it easy for nonbelievers to find their places? Are you classing people to death? What can you do programmatically to create more relational connection opportunities in your ministry model?

The last catalyst in Stanley's model is pivotal circumstances. Stanley refers to this as the power of the picture. Positive events occurring in the church will assist in producing a cohesive body that feels like they are being utilized. Baptisms are always something that the entire church enjoys. He communicates about baptisms, small groups, mentoring, family ministries, and things that positively impact the church.

This list looks impressive and full of pros, and Stanley has implemented this model to add thousands to his church, reaching many unchurched people. The tragic fact is how Stanley utilizes his model. When Stanley demonstrated how he put this model into action, it was like riding a roller coaster. It was full of excellent concepts with positive results but accompanied by unhealthy ideas and practices that were utterly unbiblical. The cons of Stanley's model are that many pastors may adopt it because of his results, but they will inevitably compromise sound biblical principles if they are not vigilant. In implementing this superb model design, he appears to concentrate more on entertaining the goats than feeding the sheep. One example is in his pursuit to fill the church with unchurched people. Some Muslims and Jews claimed they did not believe in Jesus, and Stanley replies, "Consequently, Jewish attendees often bring friends. They refer to me as a good motivational speaker. I'm fine with that. A Muslim attendee tweeted that

he hums through the Jesus parts of my messages.”<sup>119</sup> Stanley says, “I give people permission to filter out the “Jesus” parts of my messages.”<sup>120</sup> In the fourth catalyst, “providential relationships,” Stanley speaks much about mingling and becoming friendly with lost, unchurched people in hopes of leading them to Christ, but scripture says the opposite. Paul says in I Corinthians 6:14, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” This idea in Stanley’s model is to interact in the community through secular events. Paul later adds in verse 17 saying the opposite, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,” James says that the friendship of the world is enmity with God (Jas 4:4). Yes, believers must interact with unbelievers nearly every day in society and should do so in Christian love being lights to the lost. However, they should not be hanging out together, for this will likely have the opposite effect. Christians, in most circumstances, will become worldly instead of leading others to Christ. Though Stanley asserts that his model clings to both grace and truth, he subsequently speaks about how truth such as biblical theology can be toxic to church success. He said, “People are far more interested in what works than what’s true. I hate to burst your bubble, but virtually nobody in your church is on a truth quest.” Stanley adds that even though one may be accurate theologically, nobody will choose to pay attention to them because people only care about what works. These statements are upsetting because Jesus cared more about truth than He did entertaining the goats and adding to the number of the crowds. Practically all of his model is full of excellent ideas but implemented without the Spiritual character that Christ exhibited in

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<sup>119</sup> Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend, Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 80.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

the gospels. Stanley lets unsaved people lead worship services and even bible study. Attempting to employ his methods with spirit-filled biblical truth will not produce the same results because the church will possess the aura of a holy sanctuary instead of a clubhouse for adults. A holy sanctuary is something unchurched people do not love to attend, but it is commanded in Scripture. Unchurched people should not love attending church, for they are enmity with God. Instead, they should feel the Spirit's conviction (John 16:8-9), leading them to repent from sin and seek salvation in the finished work of Christ, resulting in salvation. Then they will have joy and love attending church. The church is a place the saved should love to attend, not the worldly unsaved.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The methodology of this DMIN research action will include the seven fundamental ideas learned through Scripture in the foundation of theology section of this thesis combined with the pros from Bill Henard's church revitalization model and some pros from Andy Stanley's model, which is making a church that unchurched people want to attend. The seven truths in the theology foundation will be the sure basis of this model since they are biblical truths; expounding on these seven fundamental principles and combining them with some of the pros from Henard and Stanley's model, this DMIN action research created a model that tailors the current situation of MWBC in the Mineral Wells community. A church with a stigma should always start its model with church revitalization. MWBC has been in this process for several years now and has grown in grace, love, and forgiveness, but a few things are left to be added, such as the maturity of church leadership and the congregation; then, assuredly, MWBC will be ready to reach the community with a holy positive new character.

### **Creating & Implementing a Model**

The creation of this model came via the seven biblical principles in theological foundation combined with some aspects of Henard's and Stanley's model. Combining these three elements, this model was successfully formed and implemented in MWBC and the Mineral Wells community. The creation of this model began with pros found in Henard's design, then transposing into the theological foundation's seven fundamental truths in Scripture with the addition of some pros of Stanley's model.



### Pros from Henard's Model

Like Henard's model, this design began with the Holy Spirit. The pastor, church leadership, participants in the DMIN research action, and the congregants that desired to share the gospel in the Mineral Wells community were subservient to the guidance and faculty of the Holy Spirit. Second, the pastor zealously sought God's guidance throughout the project through repentance, revival, and renewal. The pastor took examples from Moses and David, two of Israel's most outstanding leaders, that sought the Lord before leading the people. Moses said in Exodus 33:13, "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight." David said in Psalms 25:4, "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths." As Moses and David sought the Lord to understand His ways and will in leading the people, so did the pastor before implementing this action. The pastor invited the Paraclete to oversee and guide this action, desiring from Him wisdom to know His ways and ability to bring them to pass. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Any Spiritual action must begin with a desire and the enablement of God to be a completed and successful action.

This DMIN action differs from Henard's model, which is on revitalization because the goals were distinct. This action moves on from the revitalization stage, which Henard's model illustrates, to the maturity of the congregation and leadership. Teaching the leaders how to govern the Church from a biblical perspective is of the utmost importance for a church trying to re-establish a Holy Character in the community. The reasoning behind this action is that if leadership does not know how to manage the congregation, the Church will deteriorate again. In part, the goal of enlightening Church leadership was achieved as most understood that God's

Word is the ultimate authority in the Church, but the head deacon opposed almost all suggested changes to the bylaws or Church policies by this DMIN action.

Other than teaching leaders Church authority from biblical principles, another goal implemented in this action was maturing the congregation, which happened to some extent. The pastor continuously taught the MWBC congregation the imperativeness of discipleship, spiritual formation, involvement, and evangelism. MWBC responded to the messages and visions put forth from the DMIN action. MWBC has great peace after implementing this DMIN action's outreach, being unified in their faith and vision, and reaching the community better than they have in years. The entire Church did not mature, and some still lack the development of powerfully sharing their faith and evangelizing the community. Still, this model enhanced their awareness and motivated them to become more involved in the Church and the community. About eighty percent of the congregation was active in this DMIN action.

The last goal flows from the positive results of the first two goals, which is resolving the stigma of the Church. The leadership and congregation had to put on Christ to retrogress MWBC to the place they were before the dilemma of the stigma. The Church and administration did seek to be filled with God's Spirit, love, Holy Character, grace, righteousness, and boldness in the sanctuary, following biblical truth in these trying times where biblical truth is perceived as judgmental condemnation.

Another part of this DMIN model that came from a pro employed by Henard's model is presenting a sanitary, respectable church to the congregation and the community both outwardly and inwardly. The Church looks exceptionally pleasant outwardly, and all who visit see and feel the love and compassion of Christ on the inside. This model also works with another pro from Henard's model and the first step of the fundamental biblical truth found in the theology

foundation section, edifying the leadership. This DMIN action, as Henard suggests, identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that MWBC faced and presents them to the leadership team. Assumptions by the pastor and twelve members surveyed determined the SWOTs of MWBC and delivered the results to the leaders.

### Infusing Seven biblical fundamentals with pros from Stanley's model

#### *The First Biblical Fundamental Truth*

The first fundamental truth is effectively edifying the Church leadership. This action engaged and enlightened the administration concerning church authority. Maintaining authentic biblical leadership is mandatory, or the Church will stagnate, become excessively sensual, and ultimately devour itself (Gal 5:15). No matter what part of Church leadership, board, or committee the Church possesses, whether elders, deacons, committees, or a church council, the DMIN action addressed them all according to their maturity, and spirituality. There are five older deacons on the MWBC deacon board, the youngest being sixty-two and the oldest being eighty-two. MWBC has recently ordained one deacon into the gospel ministry, making him an elder according to Scripture. Despite being naturally ethical men, the laity-led church and deacon board in the past governed the Church by bylaws and church policies (written by the head deacon) as an alternative to overseeing the Church by Scripture. The pastor stressed to the deacon board that managing the Church according to Scripture entails consenting to God's governing, for Christ is its head (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18; John 1:1-3, 14). The historicity of MWBC has elucidated that previous pastors have not spiritually taught the Church how to govern themselves and the congregation through Scripture. The pastor and the elder's vocation is theology, and via their expertise, they oversee and manage the Church with wisdom grounded in Scripture. The pastor of MWBC has met with the deacon board emphasizing the magnitude of

biblical authority (see Appendix G) so that he can teach a leadership course from the Scriptures that will educate the deacons. Since the sheep follow the shepherds, the leaders must lead from Scripture. Suppose the leadership of MWBC refuses to develop into authentic biblical leaders. In that case, the congregation must remove them from their positions, or the Church will suffer for the rest of their tenure. This DMIN action undertook to enlighten the deacon board through three lectures, leading them to advocate and endorse Christ as the authority of the Church. The pastor also emphasized in the lecture that if MWBC leadership matures in their faith and learns to govern the Church according to Scripture, then this will instigate the production of a spiritual congregation resonating with the genuineness of Christ. The pastor took this approach to let them know that they are not doing their job and performing their calling according to the Scriptures, intending to motivate them to grow and study the Bible for themselves. This approach worked for all but the head deacon. One cannot help but think he is hearing and learning but rejects the Scriptures presented because of power and pride. The head deacon willingly agreed to everything in this DMIN action and participated in all the events, except when it came to changes in the bylaws which overly empowered the deacons. He is adamant about keeping the bylaws he wrote as the Church's authority, though the other deacons and all who were surveyed and interviewed want them changed.

#### *The Second Biblical Fundamental Truth*

The second fundamental truth is a powerful gospel message to the congregation. The efficacy of persuasive preaching greatly influenced the congregation, which moved them to become more involved. The teaching of the gospel does a matchless work in the body of Christ compared to any other method. Persuasive preaching is similar to Stanley's first catalyst in his model: practical teaching, which is the pastor's responsibility. Strangely, the pastor and Stanley

significantly differ on what pragmatic biblical teaching is. The spirit must energize the pastor to proclaim with conviction the formidable message of the gospel. Stanley suggested teaching the congregation what they need to know and what they should endeavor to accomplish. The pastor staunchly preached on grace and responsibility. One cannot merit their salvation, but one is still responsible to Christ to possess their vessel in sanctification, edifying the body of Christ (Eph 14:12,26; I Thes 4:3-4). The pastor repeatedly preached that the church body must comprehend the gospel message and Spirit of God to embody the Holy Character of Christ in the community. He frequently gave a sermon on the three I's of evangelism, teaching the Church how to become more involved in the community and share their faith.

The three I's are Interaction, Initiation, and Implementation. The Church must have interaction to share their faith. When preaching on the first I (Interaction), he told of all the events in the DMIN action project. The fellowship weekend revival, yard and bake sale, the dinner-sings, the car show, the First Responders Day, Kid's Night activities, and more. Community interaction was the theme in several sermons to the congregation. He preached that MWBC must interact with the community to be a light for Christ and the gospel that the Mineral Wells community needs to see and hear.

The second I is initiation. It is the believer's responsibility to initiate conversations about the Lord, their faith, and the importance of the Church. The pastor expounded upon the topic of initiation in several sermons. It is the Church's call always to be ready to give an answer or testimony for the hope that they possess, contending for the faith (1Pet 3:15; Jude 1:3). The pastor emphasized to the congregation that it was not enough to have events that brought people to MWBC but that it was just as important to attend these events being a witness for the Lord and the Church. The pastor pointed out that the events were essential for the Church to create a

better environment to share one's faith and testimony. When a person goes to a football game or a bowling alley, the atmosphere is often not appropriate to initiate a conversation inviting people to Church. However, when events are happening at the Church, the atmosphere calls for one to bless and give an invitation inviting people to come and worship.

The third I is the implementation of the gospel. The pastor preached that all Christians should know how to lead someone to Christ and taught the congregation several approaches for leading someone to the Lord. These three sermons were preached intensely throughout this DMIN action putting the hearer in check and explaining to the congregation that they have a responsibility as Christians to interact, initiate, and implement the gospel in their local community. This DMIN action intervention necessitates that the pastor constantly preaches grace, forgiveness, love, and discipleship and favors others above self, employing illustrations from biblical narratives. The pastor also repeatedly preached on discipleship, saying if one is not bearing their cross, denying self and the world, they cannot be a disciple of Christ.

One timid lady throughout this DMIN action started singing in the music ministry and giving free haircuts once a month to the less fortunate. Her parents said the preaching motivated her to overcome her timidity and serve the Lord in her community. The receptive Christians who heeded the messages, applying them to their walk, matured in their faith tremendously. Also, soon after this DMIN action, a teacher-led two young ladies to the Lord.

### *The Third Biblical Fundamental Truth*

The third fundamental truth is to unite the Church through repentance. The necessity of repentance is often overlooked and can divide a congregation. A repentant Church seeks God's

will, while an unrepentant Church seeks its own. This DMIN action implied that the Church and those in leadership needed to grasp the impact and significance of repentance. The pastor taught the Church and leadership the power and fundamentals of repentance. Rather than being hardened by pride like the congregation when the current administration arrived, the pastor knew that true repentance would unite MWBC; therefore, he implemented an intervention fellowship revival to revive the Church at the onset of the DMIN action. The prophets, Christ, and the apostles began their interventions with repentance. There will perpetually be a spirit of pride in the Church if leadership and the congregation refuse to repent of their views, opinions, and traditions. This DMIN model orchestrated a Fellowship Weekend Revival (FWR) to have the members preach to their selves, sharing their imperfections, vulnerabilities, and testimonies of deliverance. The pastor wrote thirteen short sermons about the life of Simon Peter. In each one, the devotional revealed a shortcoming in the life of Peter; then, the speaker would share a personal story where they, like Peter, have fallen short in their life. If it were not for the Lord, they would be hopelessly lost or in a terrible position. This action was the foundation stone for the congregation. Virtually everyone who came to the FWR, which lasted for seventeen hours in three days, had tears in their eyes at some point; about seventy percent of the congregation attended the revival. The revival broke the congregation's hearts for one another, and the Spirit of the Lord revived the Church creating a union like never before.

Stanley's second catalyst is private disciplines. Repentance of a church is both public and private. Public because the Church understands they need to repent as a body, but private because this action occurs through intimate prayer. An example from Scripture is when the nation of Israel repents. God says, in, Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they

shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

After this, Scripture says that all families mourn apart from each other. Even though the nation is repenting together, it is still private, for they mourn and repent apart from one another.

Through the FWR, the MWBC weep together, worshipped, repented, and revived.

#### *The Fourth Biblical Fundamental Truth*

The fourth fundamental truth is steadfastness in the faith. MWBC did not just repent and revive at the FWR but remained steadfast in their devotions to Christ. Since MWBC genuinely adhered to the call of repentance through unswerving faith, the Church stabilized and generated a constructive witness in the community through this DMIN outreach. The Church of Corinth, John Mark, who penned the gospel of Mark, and the apostle Paul all recaptured their prestige because of a steadfast commitment to the Lord after genuine repentance. Repentance and steadfastness are of the utmost importance for resolving a stigma in the community. MWBC repented and stayed the course thus far, effectively reaching many in the community who now hold MWBC in a new light.

#### *The Fifth Biblical Fundamental Truth*

The fifth fundamental truth is being obedient to the Scriptures. Essentially, the leadership of the Church and the congregation ascertain to be subservient to the Scriptures above opinions, emotions, and church policies. In His ministry, Jesus dealt with this issue frequently. In many synagogues (Jewish churches), Jesus taught and preached, and they clung to their traditions, disobeying His words. Jesus said in Mark 7:8, "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men. . ." and in verse 13, He adds saying, "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition . . ." Traditions in the synagogues was a deep-seated issue



that Jesus and the apostles probed. They had limited success in many territories since the spiritual leaders were inclined to obey traditions above Scripture. The pastor or elder can only reveal in love the contradictions between the Bible and the policies and pragmatics of the denomination by pointing them out in Scripture. Those surveyed and interviewed and a few deacons desired to follow the Bible (God's Holy Word). MWBC should only use the bylaws and church policy when guidance from the Scriptures is ambiguous.

#### *The Sixth Biblical Fundamental Truth*

The sixth fundamental truth is creating church fellowship. Strengthening the bond between a church and its members through implementing fellowship programs and group activities is crucial for a church to heal and become healthy. Scripture teaches that the Church should possess an alternate community (Acts 2:42-47; II Cor 6:14-18). Having an alternate community is vital to the health of any church. Regular dinners, movie nights, and small group study nights are enjoyable activities for the Church. Since every congregation differs, the tailored ideas of the DMIN action suit the needs of MWBC. It is vital for the Church to participate in activities regularly for the Church's health. Incorporating this in the Church was as straightforward as taking it to the church leadership and then having the pastor and leadership announce and advertise it to the congregation (if any administration refuses this type of action, then the Church needs new management). The idea was to attempt to get other churches in the association to do likewise so the churches could compete against one another in activities, such as softball, volleyball, or even cornhole. Having an alternate Christian community in activities would have been a blessing for all churches who participated because the activities would have been in Christian fellowship in a place where everyone had the same worldview, but sadly not one appeared to be interested. They are eighteen other churches in the Immanuel association,

but none picked up on it. A church close in proximity was asked but did not seem interested. The DOM was asked about his thoughts and to share, but he did not appear to be interested either. Therefore, the pastor strongly suggested to the Church the importance of being in a Christian community which caused several to come up with ideas to make a Christian community among the members.

A men's breakfast fellowship commenced, and a men's fellowship Bible study. The ladies also started a prayer and share night in which they used ice breaker questions to start conversations about how God works in each of their lives. The teen-teacher also has the teens extremely busy presenting movie nights and helping at game time in the new Kid's Night program that began at the onset of the DMIN action. After two years and five months, a new Kid's Night program commenced, and several went through the community in the Church van on multiple occasions, passing out flyers and having special events to build a foundation. The Kid's Night program was a tremendous success. The Kid's program went from zero kids to averaging about forty children weekly. A church that meets endlessly to discuss problems causes problems, but a church that meets for dinner, games, movies, or study makes a joyful church, and the Lord's joy is the Church's strength (Neh 8:10).

#### *The Seventh Biblical Fundamental Truth*

The seventh fundamental truth is community interaction. Community interaction should be among the Church's highest priorities. Stanley's model lists his third catalyst as a personal ministry: interaction with the community through ministry. When the Church is healthy, evangelizing the neighborhood is the Church's vocation. A well-organized church serves the community by effectively sharing the gospel, which is the hope and commandment of Christ. MWBC interacted with the community in various ways such as benevolence to the underprivileged, free yard sale, bake sale, dinner-

sings, food pantry, community dinners, housing ministry, and assisting the local volunteer fire department in activities that will facilitate honoring them, having a First Responders Day. The efficacy of these reciprocity actions caused MWBC to interact with the community effectively.

MWBC became a more spiritually mature and joyful congregation sharing their faith in genuine Christian love, overwhelming much of the stigma in the community from previous ministries. Considering and orchestrating many ideas and putting them into action enabled involvement by the entire congregation of MWBC. Stanley's last two catalysts do not fit this DMIN action research. The recipe for implementing this model is achieved through the following nineteen steps.

### **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

Twelve weeks was the duration of the implementation of this nineteen-step intervention, with a couple of weeks of preparation and a couple of weeks of data collection. The entire process took about four months. The performing execution of each step was considering the historicity of MWBC; therefore, this model may need tweaking to suit each specific body.

Step 1. The first step was a personal revival from the pastor or whoever implements this DMIN model. To properly implement this DMIN action, personal revival is of the utmost importance and the initiation of the action itself. The pastor spent about ten days in personal commitment in alone time with God through prayer, study, and meditation. The pastor felt a refreshing and cleansing of the soul before attempting to implement the model of this DMIN action project. The Spiritual leader must be spiritual to lead in a Godly fashion. After spending much time in prayer, studying, and preparing for this DMIN action research, the pastor felt sanctified and was ready to implement this DMIN model.

Step 2. Step two was recruiting church members to participate in this DMIN action project. This process was accomplished during the ten days of sanctification by the pastor and before the twelve-week intervention began. Only members of MWBC participated in this DMIN action research. Every participant was an active church member for the best results. Otherwise, it would lead to statistical error giving the surveys, interviews, and Likert scale to members who were not steadfast with regular attendance. To rigorously evaluate this DMIN action research, one must be steadfast in the Church.

The members of MWBC who were chosen and participated in this DMIN action research were Spiritual members who have been a part of the Church for several years and have the Church's best interest in mind. Every participant was a church member who actively served MWBC, which produced the best results. Everyone asked agreed to participate, demonstrating that all participants were seeking the betterment of the Church.

Step 3. Presenting Church visions or goals to leadership, the participants of this action, and the congregation. The desired outcome of this DMIN action research vision and goals were presented to leadership in a deacon's meeting, to the participants of this action in a personal conference, and to the congregation on multiple occasions from the pulpit. The pastor has frequently delineated the importance of solid biblical Church governance to the Church and the deacon board. The congregation has repeatedly been asked from the pulpit to evangelize the community letting their light shine, especially during church events. The objective goals of the DMIN action were the maturity of leadership, and congregation, which were necessary for resolving the church stigma. At the end of this DMIN action, Likert scales were given to the deacons for personal evaluation (see appendix A), and twelve members took a Likert scale evaluating the Church's maturity as a body (see appendix B). The congregation also evangelized

in the community to receive current feedback on MWBC's perception in the community to determine if they effectively reached the community through this DMIN project. As a result of interfacing with the Church in the community, the congregation developed results based on input provided by their interaction.

Step 4. Before agreeing to participate in this DMIN action research, all participants agreed to be honest for the best results. MWBC needs a biblically-based program that works effectively and efficiently through the leadership of the Paraclete. It was explained to the participants that if this DMIN action research does not bring about the desired spiritual results, something new must be constructed; therefore, honesty is of the utmost importance for accurate results.

After agreeing to participate in this DMIN action, all contributing agreed to seek the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit to make MWBC a more biblically-led congregation. Pursuing guidance from the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit is crucial because if God is not in this research action, then the results are irrelevant. The objective has always been to build a Spiritual Church in the Mineral Wells community, not an attractive clubhouse.

Step 5. All participating in this DMIN action were given a consent form before participating in this DMIN action project (see Appendix C). Each individual understood and signed a consent form before participating in the DMIN research action.

Step 6. There was a selective sampling survey of eleven people with one alternate at the beginning of this DMIN action project (see appendix D). The twelve people were active, steadfast members of the Church. This DMIN action instructed the participants to observe the model's implementation for the post-DMIN survey questions after completing the pre-DMIN survey. Their assessment pertains to their personal evaluation of the efficacy of the DMIN

research action. Based on their personal observation and assessment, they all answered and described the efficacy of this DMIN action in their own words and opinions.

Step 7. There was an interview of twelve people with one alternate at the beginning of this DMIN action (see Appendix E). Those selected for the interviews were long-term spiritually mature members of MWBC except for the alternate. The alternate has attended MWBC for about five years and is a spiritual Christian but has only been a member for almost two years. This project intentionally wanted to interview spiritually mature people who have been at the Church for several years and understand the historicity of MWBC because they understood the situation of the stigma in the community better than anyone else. This person was selected because he is a faithful witness for MWBC who has had some negative feedback. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to enlighten him concerning the stigma situation in the community.

The recordings of the interviews are on an iPhone with a passcode protecting them and keeping them confidential. During the recordings, the questions turned into discussions causing the interviewees to become surprisingly inquisitive and involved with this DMIN action project. They were interviewed at the beginning of the implementation of this model, then reinterviewed at the end of this DMIN action research to describe in their own words the efficacy of this DMIN action.

Step 8. Presenting a clean and respectable church to the community both outwardly and inwardly. The deacon recently ordained as a minister is exceptionally detailed and hard-working. He gathered several members to clean the outside of the Church, paint the activity building blocks, clean the steeple, and replace a water heater and furnace in the church

basement. He also recommended resealing the parking lot, and after several estimates, MWBC chose the company that agreed to a deal for a double resealing.

The outside of the Church now looks immaculate, and the inside feels as welcoming as being at someone's grandmother's house. MWBC held a church workday starting this action and another about a month later, inviting all members to participate in facilitating keeping the Church looking nice. Also, the pastor sought out a few specific individuals who have kind, outgoing personalities to show genuine love on the inside to all visitors and give them gift bags and take their personal information. The pastor had four members who had exceptional kindness to be greeters. One is a door greeter who hands bulletins to all who come in. Another greeter makes complimentary gift bags for all new visitors. The third greeter finds people who have recent achievements, sicknesses, or some type of event in their life, whether they are a member or not, and does something special for them, such as sending them a card or buying them a thoughtful gift. The fourth greeter looks for people who have missed a few services and calls or visits them to see if there is a problem and if the Church may assist them in some way. The pastor repetitively preached that the Church should place immense value on being hospitable to the visitors. Still, the four chosen were the overseers retrieving their data and giving them gifts.

Step 9. Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats the church faces and present them to the leadership. Twelve members took a Likert scale to determine the greatest Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat that MWBC is currently facing (see Appendix F). The SWOT Likert scale results were presented to leadership. The results were conferred to leadership because it is not a message for the congregation. The pastor and elders, or whatever administration a church has, are to be the Church's leaders and feed the flock (I Pet 5:1-3) and not burden the congregation with problems they should solve. The current information suggests

that the strength of the Church is the loving and growing congregation, the weakness of the Church is its government, the opportunity of the Church is winning back the neighborhood, and the threat of the Church is stagnation through mediocre leadership that does not lead the flock to green pastures. The SWOT Likert scale results were given to the deacon board at the onset of this project, illustrating the condition of how the members perceive MWBC.

Step 10. Fellowship Weekend Revival (FWR). This action involved a seventeen-hour three-day revival for the Church through several volunteers; therefore, there was much preparation for this event. Thirteen devotionals were written and formatted so one may implement and interweave their testimony through their discourse. The thirteen devotionals examined the life of Simon Peter since so many believers can relate to his often shortcomings and interweave their testimony to that of the apostle. The structure of the devotional concentrated on repentance. As discussed in the model, Church unity through repentance is the starting point of Church maturity. A devotion every hour by a church member who gives a testimony appended to the devotional. Friday's services served snacks and dinner to all attending the FWR. Saturday started with breakfast in the morning and a small dinner in the evening, and Sunday, there was a church dinner to finish the FWR.

They were seven members who needed to serve food, five members required for music, thirteen members were needed for devotionals, and guests for the special singing. Thirteen members to prepare devotionals with personal testimonies. This DMIN action employed the FWR for three days after vigorously promoting it at the onset of this project. Five hours on Friday, eight hours on Saturday, and four hours on Sunday. They were singing, devotionals, testimonies, and fellowship every hour. The thirteen members doing a devotional made themselves vulnerable by implementing their testimony in their homily. The FWR was in the



activity building, where interaction with much fellowship and food took place. The congregation sang songs together virtually every hour. A devotional by a member coming out of their comfort zone was also hourly, with the congregant giving testimony during a devotional. They were special singing and a spiritual reading every hour. Sometimes this process took longer than an hour because some devotionals and testimonies were longer than others. Also, other congregants stood at times, adding how their testimony related to the devotion or the person giving the devotional. The FWR action intended to revive the Church through repentance and vulnerability and was successful.

Step 11. The congregation has experienced much growth in grace, love, and forgiveness but lacks maturity in some areas. Therefore, preaching the gospel was focused on maturing and edifying the congregation through messages that convict the heart. MWBC was taught and understand the magnitude of personal growth through an intimate relationship with God through prayer, Bible, and meditation. Preaching to the Church through the authority of the Scriptures influences the congregation immensely to follow Christ and resolve their immaturity, leading them to pursue the community in love to repair the stigma issue.

The congregation experienced much growth in grace, love, and forgiveness. For twelve weeks, the pastor's preaching focused on convicting the congregation to maturity, discipleship, and edification in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. MWBC has and is still being taught the significance of personal growth through an intimate relationship with God through prayer, Bible, and repentance. This preaching to the Church has been successive concerning self-examination, purpose, and growth.

Step 12. Making an alternate community through fellowship, group activities, and studies was a goal of the DMIN action. Creating an alternate society is remarkably challenging and

performs much more effectively when several congregations participate and are engaged in this fellowship. The pastor contacted other churches and the DOM, recommending an alternate community where each congregation would have a softball, volleyball, or cornhole team. Still, other churches would not engage in this action. Therefore, the pastor focused his attention on the MWBC congregation and concentrated on church fellowship.

Church families that serve and worship together stay together, and the pastor attempted to make as many fellowship opportunities for the congregation as possible. There was at least one dinner every month after the morning worship service, but because of the events in this DMIN action, they were much more dinners that the congregation participated in throughout this project. There was a movie night that the teens hosted and now host about every six weeks on Sunday night, in which the Church takes up an offering for them. There were game nights and interaction through study groups and church services multiple times a month.

Throughout this DMIN action, the fellowship of MWBC was more frequent than any other time in the six years of ministry of this current ministration. There were several meetings with leadership concerning the future of the MWBC, discussions with those participating in the new Kids Night program, and meetings with most of the Church repeatedly to discuss how to implement the FWR. They were many studies between the pastor and the thirteen members doing devotions. Virtually every step of the DMIN action caused several positive meetings by a high percentage of the Church. The First Responder's Day, Easter egg hunt, game night, movie night, and car show, not to mention other DMIN actions and the regular meetings of the activities MWBC does, such as participating in a baby bottle ministry, homeless shelter, benevolence in the community, preparing for VBS, and meeting the need of those hurting in the Church to name a few. They have been game nights, prayer nights, and special meeting nights.

Step 13 Community interaction through a refreshed congregation commenced in the Mineral Wells community to combat and overcome the stigma of the Church. There were several events throughout the implementation of this DMIN action. On three separate occasions, MWBC advertised a food pantry for the community through the internet and church signs, and unexpectedly, a beautician in the Church offered free haircuts, which was an additional blessing.

The Church had two community dinner-sings. The dinner-sings advertisements came through flyers, church signs, and the internet. The dinner started at 6:00, and the singing started at 6:30. The gymnasium was filled with tables so the guest could eat and drink while enjoying the gospel music. Everything was free and accessible to the community. The first dinner-sing filled the gymnasium, but the second dinner-sing did not which only filled about half of the building. The shortcoming of the event was the fault of this DMIN action for scheduling the dinner-sing on the same day as graduation. No Church should schedule an outreach event on graduation night in a small town.

The Church had a two-day Rummage bake sale where virtually all items were free with a donation to the food pantry. All members of the Church brought donations for the Rummage sale. MWBC nearly filled the gym with nice clothes, golf clubs, car ramps, tools, crock pots, books, video game systems, and much more from the donations of its members. Everything was free except for valuable items, priced between ten and twenty dollars. This event lasted all day for two days. This two-day event brought in several hundred people through MWBC doors and assisted many in the community with good items, mostly free items. MWBC received several positive comments through this event. MWBC also produced a hot dog sale for the food pantry.

The hot dog prices were low, and they sold about four hundred hotdogs, not counting desserts, chips, and drinks.

MWBC promoted a free car show which had over eighty prizes. Everything was complimentary. The Church served complimentary hot dogs, chips, ice cream, and gifts throughout the show. MWBC had the musicians and singers sing for ten to fifteen minutes at three different intervals, and the pastor gave a devotion before the final grand prizes. Several hundred from the community came to enjoy the free car show, and it was an incredibly joyful day. The parking lot, the community building's parking lot, and the grassy areas around the Church were full of beautiful show cars. The local barbershop, doctor's office, and the grassy area of the community building allowed us to use their property for pedestrian parking. Moreover, and surprisingly, the local veterinarian's office donated one hundred dollars to this event when asked if some of their parking areas were usable in case of overflow.

MWBC had a first responder day to honor those who serve in the Mineral Wells and surrounding communities. The Church invited all local first responders to attend Church to be recognized for their service in the community, followed by a dinner to serve them. Flyers were circulated in the community and taken to each volunteer fire station in the local vicinity, the sheriff's office, and the local dispatch office. The implementation of other advertisements through signs and the internet assisted in the promotion of this event. A particular firefighter minister was invited and subsidized to preach, as were the special singers for their part in the service. MWBC provided a fellowship dinner in honor of all first responders after the service. This event took several volunteers in the Church to promote, advertise, and successfully serve dinner to a large group. This event brought the largest attendance in over seven years to the morning worship part of the service. The other events reached and brought much more people in

the community to MWBC, but this event was unique because it was during the morning worship service with dinner following.

The Church helped the community center with its needs by providing free parking for them and the doctor's office next door. MWBC also sealed the community building's parking lot for free when MWBC recoated their lot. MWBC changed its community building rules allowing the utilization of its facilities to the community at no cost.

Someone oversaw and kept the Church informed about community events, which kept MWBC actively involved in the community. The Church sought to be involved in community events, such as parades, fundraisers for the local fire department, upkeep of the local community building, and the like. Surprisingly, the Church placed first in the non-commercial float section of the parade. MWBC interacted with the community in various ways, such as benevolence funding to the underprivileged in the community if needed (rent, water, electricity), a church baby shower for baby supplies to disperse into the community for single parents, housing ministry, and assisting the community (clothes, laundry detergent, and other household items).

MWBC had an Awana program that was in a downward spiral. Pre-covid, Awana was the only area in the Church that was not improving, and many thought it was because of the Awana commander, who was often at odds with people when he did not get his way. When covid began, he suggested taking a break from Awana, whose average attendance was about twelve to fifteen children on Wednesday nights. During covid, the Awana commander left the Church, and covid was harsh in Wood County then; it was time to start a new Awana year; therefore, many of the elderly Awana teachers felt that it was unsafe to restart Awana. MWBC went two years and five months without an Awana program or any type of service for the children on

Wednesday nights. After two years and five months without a children's service, it was official that there was no longer a children's program at the Church.

MWBC interacted with the community through evangelism and events to initiate a new children's program named Kid's Night. On several occasions, members went through the community in the church van with flyers and gift bags for children to commence a new children's program called Kid's Night. MWBC advertised a community Easter egg hunt service through signs, word of mouth, flyers, and the internet. MWBC provided free Easter eggs with candy and prizes for the egg hunt, pizza, chips, and drinks. It was a service where the children and parents could eat and enjoy the service together while mingling with the members of MWBC. MWBC subsequently promoted a community game night with commercial inflatables and pizza for the children, which filled the gymnasium. Tables were also out so that parents could stay, eat, and enjoy watching their children play, which was the goal; that way, members of the Church could mingle with them and invite them and their children to start attending MWBC's services.

The congregation was active in the community, engaged in the events designed by this DMIN action project, and gently invited people to Church. The pastor repeatedly spoke of the power of one's testimony and preached sermons about sharing one's faith through personal testimony. He stressed in his sermons that Jesus told the man healed of the legion, go home, and tell people the good things God has done, and all wondered at his testimony. The pastor instructed the congregation to share their faith by sharing a personal testimony. The congregation was taught not to beat people over the head with Scripture but simply bear witness to others by sharing personal testimonies and salvation experiences, which is how Jesus teaches

believers to share one's faith. Of course, he also taught them how to lead one to Christ if someone desired to be saved.

Step 14. Involvement through personal ministry. The pastor and this DMIN action have consistently enunciated the essentialness of participation in ministry. To mature as a Christian, one needs to either get involved in a current ministry in the Church or start a new ministry to aid in serving the community in Christ's name. Preaching on personal ministries has undeniably impacted the congregation. Involvement through personal ministry is necessary for maturing a congregation and producing a thriving church. Through this DMIN action research, the pastor regularly encouraged the congregation to get involved, if not in one of the Church's ministries, then start a new ministry, which the Church may help support and be a part of, but do not be idle. Involvement was highly encouraged so that the entire congregation would be involved in reaching the community and correcting the stigma of the Church. The Church had over eighty percent involvement in the DMIN project.

Step 15. This DMIN action gave a Likert scale of five questions to twelve members concerning the growth, church involvement, community activity, and maturity of the MWBC congregation (see Appendix B). The pastor gave the surveyors this Likert scale after the implementation of this DMIN model was complete.

Step 16. This DMIN action surveyed the same people for their opinions on the positive, negative, or neutral effects of this DMIN research action to gather results (see Appendix H). Everyone that participated, including the alternate, once again took the surveys. Since there was no need for a replacement, the results will show the effects of twelve surveyors instead of eleven.

Step 17. This DMIN action interviewed the same people for their opinions on the positive, negative, or neutral effects of this DMIN research action to gather results (see Appendix I). All the participants, as well as the alternate, were reinterviewed. Just as in the surveys, the results will demonstrate the effects of twelve interviewees instead of eleven because there was no need for a backup interviewer.

Step 18. As part of this DMIN action research, all persons attending MWBC were asked to evangelize the community through one of the events mentioned or by some other means. The congregation was encouraged to give feedback to the pastor in writing or in person to be recorded, analyzed, and evaluated statistically. The members of MWBC volunteered and participated in all events this DMIN action promoted with feedback from the community resulting from their witnessing for the Church.

Step 19. Edifying the deacon board of MWBC through a Bible study that teaches that Jesus is the head/authority of the Church. The pastor and deacon board have governed the Church for about three years, but the bylaws stipulate that the laity governs the Church. The bylaws, church policies, and traditions have long controlled MWBC with minimal biblical corrections; therefore, the pastor presented a wide range of Scriptures to the deacon board, highlighting how God governed Israel and the early Church through Elders and His Word. He taught the deacons the difference between a bishop, elders, and deacons, which are the three ordained positions in the Church according to Scripture (I Tim 3:1-7; 3:8-13; Tit 1:5-9). He also taught them that God's Word, not the bylaws, is the authority in the Church, or Christ is just the savior of the Church and not its Lord. Christ must have authority in the Church to be its Lord.

The pastor stressed to the deacon board that if the Church is laity-led or led by a Deacon board through bylaws and church policies instead of Scripture, then Jesus is not the head of that



Church. The bylaws, church policies, and traditions should only be necessary when applicable and not when the Scriptures are unambiguous. Otherwise, the bylaws, policies, and traditions have the authority of the Church instead of Christ and Lord over the congregation's faith (II Cor 1:24; I Pet 5:1-3). Christ is the Word and head of the Church, not bylaws and Church policies. The pastor gave numerous Scriptures that teach about the Church's authority elucidating that elders are to rule the body under the Word of God (see Appendix G).

The process of this step was supposed to take approximately three weeks, but the head deacon deliberately tried to hinder this process. He postponed and canceled the scheduled meetings on four separate occasions. Therefore, this action did not meet the scheduled standard, and the results were extremely late. However, the pastor was persistent and did lecture the deacons on three separate occasions, providing them with literature illustrating the Church's authority. Teaching from biblically-based literature that expounds on a hierarchy (elder ruled) governed Church. This teaching is crucial for MWBC because mediocre leadership has led the Church into a downward spiral over the past fifteen years. If the leaders do not understand how to govern the Church from Scripture, then popular vote, opinions, and cliques will dictate the Church, which in times past caused the stigma that the Church currently occupies. God commands that his precepts govern the congregation and what is right in His eyes and not what is right in the eyes of the congregation (Deu 6:18; 12:8, 25; 13:18). During the times of the judges, Israel backslid and became subjugated unto their enemies seven times until they repented, and God sent deliverance. During this time, the people governed themselves by what was right in their own eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

Church authority through a hierarchy of knowledgeable elders who are enabled to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all sound doctrine is the philosophy of this DMIN action. Even

if that is not the reader's view, it is essential to note that this congregation and deacon board were extremely uneducated in Scripture, carnal in laity-led actions, and in desperate need of genuine Spiritual guidance. At the inauguration of this ministry, MWBC's perception by the DOM and Immanuel Baptist association was of a Spiritual nursery. This stigma was more than in the community; it was also among the eighteen Churches making up the association. Though the Church has come a long way, they are still not mature enough to make Spiritual decisions without an influential spiritual leader, and two brothers on the deacon board who love to have the preeminence are biblically uneducated and have no business in the Church governing process. Therefore, this DMIN action seeks to pave the way to set up a Spiritual presbytery to manage MWBC.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Introduction

MWBC successfully implemented the DMIN action project, alleviating much of the stigma the Church occupied. At the FWR, MWBC revived, repented, and energetically through ten outreach activities in the community, validated the love of Christ they enjoy as they aspire to manifest the image of Jesus into the Mineral Wells community. MWBC desired to be the gospel and take that gospel to the community by hosting these events at the Church at their own cost. Virtually all ten outreach activities were successful. Some of the activities were three food pantries which successfully gave out close to a hundred food boxes to the less fortunate in the community, with one of the members (a licensed hairstylist giving free haircuts). MWBC's car show was likewise a success, with many in the community placing their cars in the show. They were over a hundred cars in the show, and well over two hundred enjoyed this event. MWBC provided about four hundred complimentary hotdogs at the concession stand to any who came to the event, with chips, drinks, and snow cones. A charity box for the food pantry collected over nine hundred dollars. The rummage sale donations from MWBC members filled the entire activity building gymnasium, and the sale lasted all day Friday and Saturday. All items were free with a donation, and the community generously gave over thirty-six hundred dollars that benefitted the food pantry and hospitality committee. Over five hundred people from the community and the surrounding area came to this event.

One member proposed that MWBC should include a bake sale for any in the community that might want to participate in a baby ministry project, which raises funding for baby clothes, diapers, formula, and single parents. Items were donated to help start a baby ministry called "baby steps." Several boxes of diapers, formula, and clothes were donated, and over fourteen

hundred dollars to get this ministry started. The baby steps ministry immediately assisted four families in need. MWBC had a free dinner-sing, which crowded the Church filling the entire gymnasium, and allowed MWBC members to manifest their love for many in the community. Sadly, the scheduling of the second dinner sing was on graduation night in a small town; therefore, it did not produce the same results as the first event. MWBC also assisted the local fire department in a first responder day honoring all who make the sacrifice to serve the community every day, which was a tremendous success and hopefully the start of a new tradition. The Church had about thirty visitors that came that morning because of this event. For a church under a hundred, this is a successful event having over a hundred in attendance that morning. The Church had more attend this service than they did the Easter service. MWBC provided a community Easter egg hunt for the new Kid's Night program and, a month later, a pizza game night for the children and their parents to enjoy together. Both of these events brought in fifty-plus children and their parents.

MWBC also served in other areas besides communal events. MWBC coated the paved parking they always allow the community building to use. They also paid for and sealed the community building section for free, which was a great blessing to the overseers of the community building. The pastor also strongly suggested that MWBC start allowing the community to use MWBC's facilities freely, which was a rule change—allowing free use of MWBC facilities brought in a couple, which led them to join the Church.

This DMIN analysis yielded positive results. Though most acknowledged that the Church had a stigma obstacle from prior ministries and unchristian behavior by some in the Church, the community interaction gave MWBC a new light through the outreach of this DMIN action. The stigma may still be there by some in the community, but not nearly to the extent it previously

was. According to the surveyors, everybody concurred that they were many improvements in the Church and community. The interviews were likewise strikingly constructive. The spiritually mature long-term church members were enthusiastic to see actions implemented in the community that brought positive attention to MWBC. After all the negativism over the years and dealing with the battered embarrassing reputation, several were eager to embark on this journey. Four people asserted that if the Church maintained this action long-term, MWBC would be better than ever.

### **Methodology Implementation Results**

Step 1. The pastor sensed God's presence leading him as he implemented this DMIN action research. Before inaugurating the methodology of this DMIN action, he felt an intimacy with God that he had not experienced in some time. The Scripture says in James 4:8, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." The pastor did draw near to God and felt the leading of the Spirit throughout this DMIN action project.

Step 2. When recruiting the surveyors and interviewees, the goal was to identify the most dependable, mature, and steadfast members of the congregation who sought the betterment of the Church. Each participant asked to engage in this DMIN action research agreed after making prayer and introspection. When they heard and understood all this DMIN project was going to implement, they were excited and overwhelmed, thinking that it might be too much in such a short time. Nevertheless, they were enthusiastic because several previous pastors, according to some, discussed making changes to ameliorate the Church's activity and reputation in the community but did not follow up on them. They appeared excited to see this many events and outreach into the Mineral Wells community. Each participant became much more emotionally

involved in the welfare of the Church after hearing the DMIN action plan for MWBC, so these results were positive.

Step 3. Presenting the goals to the Church began eminently favorable and continued to be optimistic for virtually all of the Church until the end of the project. Everyone in the Church desired more interaction in the community and a better reputation. Several in the Church also wanted changes in church authority, more freedom to serve the Church without strict bylaws overriding everything, and for the Church's government to be more biblical. Once two deacons realized that some leadership changes were needed, they were distraught, especially the head deacon. The Church continued the excitement and changes that this DMIN action brought to MWBC, which met many goals.

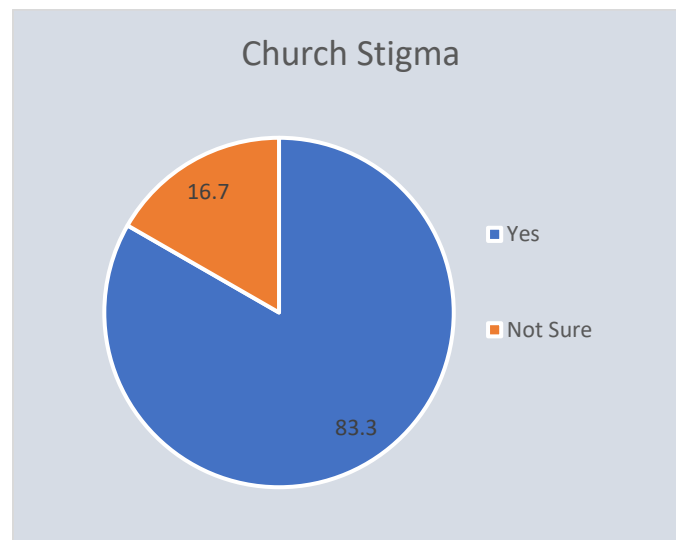
Step 4. The participants were advised to be honest, led by God, and biblical in their participation. This DMIN action assured the participants that the meetings were confidential and that they could freely express their apprehensions and viewpoints. All the participants surprisingly and audaciously spoke the truth, leaving their comfort zone, which revealed that they genuinely entrusted this DMIN action to deliver positive results to MWBC. These results were strikingly beneficial because many solid members who are reserved voiced their opinions about matters that have perplexed them for years and their current concerns. The impact of surveying and interviewing those who cooperated in this DMIN action project was encouraging. The relationship and trustworthiness created with those participating were reverent because several surveyed and interviewed will assist in many of the actions. Every pastor of a small church should take the time to consult their congregation better to understand their thoughts, feelings, and desires.

Step 5. In this step, everyone participating in this action received a consent form to read and agree to before this DMIN action commenced. Those taking part in this project were incredibly trusting of the DMIN action and consented with hardly any questions.

Steps 6. Step six initiates the Pre-DMIN Survey.

Pre-DMIN Survey

1. Do you feel like MWBC possesses a stigma in the community?



In response to this question, eighty-three percent claimed the Church had a stigma in the community. The other sixteen percent answered that they were unsure because they are not active in the community, even though they have lived in Mineral Wells for years. Their inactivity is due to them relocating for employment and working many hours; therefore, they have not had much interaction in the Mineral Wells community to know the gossip in the immediate area. Surveyor seven specified that many have left the Church on a sour note throughout the years and continued gossiping about the Church. Surveyor ten indicated that the Church possesses a stigma because of previous ministries. However, the Church is different today, yet some in the community still behave as if they would not attend the Church. Surveyor

eight replied that the stigma exists and prevails among the elderly in the community, but not the younger crowd. Surveyor twelve believes that the deacons have gone by a double standard in the Church for years, causing many to leave and gossip about the Church.

2. How would you rate the leadership of the MWBC? Pastor and deacons.

Surveyor one remarked that there have been and still are problems in the leadership, but they are many improvements too. Surveyor two mentioned that they think the heart of leadership at MWBC is excellent but calls for improvement. Surveyor three explained that some leaders (two in particular) lack maturity, people skills, flexibility, and grace when interacting with people. Surveyor four believes that leadership is good-hearted but lacks solidarity. Surveyor five is pleased with leadership but still believes that it lacks unanimity. Surveyor six suggested that the leadership in the Church is good, but the deacons should be more active and engaged with the families of the Church. Surveyor seven is dissatisfied with the deacons and claims they have had too much power in the Church and overstep their authority. Surveyor eight expressed that they did not know enough about what the deacons were doing to judge but thought that the pastor had helped the Church to be more biblical. Surveyor nine says that the leadership at MWBC works hard but encounters some uncalled-for opposition. Surveyor ten believes that the administration has virtuous motives but putting those intentions into positive action is not easy for them as a group. Surveyor eleven believes that MWBC has some good leadership but not all. Surveyor twelve believes that the Church should follow the pastor and that the deacons have no authority to rescind him in his decisions unless he unbiblically manages the Church.

There are many opinions about the Church's leadership, but they were one common denominator: leadership is not where it needs to be. All the men want to see MWBC succeed,



but few are biblical uneducated and wish to follow a broken system that created the stigma in the first place. Therefore, this DMIN action is using Scripture to edify them in the knowledge of God and disclosing to them that this Church is the Lord's and His Word should be the authority. This process continues even after this DMIN action has finished.

3. Do you feel like MWBC is growing spiritually?

One hundred percent of participants agreed that MWBC is spiritually growing because of biblically based teachings and a lucid vision. For several, this is the best quality the Church possesses because if the preaching is not sound, then it does not matter what else is working.

The congregation is full of amazing people, but in past years they were not spiritual and were meeting at least twice a month, attempting to guide the Church via openly discussing every problem of the Church. MWBC lacked the spirituality to govern appropriately, and the leaders were also lacking in this area, which caused frustration, bread politics, and formed a cliquish congregation. The pastor took away the meetings and spoke to the deacons about how it was the job of leadership to bear the Church's burdens and let the sheep feed. Therefore, about three years ago, the pastor had the Church quit having all their meetings except four a year, presenting the personnel for the upcoming years, and voting on those filling the position the following month. Then an annual budget meeting in November and a vote to accept the proposed budget in December. After this, the pastor asked the hospitality committee to step it up with snacks before Sunday School and regular dinners, which eventually took away the cliques of the congregation. The Church has been governed by the pastor and deacon board for the past three years. Since then, the Church has grown tremendously in unity and spirituality, which is why all those surveyed see and believe that MWBC is spiritually growing. They are no

Church politics, and the congregation now meets for worship, biblical-based teaching, and times of fellowship, which has transformed the Church.

4. Has the Church improved since you became a member of MWBC?

One hundred percent of surveyors maintain that the Church is improving but has not continuously improved. Surveyor three stated that MWBC seemed great for the first couple of years he and his family attended but started declining many years after. MWBC is recovering and building back, but not where it was many years ago regarding attendance and prominence in the community. When MWBC commenced declining, the services were spiritual, but the meetings were carnal. Many in the business meetings were either searching for fault or seeking to procure authority in the Church. It is picking up better because many problematic members have left the Church. Surveyor six claims church improvements have been up and down over the years, but MWBC is in a better place now than it has been in a long while—surveyors seven and eight express that MWBC has been improving, especially recently.

An immature congregation meeting at least twenty-four times a year brought a roller coaster effect to the congregation. Though the Church was filled with predominantly loving people, the meeting kept strife and divisions in the Church. The present ministry is biblically-based and engenders no respect for persons' egalitarian approach to ministry. The current pastor intensely teaches grace, love, and forgiveness as fruits of salvation, and that one may realize that they are saved by how much they love their brethren (I John 3:14). Before each of the four business meetings, the pastor read Ecclesiastes 5:1-2. After reading the text, he says anything someone adds or voices in the business meeting of the Lord's Church should be biblical or spiritual, or it is offering the sacrifice of a fool. The Church is the body of Christ and the house

of the Lord. Several quit attending the business meetings simply because the pastor would not tolerate debating in the sanctuary, which immediately brought much peace to the Church.

5. Would you speak positively about MWBC and invite people to attend?

One hundred percent of surveyors said they would speak positively about MWBC and encourage others to attend. Several have stated they frequently witness for the Lord and the Church in the community, bragging on how far the Church has come and the strong bond it now occupies.

MWBC has gone through a period of revitalization for years, and the present congregation is particularly well pleased with the direction MWBC is currently moving. Changing the business meeting from twenty-four to four meetings a year and having the pastor and deacons manage the Church problems behind closed doors has allowed the congregation to focus on being a Church instead of a government.

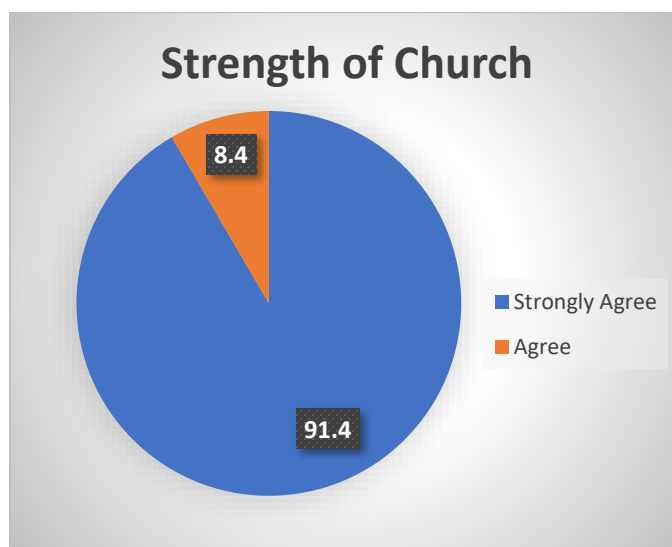
Step 7. Step seven is another Pre-DMIN Action, which is the SWOT Likert Scale.

The surveyors received a Likert scale to answer questions regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of MWBC. Based upon the observation of the ongoing ministry and the research of this DMIN action project, it is presumed that the bulk of the Church believes its best strength is its present, loving, and graceful congregation. MWBC's greatest weakness is the bylaws that govern the Church, which produced mediocre leadership and a divided, immature congregation that contributed to the church stigma. The most significant opportunity for MWBC is to win back the Church's reputation in the community. The Church's greatest threat is reverting and regressing to a carnally disconnected congregation and governing style of previous ministries, which caused the stigma. The surveyors responded to a Likert

scale, answering the following four questions. The four questions have a follow-up question requesting their opinion if they did not strongly agree with the assumed statement.

Question 1. The strength of MWBC is its loving and flourishing in grace congregation.

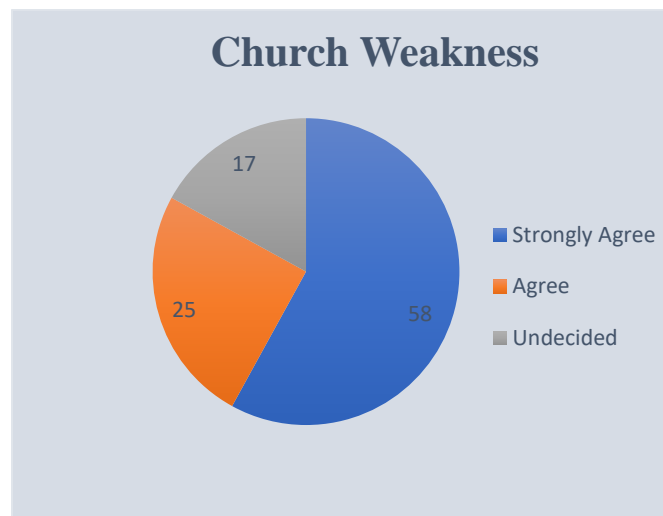
5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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Almost ninety-two percent agreed that the loving and affectionate congregation is the Church's strength, with merely eight percent disagreeing. The follow-up question asked to those who disagreed was, if you believe MWBC has a more substantial strength than its loving congregation, what strength would that be? Surveyor number four said, "the truth of the Gospel is preached in our church, which I believe is our greatest strength." Her statement may be more accurate because the gospel is the Church's backbone. Without the faithful preaching of the true gospel message, the Church is a clubhouse and not the Spirit-filled body of Christ. The surveyor adds, "we are growing in grace right now because that is what is being taught. We were weaker in that area in past ministries."

Question 2. The weakness of MWBC is the bylaws that govern the Church, which produced mediocre leadership and a divided, immature congregation that led to the church stigma.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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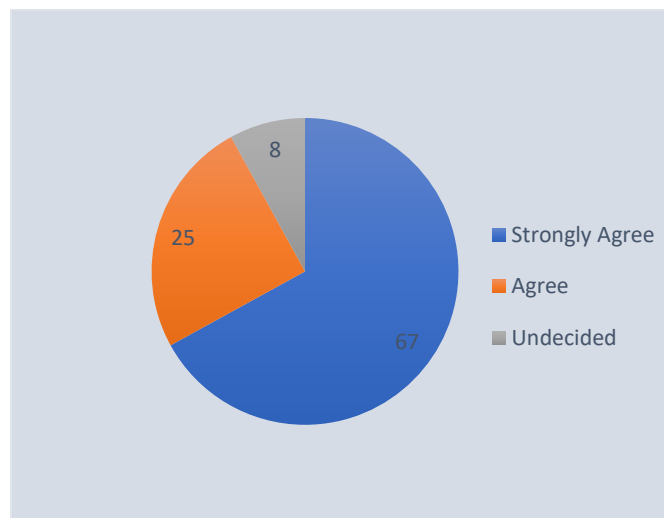
The surveyors did not extensively agree on the greatest weakness of MWBC. After answering the question on the Likert scale, this DMIN action asked what they believed was MWBC's most substantial weakness. One said they were unsure of the Church's most notable weakness. Surveyor four said, "I believe that the greatest weakness is that the church does not know enough about the Bible." Many people know more than enough but lack proper application of what they do know. Surveyor seven said that the deacons are the greatest weakness of MWBC. They usurp too much authority and power in the Church and govern by a double standard.

The pastor reviewing Church history and listening to complaints from previous ministries, unequivocally found that the bylaws with immature leaders allowed and caused this

stigma to both form and grow. For example, a preacher and youth leader in the Church was arrested for drugs on Friday, and two days later, the senior pastor asked him to preach the Sunday morning message. This event describes the maturity of the previous ministry, and the congregation, also extremely immature through laity-led bylaws, kept the Church from spiritually bonding. In light of prior knowledge and the history of MWBC, the pastor felt that immaturity of the Church through laity-led bylaws was the most significant weakness, and maybe some surveyed did not fully understand all this question was implying.

Question 3. The greatest opportunity that MWBC has is winning a holy reputation in the community.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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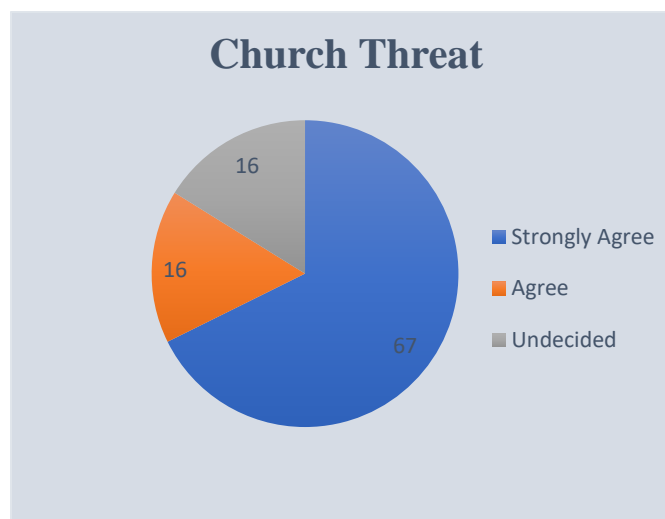
Two-thirds of the surveyors agreed that winning back the Church's reputation in the community was the greatest opportunity for MWBC. In the follow-up question, this DMIN action asked the surveyors what they believed was MWBC's best opportunity. Surveyor two

said, "I believe the greatest opportunity is to grow the kingdom of God, and it does not need to be limited to our community." Surveyor five said, "I believe winning lost souls is the church's greatest opportunity." Surveyor eleven, who faithfully attended MWBC for about five years, said she did not realize the Church's reputation was subpar and needed to win back its reputation. Although this surveyor is somewhat active in the Church, she has not lived many years in the community and does not hear any of the neighborhood gossip.

Agreeing with surveyors two and five that winning souls and growing the kingdom of God are of the utmost importance, but winning back the reputation in the community and overcoming the stigma that has plagued this Church must first be achieved to accomplish these goals on a grander scale. Winning back MWBC's prestige in the Mineral Wells community will enable the Church to win more souls and grow the kingdom of God

Question 4. The greatest threat to MWBC is inadequate leadership.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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Sixty-seven percent strongly agreed with this statement, and the rest simply agreed. The follow-up question to those that agreed was if you believe MWBC has a more significant threat, what threat would that be? Surveyor two said the most significant threat is "when man's opinions have more authority than God in the church" (which appears to be making a similar conclusion as the statement). Surveyor three said that the Church's greatest threat is when it is not governed biblically through love and unity. Surveyor five believes that pride and resistance to change will impede the Church, causing it to decline. Surveyor nine said that satan was the greatest threat to the Church, for he deceives the whole world (Rev 12:9) and the warfare of the Church is spiritual (Eph. 6:12). Surveyor twelve thought that hypocrisy is the greatest threat to the Church, which is an excellent deception from satan.

These answers all seem to be saying the same thing; anytime the Church is governed inadequately, it will cause a threat to the health of the Church.

Step 8. Step eight is the pre-DMIN interviews.

They were ten questions that the interviewees (INTVW) answered concerning their experience at MWBC. This step and these questions are essential because it allows the Church to express what they see, how they feel, and where they see the Church going.

1. What was your perception of MWBC before attending for the first time?

INTVW one, two, eleven, and twelve had no perception of MWBC before attending the first time. They were new to the community and did not have any acquaintances. INTVW three, four, five, and six had positive perceptions about MWBC when they came for the first time. They believed that MWBC was an active, thriving church. INTVW three and four began attending after the completion of the new activity building when the Church was also



experiencing growth in its youth program. Their granddaughter enjoyed the youth program, so they began attending regularly.

INTVW five was not from the Mineral Wells area. His mom and aunt moved to Mineral Wells and began attending MWBC, and a few years later, he moved to the Mineral Wells area. His mom and family came to MWBC; therefore, he had a good perception of the Church and started attending because of his family.

INTVW six was radically impressed by MWBC when she began attending. She has been at MWBC from the beginning. She was not a charter member but began attending MWBC soon after the charter members initiated the Church. She came from a formal church and was excited to be part of a new church that was loving, focused on Christ, and not entertainment.

INTVW seven, eight, and nine were concerned about the Church splits before attending for the first time. INTVW seven and eight knew that the two schisms were giving MWBC a deleterious name in the community before attending. Their Church also had split, and they felt like the pastor was not feeding them before he resigned and therefore began attending other churches. They went to several different churches before trying MWBC, but after several invitations on multiple occasions, they were surprised that they enjoyed attending MWBC.

2. Has your perception changed since you have been a member? If so, how?

This question was irrelevant for INTVW one, two, five, eleven, and twelve since they had no perception upon attending for the first time. INTVW three and four said their perceptions had changed over the years. It started optimistically, then negatively for years, and is now positive again.

INTVW six says she has been through it all. Both Church splits, problems with the pastor who had an affair, and so forth, but she noted MWBC has always had a core group that has remained solid and loving. Therefore, she believes her place is in MWBC.

INTVW seven, who began attending MWBC about fifteen years ago, believed that the Church was not very spiritual when they first started attending with their family and that it was more of a social thing. INTVW eight's perception of MWBC is currently positive. She said the Church is better now than it was in the last administration.

INTVW nine and ten began attending over five years ago and were surprised that MWBC was much more spiritual than they expected it to be. They said the biblically based sermons fed their souls much better than their previous Church. INTVW 10 says they quickly became involved in the Church, and now it feels like home.

Many explained that when they initially came to the Church, the services were excellent, but after they joined and started attending the meetings, they saw the Church in a new light and were not satisfied. INTVW three said that the Church was Spiritual during Church services but was terrible during the business meetings, with some screaming at others and one threatening to fight with another. These meetings left several discouraged about the Church's direction and the Church's leadership. They believe that the Church is building back some numerically and that the meetings are much better and biblically led through the current administration.

3. According to your friends, family, and acquaintances, what type of reputation does MWBC have in the community?

INTVW one, two, five, eleven, and twelve found this question irrelevant since most of their family and friends are from out of town. INTVW three believes the perception has been negative for years because many people have left the Church through unresolved problems and

church splits, and several who departed from the Church are still gossiping about MWBC.

INTVW four stated that their friends and family would probably try this Church despite the reputation if they were looking for a church to be a part of and join. INTVW six said the people she now associates with are not talking negatively about MWBC.

INTVW ten said they love MWBC and will make it a positive if someone talks negatively about MWBC. She says their neighbor tries to talk to her about MWBC, and every time her neighbor mentions the Church, she talks up how great the Church is doing now so that she does not have to hear any negativity from years ago.

Since most Christians, including those at MWBC, do not evangelize much, questions like this are difficult to answer since they have not been witnessing enough to understand the severity of the stigma problem. Surveyors one, three, five, and ten understand better than the others, for they, in their witnessing, have experienced firsthand the reputation of the Church. INTVW one and three have had many encounters with negativity, but for the ones who have not, it is easy to underestimate the severity of the situation.

4. Has someone ever spoken negatively about MWBC to you personally? If so, please explain.

INTVW one says that he has heard numerous negative comments about MWBC over the years. A piano player who had not attended the Church in years was homosexual, and one man said he would never participate in the Church because of that. This incident seems irrelevant to the current ministry for two reasons, 1) this event took place several years before the current administration, and 2) the Church dealt with this problem when it was known, and the man left the Church. Churches will always possess a stigma by some; the question is whether it is a biblically-based error or not. INTVW one also said that he witnessed some refusing to come

back because of things the deacons have done over the years. One man said he would never return as long as that one deacon attended the Church. When asked why he said, "the deacon accused me of flirting with his wife when I was greeting her during a time of church fellowship." This deacon's jealousy has also been a problem in recent years. On two other occasions, others witnessed his jealousy when no one was flirting with his wife. That deacon is strangely and unduly jealous without cause. He is the brother of the dictating head deacon, and he and his wife are in their eighties. No one is flirting with his wife. He is extremely jealous about nothing. If anyone greets his wife with a hug, he lashes out at them, and because of his possessive attitude over the years, some have left and say they will never return as long as he is a deacon at MWBC.

INTVW three stated that on two different occasions when witnessing in the community, he was told by the people that they would never come to MWBC. On one occasion, a woman told him, "with all that I've heard about that church, I don't think I'll ever go there." In the other occurrence, a man said his wife was insulted, so they will never go to MWBC again. INTVW four stated that their daughter-in-law had spoken negatively about the head deacon. After an invitation to the Church, she came, and while walking in, she had an empty mountain dew bottle; the head deacon saw her coming and rudely told her that she was not allowed to go in with her drink. Oddly enough, her bottle was empty, and she would throw it away. The poignant concern about this is the double standard shown by the deacon. Another deacon brings a whole bottle of mountain dew in nearly every Sunday morning and has never been reprimanded for it.

INTVW five has a great desire to share his faith and has repeatedly witnessed to people in the community who have spoken negatively about certain church members. According to

him, different members on separate occasions, and where he has only been in Mineral Wells for a few years, he does not understand why the reputation is so pessimistic in the community.

INTVW six says there have been several comments made during the Church splits that have been harsh. She said she once received an anonymous scathing letter from someone who left MWBC and spoke extremely pessimistically about the Church. She also commented that though many had negative things to say over the many different troubles MWBC has had, many did not just blatantly express them verbally, possibly out of respect for others.

INTVW nine said that one person he invited was not coming back because of things done there by a couple of members. Another time he was told that a person was not coming to MWBC because of the arrest of a youth leader with illegal drugs, and the former pastor let him preach the following Sunday morning message.

INTVW ten has had many she invited to MWBC ask her if certain people go there, implying that they are not coming back if they do.

INTVWs one, three, five, six, nine, and ten had heard negative complaints from the community, but sadly, the others rarely witnessed or shared their faith regularly. They are active members who participate in the services and do anything they are asked to do, but active evangelism is not something they have applied to their Christian walk. Besides the pastor, INTVW one is the most active of those interviewed (but not the most active in the Church, they are one lady who is not a part of this DMIN action that witnesses daily, more than the entire congregation combined on top of working fifty hour work weeks) and has heard the most complaints. Over the years, he has heard something negative about the Church almost monthly that he had reported to the pastor.

The lady who witnesses more frequently for MWBC in the community than anyone else was not selected since she has only been a member for about a year.

4. What would you say if someone asked you about MWBC?

INTVW one said, "right now, we have a great thing going on in our Church. It is the best it has been in years." INTVW two says the Church is currently in a good place. It is a place that makes one feel at home. Is it perfect? No, but it is an excellent place to be.

INTVW three stated that the Church is currently biblically strong and preaching grace. INTVW five says that MWBC is a Bible-believing church that preaches salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. INTVW six said, please come to MWBC; those who come will feel love, be fed, and be thankful that they came. They will get a blessing, whether it is from the sermon, a song, or a testimony. There is always something good that comes out of being involved in the Church.

INTVW seven and eight stated that the services are good. We have many family members that are liberal and go to churches that promote homosexuality; therefore, we would say that our Church has conservative values. MWBC is loving and possesses biblically traditional values.

INTVW nine, ten, eleven, and twelve stated that they would speak about the Church's loving and biblically sound preaching. INTVW nine said he would tell how much he loves the Church, how good the preaching is, and how much he and his family have learned and grown since they have been at MWBC versus their previous Church. INTVW ten said she would tell how that MWBC is a loving, caring Church, where the members love one another, and the preacher preaches the Word of God.

MWBC is explicitly excited about the love and unity they are experiencing and hopeful about the commencement of the DMIN project. They are confident that the sermons are biblical, edifying, and the reason for MWBC's current progress.

5. How should the Church be governed? By the Bible through the pastor/elders, current church bylaws, church traditions, laity-led church vote, deacons, or some other way?

All the INTVWs stated that the Bible should govern the Church. Some noted that the Bible should regulate the Church through the pastor or elders. Others just asserted that the Bible should be the authority of the Church. INTVW One, two, three, seven, eight, nine, and ten agreed that the Bible should govern the Church through the pastor and elders. INTVW three said that the Bible, first and foremost, is the Church's authority, but the Church must have spiritual leaders to enact the Word of God in the Church. The elders, whose qualifications are knowing the Scriptures and how to reprove, rebuke, and rule well their house and the Church, must lead the Church. Those most knowledgeable in the Bible should lead the Church as teachers and examples of the truth in Holy Scripture. INTVW eight said, by the Bible through the pastor and elders and when the pastor or elders make mistakes, the Bible should be in a position to correct them so that God's word is the authority in the Church.

INTVW four, five, six, eleven, and twelve all stated that the Bible is the authority in the Church. INTVW four said they were no theologian and was unsure exactly how the Bible teaches church government but was confident that the Bible should be the source of whatever structure was going to be used by MWBC. INTVW five and six believe that the Bible is God's authority in the Church. INTVW five is upset that some of MWBC's bylaws are not biblically sound, and INTVW six said that the bylaws have too much man and not enough God.

All twelve INTVWs and virtually everyone in the Church desire a more biblically-based structure to govern MWBC; therefore, the pastor is rewriting the bylaws hoping to harmonize the Church through a more biblical composition. God teaches that if His people will obey His voice (a biblically led Church), He will lead, bless, and guide them in His ways, but to accomplish this, changes to the bylaws and structure of the Church is a must.

6. In your perception, how is the MWBC congregation now compared to when you first arrived?

INTVW one stated that problems are being corrected, and the Church is more spiritual now than when he and his family began attending MWBC. INTVW two said it is better now than it has been. Most of the congregation seems to be working and serving in the Church. Our first perception was good, but some problems concerning the congregation's unity were confusing and difficult to understand. The heart and agreement of the Church are in a much better place now. INTVW four remarked that the Church has had problems and backbiting over the years but is in a much better place now than it has been since they have been at MWBC.

INTVW five says that the Church is growing and doing better than it was a few years ago. INTVW seven says the relationships in the Church are closer and better than before. He stated that the MWBC congregation was nice and friendly when he first came, but it is much more intimate and more cohesive now.

INTVW seven said there was much turmoil when they first started attending MWBC, and now the unity and relationship in the Church are significantly improving. INTVW nine, ten, eleven, and twelve all agree that the Church has revitalized, resulting in harmony, and closer relationships with several improvements.



All of the results were positive concerning the current perception of the Church. Everyone interviewed agrees that the Church looks better than it did a few years ago. When everyone is saying the same positive things, the voice of the Church becomes louder through unanimity.

7. The Church has possessed a stigma for many years over a church split, a pastor having an affair, a youth pastor arrested for drug trafficking, and a carnally divided congregation. Most of these things happened many years ago, yet the stigma lingers. What do you suggest should be done to aid in the resolution of this stigma problem?

INTVW two suggest communication. When asked what do you mean by communication? She replied by communicating and displaying evidence that the Church has resolved and corrected the things which caused the stigma. These corrections should be conveyed to both the Church and the community. The resolutions must be transmitted to the community, demonstrating a change in the Church and that MWBC is more spiritual now than when these troubles occurred.

INTVW three expressed his opinions saying MWBC needs to exhibit love and unity to the community remaining steadfast without any additional troubles. The stigma will eventually pass by demonstrating love in the community and the Church. Displaying love is what we have learned and been doing in this present ministry for several years. It is finally getting better, but MWBC cannot have any more divisions or more incidences in or around the Church right now. It will set the Church back and ruin the progress of revitalization MWBC has accomplished in this ministry.

INTVW four says terrible things will happen, and people will be people. She believes that the Church can and will overcome any past problems with the Lord's help, but the Church

must learn from past mistakes and press on with a positive attitude. No one wants to go to a church that continues to dwell in negativity. The joy of salvation and the joy of the Lord is the Church's strength; therefore, the Church needs to focus on positivity and the joy of salvation.

INTVW five quotes the words of Christ in John 13:35, saying, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." MWBC must walk in love and let their actions reveal to everyone that they no longer operate like they once did. He added, "the stigma can actually be used as a light once they see the change of heart by the church."

INTVW six said MWBC must continue reaching out to the community, providing opportunities for the community to come and see and go and tell.

INTVW seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve all concur that more community outreach is needed to demonstrate interaction with the community. INTW seven and eight said MWBC especially needs to try and reach children and young parents for the Church to grow. INTVW eleven thinks it will be highly time-consuming, but more community involvement will take time from several in the Church to prepare events that interact with the community.

The INTVWs agreed that the community needed to be aware of how loving and united MWBC has become. INTVW two is precise in her observation, but accomplishing this was the current dilemma in this pre-DMIN interview. This DMIN action did achieve this to a certain degree through communal outreach, having several events demonstrating the love of Christ in the community. Through much involvement from MWBC's congregation mingling with the community through the events, some goals successfully transpired via this DMIN action.

8. Why do you think MWBC has had so many troubles over the years?

INTVW, one believes the deacons cause many problems, especially the ones the Church is currently facing. He stated that he has repeatedly heard that people will not come to MWBC because of certain deacons.

INTVW two believes that inadequate leadership is the cause of most troubles. "If we had better spiritual leadership, guiding and directing the congregation over the years, we might not have contributed to some problems in certain areas." The congregation often did not understand the right direction and what side to take. It is hard for the members when the Church is laity-led, and the assembly does not know how to govern the Church biblically, and then they are asked to vote on specific issues. "In one situation, the majority of the church did not understand the problem or how to vote, and there was no guidance from leadership to direct us; therefore, looking back, it is probable that we have supported people we should not have sustained, because of ignorance."

INTVW four believes that the Church needed more steadfast members over the years. The Church has been like a revolving door for the past ten years. Every year or two, it looks like a different church.

INTVW five, six, seven, and eight believe that pride has been the cause of so many problems in the Church. INTVW six said pride and having the wrong leadership. INTVW seven claims that too many in the Church in leadership positions have been political over the years, wanting power and authority to govern the Church their way.

INTVW nine said they were unsure. INTVW eleven blames satan, saying it is spiritual warfare. She said, "it is scary right now because our church is growing again, and we know satan is going to come against us just like he has in the past." INTVW twelve said the Church

had too many clicks, and too many thought they knew the best way to run the Church. Just like in most things, to many chiefs and not enough Indians.

The answers to this question, though different, told the same story. Inadequate leadership allowed the Church to stagnate in immaturity, which produced a stigma in the community. One said the deacons, several said pride in the leadership, another said lack of steadfastness, and one said satan. Proper godly leadership solves all these problems and more.

9. Should leadership bear some of the blame? If so, why?

INTVW two said, "absolutely, it is like the president of a company. If the company is not doing well, then the president is held accountable because he is in a leadership position and has an added responsibility. Likewise, the Church's leaders have an added obligation and share the brunt of the problems."

INTVW three says it must be some of the leadership's fault. Most of the problems of the Church have come from leadership. If the leaders are not disciplining themselves, then who will lead the congregation into discipleship?

INTVW four says the body is at fault just as much as the leaders. The body is responsible for performing as the body of Christ, with Jesus being the head of the body. Everyone has a Bible and has a responsibility to conduct themselves righteously before the Lord.

INTVW five believes leadership should bear the blame. He said, "they are entrusted to lead the church with their leadership positions; therefore, if the church is not governed properly, then they definitely bear the blame."

INTVW seven believes leadership should be held responsible for MWBC's problems because they caused most of the Church's complications.

INTVW eight said they are at fault because of pride and lack of wisdom. Not only have they caused many problems and divisions through their pride, but most of MWBC's leaders also did not have the understanding in certain situations to properly discern how to defuse tension and differences between the members. She adds saying the leadership is responsible in two ways 1) they have caused most of the problems, and 2) the problems that they did not cause, they did not possess the biblical wisdom to handle correctly, which is the purpose of having leadership. If leadership does not manage problems with wisdom, then good mature Christians will often quietly leave and find another church with better leadership.

The results of these interviews were shocking. The interview evidence agrees that mediocre leadership has done a great disservice to the MWBC congregation. From the interviews, it is apparent that MWBC members agree that strong biblical leadership would have prevented the stigma from ever occurring. These results gave solid data about how several members of MWBC perceive their Church.

Step 9. Step nine was to present to the community and members a sanitary church both inwardly and outwardly—the sanitizing and updating of MWBC when particularly well and brought a sense of positivity to the Church. There was a considerable amount of work around the Church, such as cleaning the steeple, trimming hedges, uprooting some older shrubs, painting the activity building, installing a new furnace and water heater, and sealing the parking lot, and so much more. Everyone seemed excited about this initially, but sadly, this did cause problems later. In the first deacon's meeting, which focused on the Church's authority, the head deacon kept agitating the other church minister. The other church minister is an exceptional worker and was getting much work done in and around the Church. It soon became indisputable that the head deacon criticized him for all he did. Finding fault in fixing the light around the

sign, installing the new security system, installing the water heater, and so much more. The fault he found in this man who worked so unselfishly for the betterment of the Church was flabbergasting. Still not entirely sure why. Maybe he is a jealous control freak who wants to do it all or feels intimidated and threatened that he is being replaced. Either way, it was absurd how he behaved. He subtly and persistently acted up for several weeks, acting as if the other minister was not properly communicating with the projects and upkeep of the Church. When the pastor rebuked him, he claimed it was only the trustee's place to keep up the Church, though he had done things like this for years, and he is not a trustee. The head deacon found fault in something that the entire Church rejoiced in, so the results were immensely positive except for the behavior of the head deacon.

Step 10. The Fellowship Weekend Revival (FWR) results are challenging to convey because emotions from an entire congregation are virtually impossible to communicate. It requires experimentation to comprehend the efficacy of the FWR fully. The FWR was the best revival MWBC experienced since the present ministry's inauguration six and a half years ago. It was exquisite to behold practically everyone in the congregation so ardently engaged. Each member who gave a testimonial also shared a personal and emotional experience interwoven within the lecture, which brought about repentance and revival. One church member, who is a tough guy firefighter, believed this type of revival was pointless. He came because of an invitation, and some of his family were giving a devotional. After just a few hours, he was in tears and stayed in tears throughout the weekend. One of the deacons had the same reaction. The result was eminently better than anticipated. MWBC revived, repented, and united more in those two and a half days than in previous months. Every small congregation should employ an

FWR in some form or fashion because to thoroughly comprehend the results; one must experience this type of revival.

Step 11. The pastor has attempted to preach more convicting sermons throughout this DMIN action research. The pastor always desires to preach convicting messages. Still, during this DMIN action, the pastor preached more on actively serving God through a ministry in the Church and ending the sermon with questions such as, what has God called you to do in the Church? What ministry is the Lord leading you to? Is the Lord placing it on your heart to start a ministry? The pastor was astonished at the results. Several after services throughout the DMIN action would wait to speak with the pastor, saying they wanted to be more involved in the Church.

Step 12. Making an alternate community is extremely difficult and works much better when several churches are involved. The pastor reached out to other churches and the DOM, suggesting an alternate community where each Church would have a softball, volleyball, or even a cornhole team, but other churches would not participate in this action. Therefore, the pastor turned his attention inwardly, focusing on church fellowship. The Church is now fellowshiping more than ever before. With all the work and interaction putting this DMIN action plan into motion, virtually every heart in the Church was stirred to be a vital part of MWBC. Several men and women have now requested to have spiritual meetings. A mentor woman of the Church has agreed to start a women's prayer and share ministry, and the pastor and a few men have decided to start a men's bible fellowship on Thursdays. Also, another church member has decided to start a men's fellowship breakfast. MWBC is doing its best to be an alternate community, but it is discouraging that other churches in the association will not

participate in this action. If the Church procured a softball, volleyball, and cornhole league, among other things, then this would keep many children from running after worldly activities.

Step 13 The community interaction was a huge success and exceeded all expectations. Mineral Wells is a community of about 2000 people. With the interface of the DMIN action, several hundred, possibly close to a thousand, people in the community came through MWBC doors without one negative comment about the Church. In times past, when the Church interacted in the community, occasionally they were negative remarks about the Church, such as once the Church did a unique food pantry turkey give away during the holidays. During this event, one person in line waiting to receive his turkey, not knowing that he was talking with the pastor, said, "this Church is only doing this because they have grants or they would not do it (which was incorrect information, but illustrating how some in the community saw the Church even when the Church was facilitating their needs). That was not the case with this DMIN action. The yard sale and bake sale brought over five hundred people through MWBC doors, the car show brought over two hundred, and many gave positive feedback about all that MWBC was doing in the community. Some had even said the Church is different now than it was. A few members of the Mineral Wells community noticed a difference, verbally expressing that MWBC was not operating the way it did in past ministries. Several commented about the first responders' day and how no other Church in the local community has honored them, so that seems like something that MWBC will do annually. Many in the community were surprised to come to the yard sale to find that all the items were free, but they could donate to the food pantry if they wanted. MWBC's free yard sale donations added to about thirty-seven hundred dollars benefiting the food pantry and hospitality committee. The car show had similar feedback. The people were amazed at all the free food, complimentary gifts, and free entry fees



for the car participating in the car show. MWBC used the car show wisely, having the musicians and singers of the church sing on multiple occasions, and the pastor gave a devotional. Though many at the car show were not Christian, they were respectful and applauded the singers and musicians. The women in the Church particularly liked this event because of all the men that came. Though it did not get the turn out in the community like the yard sale, the car show brought the men in the community out to the Church. Virtually all the hundred-plus cars were from men in the community.

The first free dinner-sing was exceptional and filled the gymnasium, but the second one, not so much because of poor timing. The second dinner-sing was on graduation night, and the singers were a traveling group that could not reschedule. When this DMIN action was aware of the situation, it was too late to reschedule, and since the singers were traveling, it would have been impolite to postpone. This occurrence was the only community event that did not meet expectations, and the DMIN action is responsible because the tight-knit community was attending graduation instead of the sing.

Step 14. The involvement of the MWBC congregation also exceeded expectations. According to Thumma and Bird, eighty percent of the Church is either uncommitted or less committed than they should be unless one has a highly unusual church.<sup>121</sup> About seventy-five percent of the congregation became involved in one of the scheduled events through this DMIN action. Some more than others, of course, but a large majority of the Church was still positively active in this DMIN action. Several who were active became even more functional without being summoned. Many others who never participated in working church events came and said they wanted to help do more after hearing the importance of being involved in repeated sermons

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<sup>121</sup> Scott Thumma and Warren Bird, *The Other 80 Percent: Turning Your Church's Spectators into Active Participants* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), xvi.

throughout this DMIN action. Several events going on in a short time brought the Church together more frequently, bringing the Church closer together in unity. A new baby ministry started, a men's fellowship breakfast, a men's bible study, a women's prayer and share, and a new joined ministry where the food pantry committee joins with the hospitality committee twice a year to have a yard sale bake sale together. The fellowship and unanimity in MWBC have surpassed all prospects.

Step 15. At step fifteen, the post-DMIN Action surveys and interviews begin until step nineteen. The first survey is the Church Maturity Likert Scale.

Question 1. The congregation of MWBC has grown through this DMIN research action.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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When asked this question, over eighty percent of the surveyors strongly agreed that this DMIN action successfully brought growth to the MWBC congregation. The other almost twenty percent agreed but did not strongly agree.

Question 2. The congregants of MWBC have become more personally involved in some type of ministry.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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Over eighty percent strongly agreed that the congregation has significantly become more involved in some type of ministry. With less than twenty percent who just merely agreed. Not sure why one hundred percent of the surveyors did not strongly agree with this question because

nearly all of MWBC's congregation is active in the Church. When a Church has over seventy-five percent of the Church actively serving and doing things like preparing a devotional and serving multiple dinners in a day and at times such as the FWR two and three days in a row, and the music committee doing the same, that is amazingly impressive.

Question 3. The congregation of MWBC is more active in the community because of this DMIN action.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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All agree on MWBC's successful accomplishments through this DMIN action in the questions, but for some reason, they are two or three who do not strongly agree. Again, about eighty percent strongly agree, with about twenty percent agreeing. After the historicity of MWBC in this community and all the work implemented in the twelve weeks of the DMIN action research, how anyone cannot strongly agree that MWBC is much more active in the community is dumbfounding. However, they all agreed that MWBC's involvement in the community improved. The assumption was that all surveyors would have strongly agreed since thirteen people from the Mineral Wells community are now attending since this project began. Nine took membership, and the Kids Night program went from nothing to nearly forty children and about ten teens, all from the Mineral Wells community.

Question 4. The congregation of MWBC is witnessing or developing a zealous spirit for the Lord.

5	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1
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**Strongly Agree** **Strongly Disagree**

One would think that not having children in two years and five months and now having over forty children and teens coming on Kids Night and thirteen people from the Mineral Wells community attending the Church on Sunday Morning, the zeal of the Church would have been overwhelmingly contagious. In a way, it has, but according to the surveyors, only about fifty percent strongly agreed, and fifty percent merely agreed.

Question 5. The congregation of MWBC has matured some spiritually

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

About seventy percent strongly agreed that MWBC has matured in their spirituality and the other thirty percent agreed. MWBC has undoubtedly developed as far as involvement, unity, and community interaction is concerned, but spiritually maybe not so much because this comes from spending time alone with God in prayer, Bible, and meditation. Prayer, study, and meditation have been preached on repeatedly, but the Church has been so active in all the events that this DMIN action has suggested that many are too overloaded to find extra time for personal studies. Still, the desire is there because two different men's actions are initiating, and a women's prayer and share are about to commence. Hopefully, these things will aid in spiritually maturing the MWBC congregation. In each section, the numbers 1-5 represented points. The goal in this section was that anything above 15 points (sixty percent) should be considered an improvement. The goal is to score 20 points (eighty percent) or above through honest answers to determine if the MWBC congregation is growing in maturity and the community. Four of the

five questions procured eighty percent or better, with one question being below the goal of having sixty percent of surveyors who strongly agree. The result was somewhat stunning because this DMIN action was highly influential in both the Church and the community, and one would have expected even better results from this survey.

Step 16. Step sixteen is the results from the post-DMIN survey.

#### Post-DMIN Survey

1. Do you believe that MWBC's reputation in the community has improved through this DMIN research action?

Surveyor one said he had heard many positive things about MWBC since this DMIN action started. Some in the community unaffiliated with any church asked him when the Church would have another car show—interactions like this show that the stigma problem is improving.

Surveyor two said yes, many newer people who have not heard the negativity have moved to this community, and since there have not been any incidences in years, that also helps. The Church has dramatically added to that in the community with this DMIN action implementation. MWBC's perception in the community is constantly improving, and the negative stigma it once had is not near as pessimistic as it previously was. Unless there are new problems, the Church is undoubtedly rebounding, and this ministry's conscientious outreach has aided in resolving any stigma problems that the Church had.

Surveyor three said, yes, the Church has gained a better perception among the people of this community and added membership to the congregation. All that was implemented through this DMIN action extensively enhanced the Church's unity and perception in the community. Surveyor four agreed and said she was shopping for one of the Church events, and the lady at

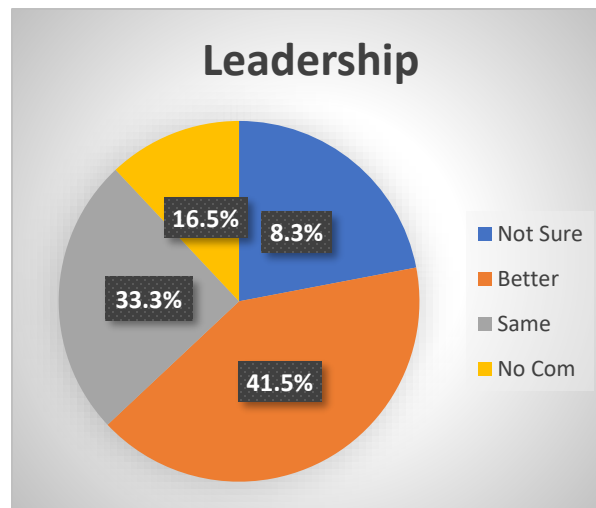
the register asked her what she was doing, and she replied, this stuff is for the Church. The lady asked what Church she went to, and after she told her, the lady said, "I have noticed that your church has been extremely active." It seems like MWBC is doing something all the time. She praised MWBC for all that they were doing in the community.

Surveyor five said yes. The reason is that, as a church, MWBC has conducted itself lovingly and tried to extend greetings and invites into the community to let them know they are welcome to worship with us. It has all been positive lately. Surveyor six, yes, this DMIN action certainly has had a positive influence on the community.

Surveyor eleven said it seems better to her though she is not incredibly active in the community; she said the Church is enthusiastic, energetic, and growing stronger. MWBC is closer than it was, so it must be better with all these accomplishments.

All the participants agreed that MWBC's character has improved in the Mineral Wells community. The frequent display of interaction in the Mineral Wells community and the love shown through the outreach events greatly enhanced the character of the Church.

2. How would you rate the Church's leadership after this DMIN action? Better, same, or worse.



Sadly, the surveyors were not in agreement with the growth and maturity of the leadership/deacon board. Surveyors one, three, five, nine, and twelve think that the Church's leadership is better now than it was before the implementation of this DMIN project. Surveyor three believes that this DMIN action has helped the leaders to understand a more biblical approach to governing the Church. He believes that although every deacon may not have matured, some deacons have grown. Surveyor five believes that they are moving in a positive direction. Surveyor nine believes that the leadership is better but is doubtful it will be perfect.

INTVWs two, four, six, and eleven believe it is not better or the same. Surveyors seven and eight did not have a comment, and surveyor ten was unsure, saying, maybe some better.

Two deacons have grown tremendously through this DMIN action and desire a better system to govern MWBC. They have been studying the Scriptures given unto them and believe change is necessary in order to prevent the same thing from happening again. Without a doubt, leadership is changing and growing. Even though the two brother deacons see that the Scriptures teach a different system, they do not desire to change. Because of this, INTVWs two,

four, six, and eleven say it is not better, but it has already assisted two deacons to search the Scriptures seeking guidance from God's Word.

3. Do you feel the MWBC congregation will grow numerically through this DMIN action research?

Several make strong comments saying things like yes, or absolutely. Surveyor two jovially said yes, emphasizing that this is our whole purpose and desire. Surveyor six said yes, and it is thrilling to see younger men and women involved in the Church and the addition of the Wednesday night Kid's program.

The two highest attendances in the past seven years happened through this DMIN action. With the addition of nine new members; therefore, all the surveyors agree that this DMIN action has already brought growth to the MWBC congregation. When a church under a hundred members has nine members who join during the DMIN action and four more who attend regularly, the results speak for themselves. The Church has about a fifteen percent growth on Sunday mornings. The part of the Church that has undoubtedly grown the best is Wednesday's Kid's Night service.

MWBC did not have Awana or Kid's Night program for two years and five months. MWBC is averaging nearly forty children every Wednesday. This success is due to much hard work from several in the congregation. Many have gone door to door throughout the community with gift bags and flyers promoting the new children's program. Everyone agreed that this DMIN action was successful in Church growth with the adage that it already has.

4. Did the Church improve through the DMIN action research?

Surveyor six said, "obviously, people seem happy and enjoy working together." The Church is united and enthusiastic about working together and serving the community.



Surveyor nine added that this DMIN action had brought MWBC closer together. Surveyor ten also said that MWBC is cheerfully improving and ready to do whatever it can to make things happen. Surveyor eleven said, "I was already close to many in the church, but now the Church literally feels like family."

All agreed that this DMIN action was a blessing to MWBC, improving the Church in many different areas. Surprisingly, nearly everyone is praising the unity of fellowship as the most remarkable achievement of the DMIN action. Most of the Church was involved in this action and has worked together for twelve weeks, causing MWBC to bond closer and stronger than ever before. Those surveyed who have been at MWBC for over ten years have repeatedly stated that the Church connected and worked in unity better than ever before.

5. Would you speak positively about MWBC and invite people to attend?

This question was written before the DMIN action took place and now seems redundant because the Church has evangelized throughout this action, and of course, everyone agreed that they would gladly invite people to MWBC. INTVW one, five, and ten said nearly the same thing, "yes, I do all the time."

Step 17. Step seventeen is the post-DMIN interview question results. They are seven post DMIN action interview questions where the INTVWs answer these questions based on their observation of the implementation of this research project.

Post-DMIN Interviews

1. Was this DMIN research action successful in maturing church leadership? Please explain.

INTVW one believes that leadership is maturing. The first meeting was a disaster, but at the second meeting, the pastor gave all of the deacons five pages of Scripture and literature and

read it with them, explaining proper Church government. The Scriptures given fostered the deacons, according to their own words. Some are doing better after the meeting through the Scriptures presented. All the deacons except one said that the lecture and material discussed in the meeting facilitated their understanding of leadership responsibility in the Church; therefore, INTVW one believes that this DMIN action is successfully maturing MWBC leadership.

INTVW two says it is no better because the same problems still exist and have not improved. She works with the deacon brothers weekly and says they are no better, and any weak person who works with them in the Church will be overrun by them or be discouraged and quit. She says that they need to learn how to serve the Church better and that something needs to be done about them.

INTVW three believes that this DMIN action has helped the leaders to understand more biblical ways to run the Church. He adds that the deacons have grown in their biblical understanding of church governance, even though the head deacon is resistant to changes.

INTVW four believes that leadership is still not where it needs to be. She says this because she is the chairman of the hospitality committee, and the head deacon is still coming in regularly, finding fault and causing her much stress, and doing this to others as well. She believes leadership will be problematic until he learns how to lead appropriately or steps down from the deacon board.

INTVW five said if leadership has acknowledged that they are errors in how they are conducting the Church and have agreed to take corrective action, then yes, they have matured. If they refuse to correct their mistakes, then no, because they are walking in pride.

INTVW nine said it is some better, but they doubt it will ever be perfect. He also worked with the head deacon on another committee and expressed that he is obstinate and has anger issues; therefore, it is unlikely that the deacon board and leadership will ever be in complete harmony.

INTVW eleven said it is not better until leadership serves in one accord. Even if the other deacons are improving, the problem exists until it no longer exists, and as long as it exists, it is not better.

It does not matter how well a system is constructed; people in their pride, stubbornness, or ignorance may still reject it. It does not mean the model is ineffective. This model has affected all deacons, especially those seeking change and searching the Scriptures. Jesus' model and that of the apostles also received rejection by the spiritual leaders. They crucified Christ and martyred all of the apostles but John. This model is good, but two brother deacons with more power in the Church than anyone else does not want to change the system that gives them preeminence. The frustration of some of the INTVWs is understandable, but positive results have come from this action, and the Scriptures have silenced the head deacon in the meetings, though he still resists change.

2. Was this DMIN research action successful in maturing the congregation? Please explain.

INTVW one through four believes that MWBC matured in several ways, such as involvement, unity, and zeal. INTVW five said yes; many of the congregation were unsure how the Church's governing process worked. Now that errors in the bylaws are known, the members understand where the Church is and where it should be. He believes that the congregation is

more actively involved, that everything he could observe from them was on the up and up, and that the Church is a maturing congregation.

INTVW six said, yes, there has been a variety of things going on, and everyone has different gifts and working together. Because the Church has spent much more time together serving, they have built relationships. God instituted a family permit and formed a church which is his body. Unity is becoming the gospel, and it feels like MWBC is becoming a close-knit congregation.

INTVW nine stated that he and his wife went to a small church for thirty years and still were not close to some people. He said that this DMIN action brought an interconnected Church even closer together. When people sit in the pew, they do not get to know anyone. This action significantly strengthened the unification of the Church and matured MWBCs working skills through this outreach.

INTVW ten believes that this DMIN action has enlightened the Church, making them aware of the potential that they possess. MWBC has seen that by working together, they can make a big difference in the community and surrounding areas.

MWBC has matured in several ways, such as leaving their comfort zone, involvement, working together in unity for the cause of the Church, and passionately reaching out to the community. Though they have grown in these areas, they still have a way to go in understanding Church government and seeking first the Kingdom of God through private and personal edification.

3. Was this DMIN research action successful in positively reaching the community? Please explain.

INTVW, one who is a faithful witness for the Church sharing his faith weekly with several in the community, said that he did not hear any more negativity like he used to.

INTVW two stated that opening the doors through various events and receiving many of the community into MWBC has facilitated the congregation to socialize with the community progressively. MWBC has witnessed its love of Christ in the community, and the community appears to be responding positively.

INTVW three believes that this DMIN action had an astute effect on the community, and the stigma dilemma may now be a light divulging all the alterations that have taken place in MWBC. MWBC gained respect and improved its perception in the eyes of the community following the model of the DMIN action.

INTVW one and five were especially impressed by the car show because many people in the community that one would not expect to see at the Church came and enjoyed themselves. INTVW, one said a man he had repeatedly invited to church in the community that was an atheist came, and he paid extremely close attention when the pastor spoke.

INTVW six said that the congregation matured in cohesive communication skills and striving together to meet goals and visions set by the DMIN action. She spoke again about how blessed she gets when she sees the van going through the community filling up with children, which brings her great joy.

Everyone agreed that this DMIN research action successfully reached the community, which has lifted much of the stigma which has lingered in the community for years.

4. What would you have done differently?

Everyone highly praised the action and results before commenting on this question. INTVW one thought it was a great job. INTVW three does not know what else could have been done differently. INTVW four stated that it was a job well done. INTVW five said he is unsure if there were a better or different approach that one could have taken that would have been more effective or brought better results than the ones MWBC received through this DMIN action. INTVW eight praised the Church's involvement in this DMIN action and thought it was a successful model in reaching the community. INTVW nine said that the DMIN action model was well orchestrated.

INTVW two, six, and ten agreed that it positively affected the Church and the community but did remark about something that could have been done differently or better. INTVW two, speaking in general, said more involvement from the congregation consistently is needed to keep the Church solid and active. Before this DMIN action, the pastor and deacons were doing too much when the members needed more involvement. MWBC should keep the active congregation involved, which will keep the Church strong. INTVW six said that leadership should hear more from more people. Even though it takes a little more time and leadership ability, hearing from the people would be better. MWBC needs to hear more ideas from people.

In response to this, this DMIN action cannot stop what it is doing mid-stream and collect ideas from church members to change directions based on people's assumptions which have no research.

INTVW ten said that she could not think of much that she would have done differently other than better scheduling. She is referring to the dinner-sing scheduled on graduation day, which was the least effective event in this DMIN action.

Though much outreach assisted in restoring MWBCs reputation, maybe they were too much in such a short span of time. This DMIN action might have been more effective over sixteen weeks instead of twelve; nevertheless, the congregation was delighted with the results.

5. Do you feel like MWBC is moving in the right direction after this DMIN action?

If so, why?

INTVW one, "yes, the church is moving in the right direction and is a place where one can find Jesus." INTVW two said, "yes, MWBC is going in the right direction because the church is full of loving people who are lifting up Jesus Christ, their Lord." INTVW three believes that the Church is going in the right direction because the community interactions were all positive, plus the additions to the Church. INTVW four believes MWBC is heading in the right direction because good things are happening, and the Church will grow when good things happen. INTVW five yes, the Church is going in the right direction because of community involvement, growing congregation and the preaching of the word has been more convicting lately. INTVW six, yes, MWBC is definitely going in the right direction and will continue to do well as long as the pastor continues to feed the Church.

INTVW seven presumes that many people of the Mineral Wells community were amazed at the Church's kindness. INTVW eight is excited about where the Church is and the future of MWBC. She believes all the activities were a great witness in the community, bringing the Church closer together.

INTVW nine stated that the DMIN action outreach has helped the reputation of MWBC and united the congregation. INTVW eleven believes MWBC is headed in the right direction because attendance is up, they are more spiritual, and the congregation has a stronger bond. INTVW twelve believes that the Church is headed in the right direction because all the events

implemented in the community outreach have created community involvement. The Church has built a relationship with several in the community, making the Church interconnected in the community.

Everyone interviewed believes that MWBC is heading in the right direction after having several successful events outreaching into the community with positive feedback from them all. INTVW seven sums it up best. INTVW seven presumes that many people of the Mineral Wells community were amazed at the goodness of the Church. The car show had free entry with complimentary hot dogs, chips, drinks, and snow cones. The rummage sale was also free with any size donation to the food pantry—the First Responder's Day honoring all first-responders and celebrating with them through a dinner fellowship. Hundreds of community members enjoyed these free events, which happen nowhere else in the community. MWBC is undoubtedly heading in the right direction if they stay involved in the community.

6. What do you feel was most effective about this DMIN research action?

INTVWs one and two consider constant and general involvement to be the strength of this DMIN action. INTVWs three, eleven, and twelve believe that the FWR was what the Church needed before initiating this DMIN action. The FWR was a great start uniting this Church. The FWR intensely united the congregation to perform the DMIN community outreach. INTVW eleven expressed that the FWR was extraordinarily beneficial, which still affects how the congregation feels about one another. The FWR brought the Church to a place of humility, vulnerability, and repentance which drove the Church closer together. As one member after another shared their testimonial weaknesses, the congregation became sympathetic to one another, and it became highly personal. She stated that the FWR is still affecting her almost four months later.



INTVWs four, seven, eight, and ten conveyed that community outreach was the most exciting part of this DMIN action because the work amalgamated the Church. People were involved and working in this Church, from the least of things to the essential things. INTVW eight stated, "community outreach was most effective. The Church tried to reach and bless the community and ended up reaching, uniting, and blessing ourselves."

INTVW five said that two things for him were highly effective 1) the car show because it brought many tough guys out to MWBC who would not typically come to a church, and 2) the pastor for having the boldness to address the problems that required addressing.

INTVW six believes that the unity in the Church and the first responders' day was the most exciting part of this DMIN action.

According to all the interviews, the efficacy of this DMIN action exceeded all expectations. All agreed that community involvement through outreach was most effective, yet different ones had different opinions about what they felt was the best outreach.

7. What do you feel was left undone or unnoticed, and why is it a concern?

INTVW two and eleven believe that though this DMIN action did address the leadership problems, it did not successfully correct them; therefore, this is left undone and needs to be followed up on until leadership is in an agreement being led by the Holy Scriptures.

INTVW five said that he could not think of anything that was left undone or unnoticed, and if there is another problem in the Church that needs addressing, he is unaware of it. INTVW eleven said, "leadership is still not fully agreeing, which is a significant concern, for they are in a position that can cause Church harm if they lead incorrectly." Jesus said in Matthew 15:14, "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

INTVW six stated that maintenance can get overlooked, and now that good things are happening, we need to keep our eye on maintenance. She said she would like to ensure the maintenance is updated.

Not sure how this answers the question because this DMIN action addressed and updated all maintenance problems. Maybe she is simply saying the Church should keep maintenance updated now that it is up to par.

INTVW seven and eight expressed that the Church has changed so much for the better with many positive changes that even thinking about anything undone or any type of negatives ever crossed their minds. They are focusing on the positives and believe that MWBC is in a much healthier state than it was before this DMIN action.

The results of these interviews were positive, and it seems that MWBC is excited to continue reaching out to the Mineral Wells community. MWBC also appears to possess a zeal to continue growing and maturing, but some will not be satisfied until the bylaws and leadership properly govern the Church according to Scripture. Not being satisfied until the bylaws and leadership are changed is entirely understandable for two reasons 1) the Scripture should govern every Church, and 2) if changes to correct the errors that allowed the stigma to form are not fixed, then what will stop it from happening again?

Step 18. MWBC certainly stepped up and evangelized for the Lord and the Church. The musicians were bold at the car show playing and singing convicting songs. Many congregation members mingled with the community in several events inviting people to Church. During the twelve-week DMIN action, MWBC added nine members to the Church from the Mineral Wells community, with others from the community now attending. This credit belongs to the MWBC

congregation for not only doing the preparation work of the DMIN action model but also for evangelizing throughout each event.

Step 19. Step nineteen was brutal and still poses problems as of now. The head deacon was made aware of the leadership and governing issues that the Church wants and needs to correct, and he was tremendously disappointed with the suggestion to make changes. Instead of verbally attacking the pastor and this DMIN action, the head deacon kept poking and prying on the other church minister and would interrupt the meeting to attack him. During the first meeting with the deacons, one deacon (who is an ordained minister) became extremely upset and did not want to meet while having feelings of anger. He excused himself from the meeting and told the head deacon that he was the reason that he was leaving. After this, the pastor attempted to admonish the head deacon, who did not want to be corrected, and another deacon got upset because he said that the head deacon was having a power struggle. He also made a dissatisfied comment as he left.

In the second meeting, the pastor tried to focus all the conversations on going through him, whether good or bad, and gave five pages of type scripture and literature to the deacons to present a biblically-based church government. Everyone agrees with the teaching except the head deacon, who again does not want any changes in the Church. All the other deacons believed that it was well presented and that at least some implementation of this model should be imputed into the MWBCs constitution and bylaws; however, with the resistance of the head deacon, it will be challenging to execute peaceably. The head deacon argues against the Bible without any Scripture to counter the passages presented. He is, without a doubt, starting to feel alone on the deacon board because no one is offering any Scripture to counter recommended changes, and the deacons speaking up say this is biblical. Still, he seems willing to split the

Church before giving up his unbiblical power. Dealing with the head deacon is the most challenging part of the DMIN action.

In the third deacons' meeting, the pastor presented to the deacons the dangers of staying with the current system, which is unbiblical. According to the pastor, an immature laity-led congregation poses several hazards that will cause the Church to retrogress back to a carnally divided congregation that produces cliques (which MWBC does not presently have). The head deacon sees that two other deacons are strongly agreeing and voicing that these changes and modifications recommended are biblical. Nevertheless, he is not ready to accept any changes at this time. His brother (who is highly uneducated in Scripture) agreed with much of what is said but is not ready to make changes now but suggests staying with the current system. The laity-led bylaws are composed in a way that empowers the deacons in virtually every area of the Church, and the two brothers have usurped the Church's authority for years. Wistfully, neither one has much biblical knowledge, yet they want to control everything. The pastor at the last meeting challenged them to study the Scriptures and prove from Scripture the proper way to govern the Church. Over 95% of complaints have been by these two deacons in the past two years or about these two deacons. The other deacons in all the meetings have grown in biblical understanding and desire to govern the Church according to Scripture, believing that MWBC needs strong leadership to continue growing and reaching the community. Even when the Scriptures are unambiguous, the brother deacons do not seem to understand that leadership should serve and edify the body, lead the congregation, and feed the flock. They are of the mindset that they need to dictate the Church by the bylaws that the head deacon wrote with an iron fist. They often bluntly and rudely snap at people quoting bylaws, which leaves the members extremely dissatisfied with the current governing system. This DMIN action is

patiently attempting to press the issue of God's Word, love, and grace to be the light that leadership possesses in MWBC. The last meeting when smoother as the pastor encouraged all the deacons to study the Scriptures for understanding instead of holding to unbiblical traditions.

The deacon's Likert scale results were positive, except for one. The head deacon refused to fill out the Likert scale after agreeing. He is not for any leadership changes, saying, "I do not like changes." Another deacon did not fill out a Likert scale because he could not make the last meeting. He works many long hours and could not attend the meeting. Talking to him on the phone, he believes that the Scriptures should govern the Church and that the head deacon wants to power-grab everything.

The three deacons that took the Likert scale agreed or strongly agreed that the Scriptures presented were pragmatic and influential, facilitating their biblical understanding of church government. Amazingly the brother deacon agrees with the Scriptures, yet he is not ready to make changes. In the Likert scale, the deacons evaluate themselves concerning their growth and understanding of the church government (see appendix A). A score over fifteen points is a positive result. Two deacons scored a twenty, and one deacon scored a twenty-four. The other deacon would likely have scored close to twenty points from how he communicated on the phone but was not at the final meeting.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Having learned that the stigma would not vanish through revitalization and spiritual formation, the exhausted and frustrated pastor sought the Lord at the onset of researching for this DMIN action. Through considerable counsel, the conception of this model was conceived. The investigation led the pastor to detect root causes that required addressing, research to mature the church in discipleship, and an evangelization program to reach a community that does not trust MWBC to be a godly representation. This model was a godsent marvel that prompted the spiritually developing congregation to draw closer together and gave MWBC a new light in the community. This conclusion will summarize learning experiences, church history, literature resources, methodology, DMIN action results, building on this action, and lastly, why a church stigma should be a topic, that biblical scholars should allocate more time analyzing and creating models to support several failing churches.

### Major learning experience

Revitalization does not resolve the stigma in the community. It is merely the framework for preparing community restoration. A church may revive for years, and the majority of the community is still oblivious to their repentance and zeal for God and their community. First, the root problems must be dealt with to remedy a stigma. Secondly, appropriate outreach in Christian love must be displayed, or the stigma will persist for years even after the church has resolved the issues that developed into a lingering stigma. Generally, people assume that when there is a problem, fix the problem, and things will be better. This is often a false assumption, primarily when it occurs in a church. When something of structure is built, such as a house, if it is not square when the construction initiates, the entire house will not only be unsquared, but everything constructed upon it will progressively escalate. When one gets to the roof, it will be

of poorer quality than the unsquared foundation. One might say, well, fix the problem and square the house's frame. If this is achieved with jacks, winches, and other tools and the house's structure becomes square, this will not rectify all the issues that the unsquared frame generated, although the house's frame is now square. This metaphor serves as an example of a church stigma. The problems that caused the church stigma were mediocre leadership pushing the immature congregation to govern itself through laity-led bylaws. If these troubles, like the unsquared house, had been addressed as they emerged, then the correction would have prevented other complications from occurring, but they were not addressed, and one problem was placed upon another problem for almost fifteen years. The stressing point is that revitalizing MWBC did not remedy the MWBC community dilemma. Many say or think, well, fix the church problems, and all will be well. That is not always true. MWBC came to a place of rejuvenation and attained a genuine biblical love for one another, yet the stigma obstacle continued. Yes, the pastor had a dispute with the Awana commander, and he could not get the head deacon to adhere to Scripture that mends his bylaws, but these actions transpired behind closed doors and did not add to the stigma problem. This church continued for approximately five years in a state of revitalization, constantly increasing in love, grace, and Spiritual formation without cliques or division. However, the stigma was alive and well when one went through the community witnessing. Repairing the cliques and divisions and governing the church for years behind closed doors with the deacon board brought impressive results to the congregation, but the community was fed-up with MWBC and did not want to hear from the church. The pastor was confident a few years ago that fixing the church's unity and having a congregation flourishing in the love and grace of God would ameliorate the stigma, but this was not the case. Though the church enhanced through this procedure and was spiritually in a better

place than they were six and a half years ago, the stigma was still prevalent. After about three and a half years of church resurgence, the pastor with others attempted door-to-door evangelism, which was a disaster and highly discouraging. People would slam their doors or comment on how terrible MWBC was because of past behavior. The community was even rude to the teens who went door to door evangelizing for VBS. One lady bluntly addressed the teens, saying, "you mean people still go to that church," then rudely shut the door in their face.

In the interviews and surveys, all that they told is not even half of what the pastor knows and has dealt with attempting to evangelize the Mineral Wells community. He kept much of the negativity away from the congregation. Though he did not desire to govern the church through the deacon board, this was a better option than congregation meetings twice a month to hash out problems that they knew not how to manage. MWBC declined so rapidly that if something did not revive the church and remove the stigma, it appeared that the church would not last much longer. When a congregation averaging about one hundred and fifty on Sunday morning falls to the thirties, and one cannot witness in the community because of the stigma, this is a church ready to die if a suitable methodology does not remedy the problem sucking the life out of the church. The pastor and some faithful church members attempted to evangelize the community on about six occasions with little success. From 2016 until 2020, when evangelism in the community took place, they were little to no satisfactory results. MWBC had to quit evangelizing in 2020 due to the covid restrictions. The good news was that MWBC was growing again, but not from people in the Mineral Wells community. More fresh faces were coming to MWBC outside the Mineral Wells community than from within the district.



## Church History Root Causes

In chapter one, ample research went into the historicity of MWBC, attempting to determine the root causes of the pernicious stigma that almost totally engulfed the church six years ago. The analysis discovered that two separate church splits occurred quickly, causing many to leave the church and gossip to spread throughout the Mineral Wells community. Subsequently, MWBC appeared to be rebounding when the new charismatic pastor resigned after having an affair with a church member. All three events happened within a six to seven-year period, which caused three separate clusters of former members to gossip and circulate rumors about the church in the community. Less than five years after this event, MWBC still had a decent-sized youth group when the preaching youth leader was incarcerated for trafficking and distribution of drugs in the community. If this was not ruinous enough to MWBC's pernicious stigma, the pastor asked him to preach the Sunday morning service two days later, which caused whispering and gossip not only to spread inside the local community but inside the church as well because this action severely upset members and added unto the division of the church. Not only had the congregation emaciated and the stigma atrophied, but even the steadfast members of MWBC felt astonished about the decisions and direction of the church, and the carnally divided congregation continued exacerbating via mediocre leadership. When the current administration took over, the preaching youth leader on work release was still attending every other Sunday morning when arrested again for transporting drugs into the jail, which was all over the local news. Witnessing in this community for the first four years of this ministry was brutal because of all the inimical negativity surrounding the church. The community was fed up with the clown show and did not care to express it verbally to anyone producing invitations from MWBC. Two things emerged that appeared to be the root cause of

the stigma: mediocre leadership and a carnally divided congregation governing the church through advice from Scripturally uneducated deacons.

#### Literature Resources

In the literature review, there was a struggle to find resources that dealt with occupying and correcting a church stigma. Various writings were about church revitalization, health, growth, discipleship, and evangelism. However, resolving a church stigma from a church that lost its prestige and holy character was practically impossible to unearth. MWBC maintained an obnoxious character, and no current literature addressing the church's needs concerning correcting the disreputable stigma was brought to light. Several works were analyzed, especially sources concerning church health, revitalization, and evangelism. Since the specific issue of church stigma or restoring a wounded reputation was not addressed as the primary problem, several analogous sources were elected that only communicated randomly about this particular topic.

The literature obtained through this DMIN action was beneficial but exhausting. Beneficial because expert counsel in these books assisted in discipleship, spiritual formation, church health, and evangelism, and some of these techniques were employed and preached during this DMIN action. The literature review was equally exhausting because the predominant conundrum that MWBC faced, restoring a tainted character in the community, was never the primary theme. Even books on evangelism fell short concerning community interaction ideas that MWBC desperately needed. MWBC possessed a disreputable character, and no current literature focusing on the church's needs dealing with correcting the shameful stigma was uncovered.

In the theological foundation, ascertaining seven fundamental truths from Scripture provided a starting point on how formulating a model would be determined. The seven fundamental truths were the framework and additional components from other models that addressed issues that MWBC was enduring. Several models were considered through the theoretical foundation, but none fit the bill of what the pastor felt would work. They were two models examined that produced optimistic prospects, but only in part. Henard's model focused on revitalization, and Stanley's model focused on active ministry and evangelism. An innovative concept of incorporating certain areas of these models, which met MWBC's needs with the theological foundation, began developing. This concept formed after a learning experience revealed that evangelism or church revitalization alone would not resolve the issue. Therefore, a model originated from the seven biblical fundamental truths of the theological foundation and parts from Henard's and Stanley's models in the theoretical foundations.

The seven fundamental truths were edifying leadership, persuasive preaching, repentance, steadfastness, obedience, Christian fellowship, and community interaction. Henard's model was full of many elements not compatible with MWBC's predicament, but the materials borrowed from his model sought first that the Holy Spirit would lead this action. Second, the pastor would spend between one and two weeks in personal introspection, refreshing himself before implementing the model. Third, the church would outwardly look immaculate to the public's eye. Fourth, the church would have all repairs fixed on the inside of the church. Fifth, there would be hospitality greeters bearing gifts to visitors. The incorporated elements of Stanley's model were practical teaching, private disciplines, and personal ministries.

## Methodology

This DMIN action happened at the appropriate time, another two and a half years had passed since the covid restriction, and the church remained steadfast without any issues to add to the stigma. Paul and Mark's stigma took over three years of steadfast Christian living to dissipate; even so, it took MWBC longer. MWBC continued for about six years without derogatory issues, but the pastor was still not convinced that the community would receive the witness of MWBC through a door-to-door evangelical methodology; therefore, one night during sermon prep, an idea came to him about implementing the model he designed. The concept was that if MWBC cannot be effective in door-to-door evangelism, then bring the community into the church. This concept came when the Lord instilled in him the sermons on the three I's of evangelism. Evangelizing will be vastly simplified if MWBC could get the community to come to them to be a part of their church environment. The pastor then introduced his ideas to the congregation in sermon after sermon teaching them the importance of involvement because if the community comes and the members are not here, it will add to the stigma. It is time for MWBC to be the gospel, and they willingly received the message, with several members staying after services inquiring how they could be utilized to serve the church efficiently. In one sermon, the pastor urged volunteers to stay back to help with the car show, and about one-third of the congregation stayed after the services desiring to cooperate.

Many events were expedited and promoted, presenting the love of God in the Mineral Well and ambiance communities exhibiting MWBC in a new light. This successful model, which has placed MWBC in a better light in the community, developed from an amalgamation of church revitalization models, church growth models, and biblical fundamentals that indicate how stigmas are removed through steadfastness in the Spirit of Christ and, most importantly

outreaching the community by bringing the community into a church environment. Although MWBC still possesses a stigma from members who left years ago and still choose to gossip about the church, it is dissipating rapidly after the implementation of this DMIN action. If this congregation remains steadfast in its faith and zeal, it will regain the holy character it used to possess in the Mineral Wells community. Many positive developments took place, and MWBC appears to have a radiant future if they hold fast to the profession of their faith without wavering (Heb 10:23).

### DMIN Results

This DMIN action brought several positive results in the community via three factors 1), MWBC revived and possessed a willing heart to interact with the community 2), MWBC was more active in functions and free events in twelve weeks than the average church their size is in about eighteen months and 3) the explicitly designed outreach brought the community into a church environment. Rejuvenating the church before this DMIN action produced a church zeal necessary to carry out such a grueling task in such a brief time. Reviving MWBC came from strong biblical preaching showing the love of God through the power of forgiveness, which immensely facilitated this congregation to embrace one another. Second, the results of the FWR eclipsed all expectations causing MWBC to become like family. Through these two actions, MWBC was ready for the task at hand. However, reviving the church did not cure the stigma problem, which continued for years after the church was walking in Christian love. After more than five years of revitalization, this DMIN action significantly facilitated quenching this lingering stigma. The rummage sale, bake sale, car show, first responders' day, game night, easter egg hunt, dinner-sings, three food pantries, and more contributed to hundreds in the Mineral Wells community to come through the doors, and MWBC members were here to greet

them in Christian love. The stigma began to subside once the community entered the church doors and witnessed and felt a renewed sincere Spirit of Christ in the church.

There should be models on stigma removal or restoring wounded church reputations, such as works on spiritual formation or discipleship. Scholars should compose more resources facilitating churches struggling with a stigma because if not remedied, this could be the last stage of a church before closure. Turning a church around with a stigma is not as straightforward as reviving a church. One Scripture exploited throughout this DMIN action is Proverbs 18:19, which says, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." MWBC knows firsthand that surmounting a stigma is not as simple as reviving a church. Overcoming a stigma from an offended community does not come through revival, for the stigma is as strong as the bars of a castle; therefore, if this subject matter were addressed more in modern literature, it would facilitate many struggling churches enormously. More scholars should write about a Church Stigma, healing a wounded reputation, or restoring the church's holy character in the community. They are information out there, as identified in the literature review, but it is troublesome to come by. Many suggestions and ideas came from several books. Still, most of what was needed was always a secondary study at best and not the primary focus of how to restore the church's name in a community that does not want to interact with them; because a good name is better than great riches and precious ointment (Pro 22:1; Ecc 7:1).

#### Building on this DMIN Action

How to build on any action depends on the results received from the data implemented by a project. If the pragmatic methodology brings desirable results, the follow-up will remain consistent with the functional elements. Still, more research may be needed in the areas with the

most negligible results, though that was not the case with this DMIN action. If the data of this methodology revealed that the congregation did not mature or become more involved, that is where one would start. More revival-type programs, dinners, sings, and activities produced productive fellowship among the congregation. If the stigma in the community is not corrected, more events focus on bringing the community through the church's doors. Evangelism is highly effective when the community comes through the church's doors, which cannot be underscored enough. This DMIN action had outstanding results in these two areas, but maturing MWBC leadership/deacon board did not exceed expectations. This DMIN action revealed that two of the five deacons did not want to alter anything that took any of their authority, no matter how much Scripture was presented to them. The methodology was not inappropriately implemented; the deacons have controlled the church in a particular way since 2007 and are determined not to release it. The Scriptures undeniably proclaimed their mismanagement of MWBC. What are the repercussions when individuals rebuff the Word of God, refusing to repent when their error is before their eyes?

It is relevant to note that when a model is biblically sound and produces not the coveted results, this does not mean that the model is flawed. More often than not, it reveals stiff-necked individuals who are unduly hardened and challenging to reach because they prefer their will over the Word of God, which is unequivocally the Lord's will. Jewish synagogues repeatedly rejected Jesus because of their traditional beliefs, but He did not change His model; instead, He spoke to the hardness of their hearts. Is this model perfect? Absolutely not, but the area with the least effective results possessed much Scripture that was not refuted but rejected. They agreed that the Scriptures were correctly interpreted and explained and that the New Testament church

was established according to the Scriptures stated in the meetings. Still, they did not wish MWBC to implement that system.

What is the next step for MWBC? The pastor is currently modifying the bylaws and will finish them soon. The other deacons and some interviewed and surveyed are excited about the amendments because Scripture references are provided for each additional bylaw. The two deacons cannot refute these changes. Nevertheless, they assert that they do not prefer change; therefore, the congregation will soon have their say if the deacons do not yield to Scripture. Over two-thirds of the congregation does not know about the pastor's conundrum with the deacon board. If the deacons do not comply at least in some areas with the Scriptures to carry out some much-needed modifications, then the pastor will take this matter to the congregation.

This DMIN action was solid and effective in areas of community outreach and church involvement and unity; therefore, more services that promote these results should continue. As with anything in the church, the pastor, whom God calls the leader of the flock, must not become distracted or emotional, focusing only on correcting problems. The pastor should not be consumed by the deacons and their bylaws and forget to maintain strengthening the congregation and interacting with the community. Jesus said in Revelation 3:2, "to strengthen the things that remain." The pastor should stay just as focused on maturing the congregation and community interaction as on resolving deacons who do not want to be instructed by the Bible.

### Why Church Stigma

The pastor elected to research this topic because the small flock of MWBC has many amazing people that just needed appropriate leading, and they deserved a much better reputation than the one they had. It was the case of a few bad apples spoiling the whole barrel. Everyone



that the pastor has talked to in the church, besides the two brother deacons, is onboard with biblical revolutions and desire to be led by God and His Word. Therefore, the pastor felt he needed to do all he could to rectify the church stigma and the mediocre leadership and bylaws that generated it. Any time one attempts to restore a church, they will meet with spiritual wickedness, which is trying to abolish the church, and many times, spiritual wickedness uses saints as its best weapons, such as the case with Peter and Jesus.

Jesus told Peter that He would be turned over to the gentiles and mocked, spit upon, and crucified. Peter then said, "far be it from thee, Lord" (Matt 16:22). Jesus replied to Peter in Matthew 16:23, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Satan's stronghold on the church is of enormous power when he deceives the saints, who, like Peter, are doing and saying precisely what Satan prefers. When this is the case, a congregation must have biblical knowledge and a leader to guide them to break this stronghold. Many churches close their doors with the small handful of people attending who went through five church splits, and it never occurs to them that they were the reason for all the splits.

Hopefully, the pastor, with others in leadership positions, can enlighten the congregation if the brother deacons remain stiff-necked in their beliefs and refuse to change. The amendments will lead this congregation into spiritual freedom where their faith is not lorded over by unbiblical deacons and the bylaws they wrote (II Cor 1:24; I Pet 5:3). If this is added to this DMIN action, then MWBC has a bright, radiant future.

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## APPENDIX A

Deacons' self-examination Likert scale

Question 1. Through this DMIN action, my understanding of church governance is more constructed according to the Bible than traditional religion or church policies.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
------------------------	------------	----------------	---------------	---------------------------

Question 2. I have a greater desire to follow biblical teachings in church governance.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
------------------------	------------	----------------	---------------	---------------------------

Question 3. Formalism is going through the motions. I will now seek God through prayer and scriptures more after hearing the teachings,

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
------------------------	------------	----------------	---------------	---------------------------

Jesus says in Mark 7:13, "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye."

Question 4. I would rather follow the Bible than church policy (tradition) if the two disagree.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
------------------------	------------	----------------	---------------	---------------------------

Question 5. My biblical knowledge of church governance has increased after the three lectures.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
------------------------	------------	----------------	---------------	---------------------------

In each section, the numbers 1-5 will represent points. 1 is the smallest and five is the greatest. In this section, anything above 15 points should be considered an improvement. The goal is to score 20 points or above through honest answers to determine if the MWBC congregation is growing in maturity and the community.

## APPENDIX B

### Church maturity POST-Likert scale

Question 1. The congregation of MWBC has grown through this DMIN research action.

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>

Question 2. The congregation of MWBC is more involved in ministry.

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>

Question 3. The congregation of MWBC is more active in the community.

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>

Question 4. The congregation of MWBC no longer possesses cliques.

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>

Question 5. The congregation of MWBC has matured some spiritually

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>



In each section the numbers 1-5 will represent points. 1 being the smallest and five being the greatest. In this section, anything above 15 points should be considered an improvement. The goal is to score 20 points or above through honest answers to determine if the MWBC congregation is growing in maturity and the community.

**APPENDIX C**  
**CONSENT FORM**

Title of the Project: Church Stigma: Healing a Wounded Reputation in the Community

Principal Investigator: Ryan S. Ward

**Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be eighteen years old and a member of MWBC. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

**What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of the study is to improve the spiritual maturity in the church and begin removing the stigma of the church in the community.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

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

1. To take a survey about you experiences at MWBC and your personal thoughts.
2. I will interview you at the beginning of this DMIN action and then again eight to twelve weeks later about your thoughts or concern of MWBC. The interview will be voice recorded.
3. You will be asked to participant in a small group teaching course about how the Bible teaches church governance.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include your views on the MWBC and the Mineral Wells community.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study include your church title being mentioned with your words being recorded and this DMIN action being published in the Jerry Falwell liberty for anyone to access, but you name will remain anonymous.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher[s] will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

Include the following in this section:

- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation and will be anonymous upon request.
- The data will be recorded on my phone which is protected with a passcode.
- The data will be deleted after the results are recorded in this DMIN actions and the participant may have a copy at any time upon request. The data will be used in a DMIN action research project.
- The focus groups will know in advance what they say is being recorded before they speak.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

Professional/Grading Authority The researcher serves as [a teacher/professor/supervisor/etc.] at [organization/school/etc.]. To limit potential or perceived conflicts [the study will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated] or [a research assistant will ensure that all data is stripped of identifiers before the researcher receives it.] [If you plan to address the potential conflict using a method other than the two examples provided, please describe your method]. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University [or (name(s) of any other cooperating/engaged institution(s)]. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time [Insert the following statement if you are only conducting an anonymous survey: [prior to submitting the survey]. Delete the statement if your data collection

includes additional/other procedures than an anonymous survey.] without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher[s] at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you [, apart from focus group data,] will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. [Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.] [Note: Revise or remove the focus group information as needed.]

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Ryan S. Ward. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at 304-928-4508 or [jesusavesouls777@gmail.com](mailto:jesusavesouls777@gmail.com). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [name], at [email].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

[Anonymous Survey Research] Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records/you can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record/photograph me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

Legally Authorized Representative Permission

By signing this document, you are agreeing to the person named below participating in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher[s] will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I agree for the person named below to take part in this study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record/photograph the person named below as part of their participation in this study.

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Printed Subject Name

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Printed LAR Name and Relationship to Subject

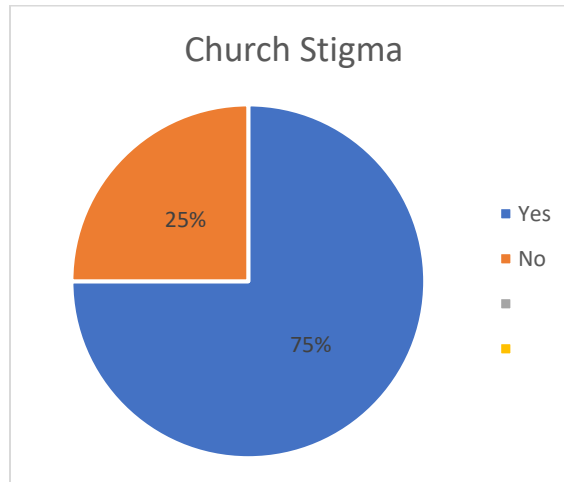
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LAR Signature

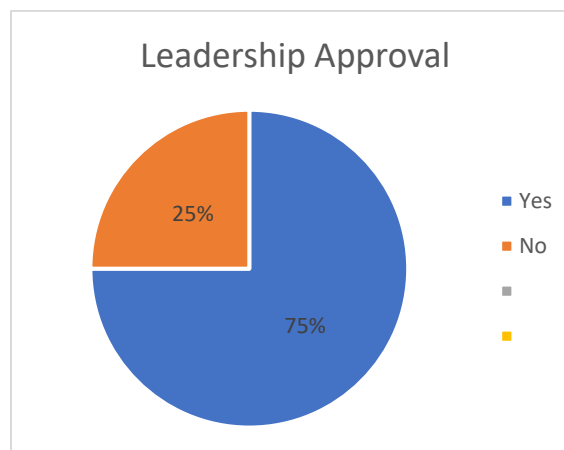
Date

**APPENDIX D**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

1. Do you feel like MWBC possesses a stigma in the community?



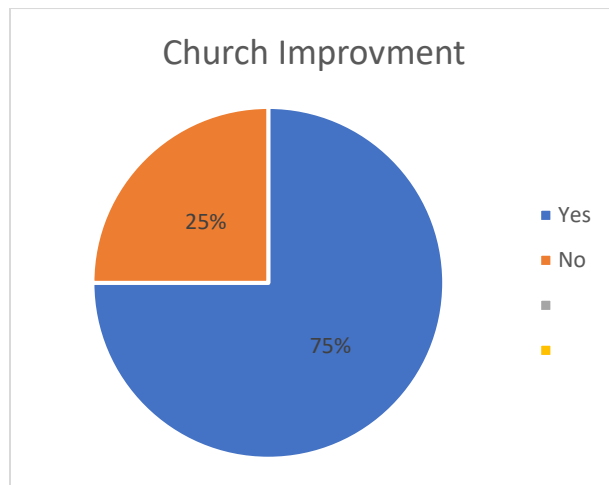
2. How would you rate the leadership of the church? Pastor and deacons.



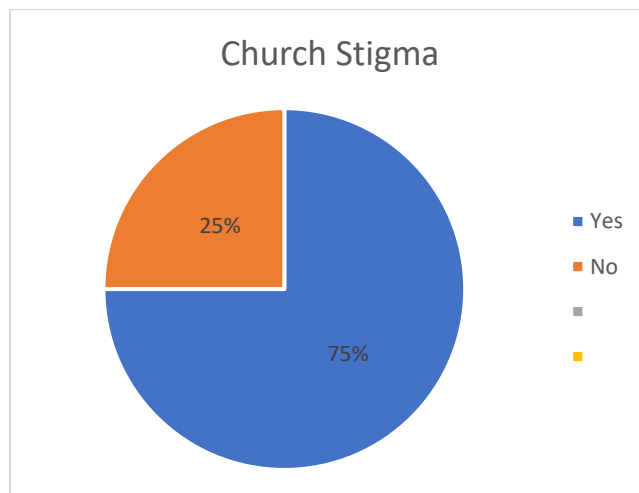
3. Do you feel like MWBC is growing spiritually?



4. Has the church improved since you became a member MWBC?



5. Would you speak positively about MWBC and invite people to attend?



## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

10. What was your perception of MWBC before attending for the first time?
11. Has your perception changed since you have been a member if so, how?
12. What type of reputation does MWBC have in the community according to your friends, family, and acquaintances?
13. Has someone ever spoke negatively about MWBC to you personally, if so please explain?
14. What would you say if someone asked you about your MWBC?
15. How should the church be governed? By the Bible through the pastor/elders, church bylaws, church traditions, laity-led church vote, or some other way?
16. In your perception how is MWBC congregation now compared to when you first arrived?
17. The church has possessed a stigma for many years over a church split, a pastor having an affair, the youth pastor being arrested for drugs, and a carnally divided congregation. Most of these things happened many years ago, but yet the stigma still lingers. What do you suggest should be done to aid in the resolution of this stigma problem?
18. Why do you think MWBC has had so many troubles over the years?
19. Should leadership bear some of the blame, if so why?

This DMIN research action is starting and after eight to twelve weeks there will be another interview of how you think that DMIN action affected the church or community.



## APPENDIX F

### SWOT LIKERT SCALE

Question 1. The strength of MWBC is its loving and growing in grace congregation.

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>

If you believe MWBC has a greater strength than its loving congregation, what strength would that be?

Question 2. The weakness of MWBC is the laity led bylaws that govern the church which produced a mediocre leadership and an immature congregation in past ministries which lead to the church stigma.

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>

If you believe MWBC has a greater weakness than the laity led bylaws, what weakness would that be?

Question 3. The greatest opportunity that MWBC has is winning back it's the community.

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>

If you believe MWBC has a greater opportunity, what opportunity would that be?

Question 4. The greatest threat of MWBC is inadequate leadership allowing the church to be conducted like previous ministries.

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Undecided	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
------------------------	------------	----------------	---------------	---------------------------

If you believe MWBC has a greater threat, what threat would that be?

## APPENDIX G

### AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

Jesus is head of the Church

Jesus is the head of the church as stated repeatedly in Scripture. Ephesians 1:22 says, “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”.

“And hath put all things under His feet” God the Father has placed all things under the feet of Jesus, and this should be fully manifested in the congregation that is obedient to the Scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church.” Christ is the authority in the church and the church is placed in an exalted position in and through Christ and His finished work, and the full manifestation of this should and will be seen in the congregation that walks in obedience to the Scriptures. Believers belong to the church, which is Christ’s body and He is the head of the church. Therefore, believers have a living connection to Christ. The head is responsible for controlling the body and maintaining its function likewise Christ (the Word of God) Is responsible for the governance of His own body, the church.<sup>122</sup>

Ephesians 5:23 says, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.” The church body is to subject unto Christ their head, which is the Word of God (John1:1-3). The body responds to the direction given by the head. Body parts that do not respond to the head’s direction are crippled, paralyzed, or spastic.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: The Complete New Testament in One Volume* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 592.

<sup>123</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 1986), 327.

Colossians 1:18 says, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” “And he is the head of the body, the church”

He is the authority of the church. The church is not to be ran by committees or have a laity-led vote to be the authority of the church. The church should abide in the Spirit and harmonize with the word. If the committee, vote, or church policy goes against the Word of God, then the Word of God is to trump these things because the Word of God Christ Jesus is our head and the body should respond accordingly. The pastor, elders, and deacons are to take a backseat to the written Word of God, if the church desires to be ran in a godly order. Peter was the chief apostle, but still rebuked by Paul with the authority of the Word of God. Peter did not argue with Paul but seemed to humble himself knowing that the word of the gospel by the mouth of Paul was correct (Gal 2:11-21). Jesus is the Word of God; therefore the Word of God is the authority of the church. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And then in verse 14 John clarifies exactly what He means saying. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

#### Elders Rule by and under the Word of God

The Strong’s definition of a Bishop is the superintendent, i.e. Christian officer in genitive case charge of a (or the) church (literally or figuratively):--bishop, overseer.

Strong’s definition of an overseer is virtually the same.

The elders are called the overseers in Acts 20:17-28. Verse 17 Paul calls the elders and then gives them instruction, calling them the overseers of the church which are to feed the flock (v 28). There is no question that Peter and John had authority in the church and what did they call their ruling positions of their authority? Not just apostles, but elders. Peter says in I Peter 5:1 “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder...” John also addresses himself as an elder in II John 1:1 saying, “The elder unto the elect lady...” John again addresses himself as an elder in third John saying, III John 1:1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius... They called themselves elders when writing unto the church showing their authority and that the

authority of the church was to be the elders. The deacons are nowhere in scripture called the ruling body of the church, but table servers and servants. Not only is the popular vote never found to rule the church with authority (except voting out an unruly member Matt18:17), but God says not to rule this way. Ruling through the democracy of popular vote directly violates the commandments of God.

God commanded Moses saying, De 12:8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. In the next chapter God told Moses to, De 13:18 When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God. Throughout the Bible, when the people did what was right in their own eyes, it was against God. Many scriptures teach to do what is right in the eyes of God, and this is the job of the elders. To teach the people what is right in God's eyes. God wants spirit-filled elders to rule the people through Holy Scripture. God ruled Israel through 70 elders, with Moses being the chief ruler. The seventy elders receive the spirit of Moses to rule the people and prophesy unto them, which are the main qualifications of an elder, ruling well and teaching or preaching well. If the problem was too great for the elders, then they brought that problem unto Moses, God's chief ruler.

Exodus 18:26 says, "And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves."

Numbers 11:16-17 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. Num. 11:30 And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

Through Moses' 40-year ministry many problems came to him. Some he judged immediately, and others he took to the Lord in prayer. So, the elders ruled the children of God under the chief elder, Moses. Israel is called "the church in the wilderness" by Stephen (Acts

7:38) and they set the New Testament church up the same way. The church is to have ordained elders with a pastor/bishop as chief overseer the ruling body of the church.

The church is NOT to be ruled by vote, neither is all the weight and burdens of the church to be upon the pastor, for he is just one man and like God told Moses, “they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. (Num 11:17)” The elders making up the presbytery are to rule in the small matters and bring only the hard matters unto the pastor/bishop. The problems of the church are not supposed to be upon the people, for that causes divisions in the church, but upon the ruling body of the elders.

In Acts 15, the ruling body of all churches were the apostles and elders which met and ruled together. Notice that they are no church vote in Acts 15 or anywhere in the New Testament about anything, especially ruling and judging. Acts 15:2 says, “When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.” Then in verse six, the Bible says, “And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. “After they came together and made the decision that told the church what they had decided. Acts 16:4 “And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.”

The elders, which are God’s superintendent’s, are the ruling authority of the local body, they are to rule with humility and not as masters over God’s people, but rule with love, being examples to the flock of God’s love, as stated by the apostle Peter.

First Peter 5:1-3 says, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

Finally, Paul tells the church to esteem them that rule over you in the church, which shows that a church vote was not intended to rule the body of believers.

I Thessalonians 5:12-13 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

Hebrews 13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

### **Harmful Effects of Laity Led, Traditions, and Church Policy**

Many different things in many different Churches have authority when they should not, such as the wealthy, the laity, the deacons, and the like. The harmful effects of this type of government are:

- I. Cripples the pastor. Moses and David are prime examples of this. The popular vote attempted to set Israel up with another leader that tried to take them back to Egypt.

Num 14:2-4 "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." Israel was going to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb, but the LORD intervened and saved them.

Num. 14:10 "But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel."

The popular vote almost stoned David as well.

1Sam 30:6 "And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God." The only time Scripture teaches the congregation to vote is to elect leaders and dismiss unruly members Matt. 18:17; Acts 6:2-4.

- II. Laity-led Breeds politics, everything decided by votes makes people campaign for votes; Absalom did this when he stole the kingdom from David. Read II Sam. 15:1-13
- III. Laity-led confuses the sheep. Bible says vs. Church vote
- IV. Laity-led may produce an egotistic congregation. People control the Church instead of the Church being controlled by God.
- V. Laity-led produces gossip and cliques.
- VI. Laity-led churches become more worldly or carnal because the spiritual leaders are not the leaders of the Church.
- VII. A laity-led church usurps God's authority
- VIII. Laity-led produces unwise decisions, such as Israel wanting to stone Moses and David and saying, "let's go back to Egypt."
- IX. Laity-led often gives the wrong people power, such as the wealthy. Virtually every Church has members of the congregation who trusted in the wealthy more than they trusted in God. Several in this Church, even in leadership, said, "if the Awana commander leaves, we will never make it;" therefore, they were willing to let the Awana commander have more power in the Church than he should have because of his wealth. Nearly every Church has members who say, if so and so leaves the Church, we will never make it. Because of this type of thinking, the wealthy often



receive much more power in the Church than they should have. The Church is the people, not its wealth.

The Strong's definition of a Bishop is the superintendent, i.e., Christian officer in genitive case charge of a (or the) Church (literally or figuratively):--Bishop, overseer. The pastor is the chief elder.

The Strong's definition of a pastor is *poimen*, poy-mane' is a shepherd (literally or figuratively):--Shepherd, pastor. The pastor is to Shepherd, the flock, to feed, tend to, and protect from false doctrine (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 1:3, 10; 4:13, 16; 2 Tim, 3:16 Titus 1:9; 2:1;2 John 1:10;).

The Bishop/Pastor and the Elders are the Overseers of the Church according to Scripture Acts 20:17,28; I Peter 5:1-2;

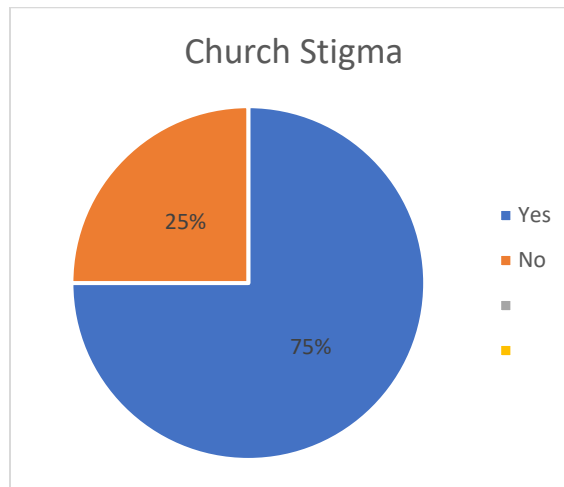
The deacons are ordained as servants of the Church or tabled waiters (Acts 6:2).

They are two definitions of a deacon in Scripture. 1) Deacon = *diakoneo*, dee-ak-on-eh'-o to be an attendant, i.e., wait upon (menially or as a host, friend, or (figuratively) teacher); technically, to act as a Christian deacon:--(ad-)minister (unto), serve, use the office of a deacon 2) (to run on errands; compare 1377); an attendant, i.e. (genitive case) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties);

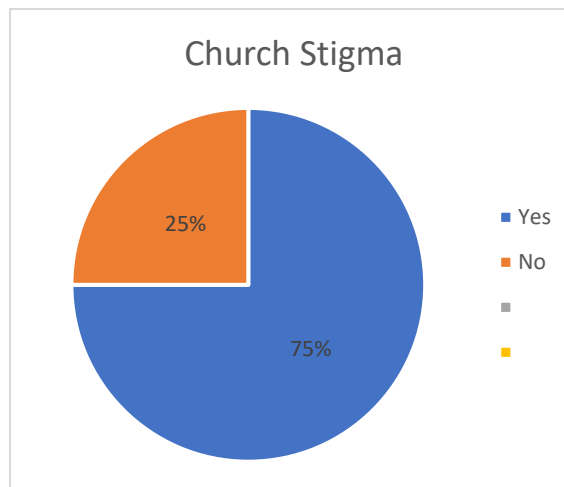
**APPENDIX H****SURVEY QUESTIONS**

Each of these questions will be answered with better, same, or worse.

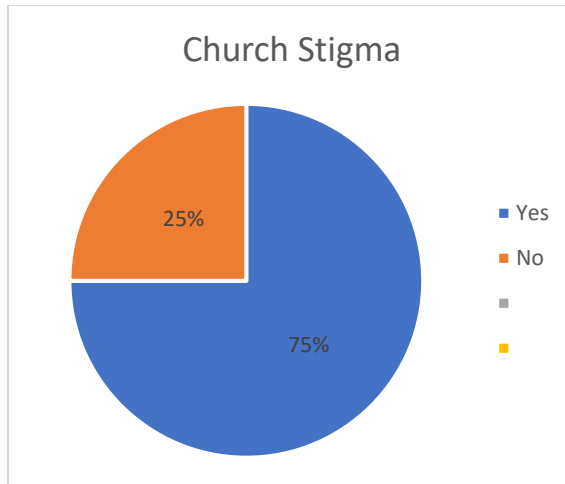
4. Do you feel like MWBC's stigma in the community is better since this DMIN action?



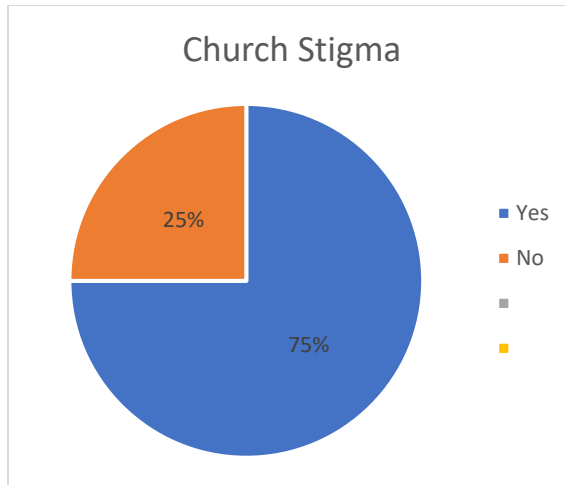
5. How would you rate the leadership of the church after this DMIN action? Better same worse?



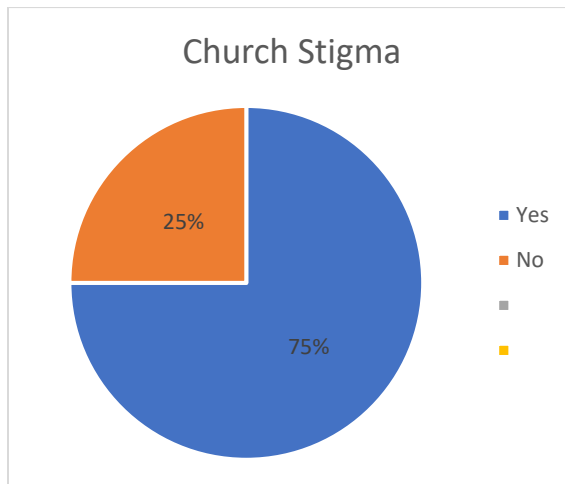
6. Do you feel like MWBC congregation grew through this DMIN action research process?



7. Did the church improve through the DMIN action research?



8. Would you speak positively about MWBC and invite people to attend?



**APPENDIX I****INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

8. Was this DMIN research action successful in maturing church leadership? Please explain.
9. Was this DMIN research action successful in maturing the congregation? Please explain.
10. Was this DMIN research action successful in positively reaching the community? Please explain.
11. What would you have done differently?
12. Do you feel like MWBC is moving in the right direction after this DMIN action, if so why?
13. What do you feel was most effective about this DMIN research action?
14. What do you feel was left undone or unnoticed, and why is it a concern?

**IRB APPROVAL LETTER**

*(The last Appendix of the paper should be the IRB approval notification.)*