

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Discipleship Methods for a Pluralistic Environment at Whiteville Correctional Facility

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity
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Doctor of Ministry

by
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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Volunteers within prisons are not accustomed to a prison's pluralistic environment. Discipleship and relationship building with inmates in prisons have been strained because proper methods are not being incorporated into their chapel services. There is a need to understand inmates' diverse backgrounds and cultures to build more healthy relationships, lead them on the right path, and maintain a successful prison ministry. The goal of this project was to teach volunteers intercultural discipleship methods at Whiteville Correctional Facility. The first phase of the research methods involved doing a pre-interview with each participant that would serve as a control to gauge where the volunteer was in their thinking in relation to culture, relationships, and preaching. The second phase was a series of six group workshops. They focused on appropriate evangelism, centered-set theory, and intercultural discipleship. The third phase consisted of individual exit interviews to assess what was gained through the workshops and how the thinking of the inmates changed from the pre-interview. Five major themes arose through conversations during the workshops and exit interviews. They were: relationships first, understanding contextualization, comprehending the inmate's real-life environment, how living incarnationally improves ministry, and considering what types of worship services work best in a pluralistic environment. Understanding what these themes can do for prison ministry will influence how a prison minister conducts worship service, interacts with inmates, and how they approach spiritual development in a correctional setting.

Abbreviations

ACA	<i>American Correctional Association</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
TDOC	<i>Tennessee Department of Corrections</i>
WCFA	<i>Whiteville Correctional Facility</i>

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Research must be defined and broken down into essential parts at the highest level. This chapter begins with the ministry context where the author currently works, Whiteville Correctional Facility. The section on ministry context will cover the ministry within the prison. It will overview a brief description of the chaplain's duties, the brief history of Whiteville Correctional Facility, the inmates' cultural diversity, and the volunteers' beliefs and values. This chapter will then focus on the problem discovered within Whiteville Correctional Facility within the volunteer base, while the author has been working within this ministry context. Based on this problem, a purpose for the research can be made. The purpose statement section offers a viable solution to the problem statement. The chapter will then turn to the limitations of the study. Delimitations are then formed based on the limitations to set boundaries for the research. This will then set the stage for the thesis of the entire project, which clearly states the problem and purpose, and then projects an outcome on the research performed.

Ministry Context

Whiteville Correctional Facility, owned and operated by CoreCivic of America, is in Whiteville, Tennessee. Whiteville's current population is around 4300 people.¹ The town of Whiteville, Tennessee was founded in the early eighteen hundreds, but was not formally incorporated until nineteen hundred and one.² Located in Hardeman County, much of the surrounding economy is agriculturally and lumber based, with cotton farming making up the

¹ "Whiteville, Tennessee Population 2021," Accessed on 1/13/2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/whiteville-tn-population>.

² "Whiteville, Tennessee – Our History" Accessed on 12/32/2023. <http://townofwhiteville.com/history.html#:~:text=The%20Town%20of%20Whiteville%20was,growing%20communities%20in%20the%20area>.

majority of the economy.³ This is ideal for a prison. The further away a prison is from a high population center, the easier it is for security to capture an escaped convict. While the United States leads the world in number inmates in prison and the rate of incarceration, Whiteville Correctional Facility houses approximately fifteen hundred male Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) inmates.⁴ CoreCivic contracts with various cities, states, and the government to run private prisons. Private prisons account for about twelve percent of the federal prison population.⁵ However, this number falls to eight percent when state prisoners are considered.⁶ Whiteville Correctional Facility is an American Correctional Association (ACA) accredited medium-security prison.⁷ Like most prisons, there are segregated units for inmates that have behavioral issues or commit crimes behind bars. Segregated inmates are on lockdown twenty-three hours out of the day with one hour for recreational time. They account for about seven percent of the prison population in the United States.⁸ The population of inmates consists of various offenders, from simple robbery or drug-related charges to first-degree murder. Nationally, forty-five percent of the prison population is serving time for drug offenses, while the remaining majority are in for weapons, explosives, or arson charges.⁹ Violence and robbery

³ Faye Tennyson Davis, "Hardeman County" *Tennessee Encyclopedia Online* Accessed on 1/26/2023. <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/hardeman-county/#:~:text=The%20county%20was%20formed%20from,the%20first%20county%20court%20clerk.>

⁴ Lauren Kessler *A Grip of Time: When Prison is Your Life* (Bloomington: Red Lighting Books, 2019), 9.

⁵ "U.S. to end private prison contracts; impact on Hamilton County facility unknown" Accessed on 1/26/2023. <https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2016/aug/19/us-end-private-priscontracts-impact-local-ccf/>

⁶ McKenzie Buday and Ashley Nellis, "Private Prisons in the United States." Accessed on 1/26/2023. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/private-prisons-in-the-united-states/>

⁷ Anonymous, "Recently Accredited Facilities" *Corrections Today* Is. 6, Vol. 79, (Nov/Dec 2017): 58.

⁸ "Restricted Housing" Accessed on 1/27/2023. https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_shu.jsp

⁹ "Offenses" Accessed on 1/27/2023. https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_offenses.jsp

charges make up the minority of prison inmates. The facility was initially built in 2002 to house the Wisconsin Department of Corrections inmates. This contract has since expired. According to 1986 Private Prison Contracting Act, a state is only allowed to contract one medium security prison that is not primarily intended to serve special needs inmates.¹⁰ The state of Tennessee circumvented the 1986 Private Prison Contracting Act, which allows only the state of Tennessee to contract with one private prison, by negotiating with the town of Whiteville. The town then contracts with CoreCivic of America to house these inmates.¹¹

The number of inmates at the prison leads to diverse backgrounds, cultures, and religions. Most inmates identify as Christian, but there is also others such as Nation of Islam Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Wiccans, and Rastafarians. The chaplain's job is to ensure that all inmates following a religion have their religious needs and services attended to and that any spiritual needs are met. Since the chaplain is usually a part of only one religion, volunteers are required to help meet the diverse inmate needs at Whiteville Correctional Facility. As a chaplain at Whiteville Correctional Facility, the goal is to supervise the volunteers' appointments and training and schedule the dates their ministries are performed. Some volunteers come weekly; others come monthly.

There are nineteen volunteers at Whiteville Correctional Facility that assist in the area of religion. All of them, save one, are of the Christian religion. There is a clergy member of the Catholic Church, two volunteers from the Baptist denomination, one from Assemblies of God, and the rest identify as non-denominational. Other volunteers come from a background of

¹⁰ "2014 Tennessee Code-Title 41 - Correctional Institutions and Inmates-Chapter 24 - Private Prison Contracting Act of 1986" Accessed on 1/26/2023. <https://law.justia.com/codes/tennessee/2014/title-41/chapter-24/section-41-24-103/>

¹¹ W.J.M. Cody, "Privatization of Correctional Institutions: The Tennessee Experience" *Vanderbilt Law Review* Iss. 4 Vol. 40 (May 1987): 829.

addiction and represent Christian-based halfway houses. However, these programs are recognized by the state of Tennessee as halfway houses and are constrained by the laws mandated by Tennessee. Except for four volunteers, the volunteers have not been ordained but attend a church they work with and may or may not have a ministry at their church.

The volunteers have had no outside training on ministry with prison inmates from a church or outside entity. The prison's only training for a prison chaplain volunteer is training on what is allowed and not allowed inside the prison. The prison's only training for a prison chaplain volunteer is training on what is allowed and not allowed inside the prison. This is because the prison cannot show bias toward a specific religion as a professional organization. Therefore, the training must be on handling inmates in specific situations for safety concerns. There is also training on the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). On September fourth, 2003, President George W. Bush signed into law the Prison Rape Elimination Act.¹² It prohibits and seeks to eliminate cases of sexual assault and sexual misconduct in institutions around the United States.¹³ It also serves to provide information, resources, recommendations and funding to correctional institutions that have a need to protect individuals from prison rape.¹⁴ In the document that is now public law, their investigation estimated that about thirteen percent of the incarcerated population had experienced rape within the prison system.¹⁵ The problem that occurred after PREA's passing is that inmates can abuse this, thus training has to occur. Based

¹² "Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)" Accessed on 1/23/2023.
<https://bja.ojp.gov/program/prea/overview>

¹³ "Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)" Accessed on 1/23/2023.
<https://www.tn.gov/correction/sp/prisonrapeeliminationact.html#:~:text=The%20Prison%20Rape%20Elimination%20Act,sexual%20misconduct%20in%20correctional%20institutions.>

¹⁴ "Prison Rape Elimination Act" Accessed on 1/23/2023.
<https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/about/prison-rape-elimination-act>

¹⁵ "Public Law 108-79—SEPT. 4, 2003—Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003" Accessed on 1/25/2023.
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-108publ79/pdf/PLAW-108publ79.pdf>

on this act, a volunteer must comprehend the act, and it is heavily advised that they do not make any physical contact with an inmate.

Volunteers' only experience with inmates is the amount of time working in Whiteville Correctional Facility. They will never receive religious training from Whiteville Correctional facility because the company must remain unbiased towards a specific religious choice. They may have had training from their local ministry on discipleship and the teachings of Christ, but the environment at a local church is much less pluralistic than in prison. It is unlikely that volunteers have been trained in intercultural discipleship and communication in the past.

The volunteers' drive to perform ministry within the prison comes from their background or desire to minister to these people, based on Matthew 25:31-40. This Scripture shows that Jesus separates the sheep from the goats when he “comes in his glory” (Matt 25:31 English Standard Version). Jesus will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left (Matt 25:33). Jesus then talks about the qualities of the sheep, saying that they clothed him, visited him when he was sick, and came to him in prison (Matt 25:35-36). When the disciples ask Jesus when they have done any of these things, Jesus answers by saying, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matt 25:40 ESV). Since Jesus specifically mentioned others visiting him in prison, this becomes the meaning for the volunteers to perform ministry within the prison.

This volunteer group is driven for the right reasons; they are just inexperienced with the different cultures within the prison. The ethnicity of all the volunteers is Caucasian, whereas the inmate ethnicity is mainly African American and Hispanic, though there are Caucasians. In Tennessee prisons, Caucasians represent about fifty-one percent of the prison population, while African Americans represent forty-four percent of the population. The remainder of the

population is a mix of Latino, Asian, and others.¹⁶ Within the volunteers' ministries outside the prison, it is the opposite, with Caucasians making up most of their congregation and African Americans and Hispanics being the minority. They have not ministered to such a diverse population before; therefore, they are unaware of specific ways to communicate to continue success.

Inmates attend services for one of five reasons: Contagious and meaningful worship, a safe haven for their faith as a measure of recompensing their guilt, a place to connect with God and other beliefs if they so choose, building and exploring new relationships, and to maintain their sanity to find some meaning to their incarceration.¹⁷ Another reason not contained in the literature is that inmates attend services simply because they would instead pass the time in the chapel than in their cell. Inmates like this attend all services regardless of religion, and some even hold no set of specific beliefs. For this very reason, a Christian service often contains Muslims, Wiccans, Jews, Atheists, and Rastafarians. It presents a unique opportunity and a congregation that would never exist outside of the prison.

Volunteers do not actively recognize inmates' reasoning why they may attend the services. Their core beliefs believe that their ministry contains contagious and meaningful worship and that all inmates come because they want to be there. They view their prison ministry congregation as their outside ministry congregation, a set of Christian believers coming because they want to hear God's Word. Some do come for this. Others come to get out of their cells or because they want to see their friend. A minority of people attend all services despite the religion

¹⁶ "Tennessee Profile" Accessed on 1/27/2023. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/TN.html>

¹⁷ Josiah N. Opata, *Spiritual and Religious Diversity in Prisons: Focusing on How Chaplaincy Assists in Prison Management* (Springfield: Charles C Thomas Publisher LTD, 2001), 172.

being practiced. Some people come to services to conduct criminal activity and are not interested in the service.

Inmates operate inside a different world where status and whom they know often differ between life and death. Inmates also misuse relationships with volunteers and staff to get what they want. This is how contraband enters the prison. However, this is not all inmates, and most can genuinely receive positive influence if a good relationship is formed and maintained.

Volunteers form relationships with some inmates, but their goal is often to preach and teach more than to gain a connection and disciple an inmate. The volunteers base this on outside ministries where people are often addressed as a group, and those who want to form relationships come forward independently.

Due to diversity, some inmates are more socially responsive than others. Volunteers often see the inmates trying to build a relationship to “get over on them.” In their initial training, they have been taught that the inmates will test them and never to trust an inmate. Due to the manipulation that can occur, this is not a wrong statement. Trust in this circumstance should only mean that a volunteer should not trust an inmate on the prison rules or do anything beyond what policy allows. A volunteer should trust that if discipleship occurs, the prisoner will do what is required to keep growing with God. However, because they do not significantly understand how inmate manipulation works, volunteers often do not try hard to maintain the connection. Inmates tempt and test newcomers regularly, and some do not have the most excellent intentions. Still, a staff chaplain quickly learns to discern the meaningful from the unmeaningful interactions with inmates.

Outside of the initial training that volunteers receive about prison operations and inmates, they are not taught about the pluralism inside the prison. Volunteers at Whiteville Correctional Facility have little to no experience ministering to those outside their religion. When faced with

such a task, they often shift to proselytization of the inmate instead of respectful interaction and an outward showing of the Christian faith through their own life. Instead of gaining a functional relationship that could become the building blocks of change for that inmate, inmates lose respect for the volunteer and cease to interact or attend a service held by that volunteer. This is not always the case, but when it is not, the volunteer instead chooses to say nothing and is instead proselytized by the inmate for their religion or a specific set of beliefs within Christianity. Proselytization is discouraged in this environment; while this is undoubtedly allowable in a respectable form in a Christian service, some inmates have stopped attending services because of the proselytization and feelings of being pushed to do something they are not yet ready to do. There seems to be a lack of understanding of respectful evangelism and evangelism based on relationship and engagement with the individual.

Volunteers also underestimate some of the prisoner's knowledge. The teaching is often basic by the volunteers. After all, they think they have not been exposed to Christianity before because they are criminals. Most inmates attending the Christian services have a background in church, and while some are more knowledgeable than others, most do have a basic understanding of Christianity. Inmates at Whiteville Correctional Facility have plenty of time on their hands and are not constantly challenged in their growth by the volunteers that lead the services. There is a deep hunger by a select few to understand God's Word better. They are looking for a relationship with an individual to help get them there. While the purpose is never to avoid those who need a basic understanding of Christ, the inmates who want to be on the proverbial "meat" of Christianity have been left behind due to a lack of solid relationships that could lead them down this road.

The research writer, the current chaplain at Whiteville Correctional Facility, arrived almost one year ago. Outside of the initial training, there were only four active volunteers at the

time. The chaplain immediately began to recruit people. Previously, services had been shut down for over a year due to COVID-19. There were few services in operation at that time due to low staffing. The unemployment rate in the United States was recovering from eight percent.¹⁸

Combining low staff with a complete shutdown of services for over a year made many volunteers move on to something different. The chaplain worked very hard to recruit and hold more services. Over time, the chaplain filled the weekly services with 17 volunteer and chaplain-led services

Whiteville Correctional Facility had never had a Sunday service before, so the chaplain started one that he would lead. Knowing the basics of his research, he offered the services and decided to test some of the theories he had been researching. The chaplain created a church that would have no board and would only operate inside the prison every other Sunday. The original name was Whiteville Correctional Community Church. The goal was to create a separation between the culture of the prison and the culture during the Sunday service. Inmates were appointed to do announcements, tithes, and general tasks like setting up the video or handing out the songbooks. Within two weeks of starting, the Sunday morning service would be the chapel's most attended. The tithes that were taken up were individual commissaries that would then be taken to the unit managers to be given out to indigent inmates. The thought was to create a time and a place where the inmates did not feel that they were pressured to be something they were not, as well as the ability to create long-lasting relationships that could lead to discipleship. It worked unequivocally.

The “non-sanctioned” church was quickly renamed when an inmate stated that he wanted to take off the “correctional” portion because he did not feel like a prisoner when he attended the

¹⁸ “United States: Unemployment Rate from 1999 to 2021” Accessed on 1/27/2023.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/263710/unemployment-rate-in-the-united-states/>

service. Everyone in attendance agreed. Three discipleship groups of fifteen or more have been started from this service alone, and many have received salvation. This service was meant to set the stage and show the volunteer what could be achieved by understanding the pluralistic environment and using respectful evangelism and intercultural discipleship methods.

These factors make up the ministry context within Whiteville Correctional Facility. All these factors contribute to the research that will be conducted at Whiteville Correctional Facility with the volunteers. The context in which the research is being undertaken can now be synthesized into the problem that is being presented.

Problem Presented

The problem at Whiteville Correctional Facility is that volunteers are untrained in discipleship methods within a pluralistic environment. The lack of prisoner response to the volunteers' current discipleship methods causes low attendance and a general lack of interest in their services. Volunteers cannot make the deep connections and relational engagements necessary to see the inmates grow from whatever point they are at with Christ.

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, volunteers at Whiteville Correctional Facility regularly dropped out and quit. Community engagement by the chaplain continued to recruit volunteers, but turnover still existed. Aside from training online, which takes approximately thirty minutes, and an annual recertification every three years after, no additional training is required for the volunteers at Whiteville Correctional Facility. Reducing the amount of training a volunteer needs to take to serve at the prison should, by all accounts, make it easier for a volunteer to start their ministry within the prison. Nevertheless, recruiting volunteers is not at a level seen in the pre-COVID-19 years.

Recently, Whiteville Correctional Facility suffered, like many others, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Chapel services stopped for more than a year, and volunteers were at an all-time

low when the ability to offer services to inmates returned. Turnover in the chaplain position also occurred, leaving the volunteers without a steady contact for some time. The chaplain position at Whiteville Correctional Facility was vacated for half a year before this writer was hired to take the job.

This unprecedented time without a chaplain and services took the inmates out of their regular routine. When services were finally able to be held again, volunteers found it more challenging to maintain attendance within the services. The lack of attendance and a low response to ministry engagement caused more volunteers to quit. The lack of volunteers has left the chapel without many services for months. Therefore, inmates have become used to the fewer services offered. The chaplain has made strides in this area, and a normal routine is almost re-established.

There has been no attempt by anyone to train the volunteers outside what is required to become a volunteer at the prison. The chaplain implements anything outside of the formal training needed. However, the chaplain is not required to present any outside training other than an orientation to the volunteers. The mandatory orientation takes the volunteers around the prison during a time when no prisoner is outside of their pod. The chaplain then goes over details of what a volunteer should and should not do, explains the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and has paperwork that a volunteer must sign to show that they understand the PREA laws.

There is a gap in the literature regarding training volunteers in a prison ministry on how to evangelize and disciple in a pluralistic environment relationally. Literature for volunteers within the prison exists but does not address how they are to engage in a pluralistic environment relationally, which may have led to the current state of the volunteers at Whiteville Correctional Facility.

The volunteers who are seen as successful within this ministry operate a ministry in conjunction with a halfway house. They often provide a simple Bible study followed by interviews with inmates seeking to get a bed within their halfway house. This is a reasonable and necessary ministry within a prison. These types of volunteers typically only come to Whiteville Correctional Facility once per month. These volunteers focus on recruiting to the halfway house so that discipleship can occur there. Therefore, these individuals do not always intend authentic discipleship, just recruitment. While this is necessary within a prison, it shows that the inmates at Whiteville Correctional Facility do not have a current regular volunteer solely focused on their development and discipleship while serving their sentence.

Unsuccessful volunteers seem to be operating at a slower pace than others. They mean well, but inmates' different cultures and backgrounds hinder their ministry. Their ministry seems too programmatic and robotic than fluid and integrative; therefore, inmates do not regularly attend. This causes the volunteer to begin to lose interest and burn out over time. These volunteers are driven to see inmates disciplined, but the methods they have been taught within their church are ineffective.

As shown in the ministry context, they also seem to underestimate their knowledge and exposure to Christianity simply because they have not made relationships and engaged with the inmates well. Not all inmates are willing to talk about their backgrounds, but several inmates that attend the Christian services have a testimony and love talking about their past and how they can grow for their future. The volunteers do not know this because they are more focused on conducting their service than they are focused on ministering to the inmates. The inmates have even tried connecting with the volunteers. Though they do like the volunteers because they are sacrificing an amount of time to come to the facility to do a service, they have yet to experience a real connection with any of them.

The inmates at Whiteville Correctional Facility who are serious about changing their lives desire a deep connection and discipleship. They are hungry to learn and want to know more about Christianity. As the chaplain at Whiteville Correctional Facility, this writer has made many connections and quickly started the discipleship process with a few of these inmates simply because of their desire to grow and learn. Therefore, it clearly shows that the volunteers have a chance to engage and connect with these individuals on a deeper level.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to develop workshops to equip volunteers with discipleship and respectful evangelistic methods so they can minister more successfully in a pluralistic environment. Six workshops will be offered to religious volunteers. Each workshop will focus on specific intercultural discipleship methods to create greater ministry success and improved prisoner response. Two interviews will be done with each volunteer participant. These are the pre-interview and the post-interview to measure the qualitative results. The interviews will show how each volunteer has grown and what they have learned from their training.

Targeting the volunteers for this research project helps the inmates and increases the number of interactions inmates have with the outside world in a positive way. The volunteer base can perform more ministry to inmates than the chaplain, due to the chaplain's administrative duties within the prison. If the volunteers succeed in their churches, the inmates have a better chance for rehabilitation.

This research will also grow volunteers by making them more culturally aware. By focusing on intercultural discipleship, the volunteers will be exposed to discipleship methods that fit the environment they are serving. Most volunteers serve their main ministry at a church filled with Christians. A prison is a radically different environment. The discipleship methods taught in

their main ministry do not always work. This research will equip these volunteers with something that can allow them to understand how to engage and communicate with others in such a different environment.

Most importantly, through the training, the volunteers can establish a better ministry within the prison setting. They will feel more successful because they can relate better and engage the inmates. They will also see the inmate grow as their relationship with the volunteers will allow discipleship to occur. Ultimately, this will lead to the goal of making volunteers more aware of intercultural discipleship methods in a pluralistic environment.

Basic Assumptions

The researcher assumes that volunteers have a “call” or drive to perform ministry within the prison and have not been previously placed in such a position. An additional assumption is that the volunteers want to improve their ministry within the prison, and they have a need that needs to be met to be successful within their prison ministry. Another assumption is that the volunteers have never had any experience working in a pluralistic environment, aside from within the prison or evangelism in the outside world.

The research assumes that the volunteers have some overarching ministry they are a part of while serving within their prison ministry. This could be a church or an organized ministry that they lead and have accountability, such as a board of directors or elders, that helps guide the individual outside of the prison ministry they serve. The research also assumes that the volunteers have experience serving in a ministry outside of the prison and have a basic level of knowledge to serve in a role that is becoming of what it takes to operate their services inside of the prison.

Additionally, it is assumed that the training will have the resources needed to carry out this training provided by the prison chaplain. It is assumed that this training will be successful based on the other assumptions that have been made.

Definitions

This project has several terms that will need to be defined. Not every individual uses words the same way. Therefore, this section will focus on key terms and provide the reader with the definition of the critical terms discussed within this project.

Intercultural Discipleship. This is defined as the process of worldview transformation whereby Jesus' followers center their lives on God's kingdom and obey Christ's commands in culture, utilizing culturally available genres.”¹⁹

Cooperative Pluralism. Defined as the practice of sustaining acceptable and supportable coexistence between adherents of different religions or faith groups.²⁰

Intercultural Communication. Defined as a set of ideals that of how social interaction can be accomplished smoothly among people within a certain community or environment.²¹

Pods. Technologically assisted, decentralized, designed living spaces that approximate “normality” by providing safer and more comfortable living environments for inmates that remove security gates, bars, and grilles, enabling prison officers to be more than just a “turn-

¹⁹ Jay W. Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship (Encountering Mission): Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 149.

²⁰ Alan T. Baker, *Foundations of Chaplaincy: A Practical Guide* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 95.

²¹ Stella Ting-Toomey and Tenzin Jorey, *Communicating Across Cultures* (New York: Guilford Press, 2018), 20.

key.”²² Pods are self-contained areas with cells, phones, showers, and a dayroom in which a control booth houses a guard to monitor all the activities of the inmates in each pod.²³

Limitations

The limitations of this research include sample size and the inability to gather feedback from TDOC ministry participants. There are only fourteen volunteers currently at Whiteville Correctional Facility, and twelve of the fourteen can participate. CoreCivic operates many prisons across the state of Tennessee. However, it cannot be assumed that they suffer the same problem as Whiteville Correctional Facility. Furthermore, no TDOC inmate can be interviewed about the volunteers or about the ministries the volunteers hold within the prison. Specific policy at TDOC and CoreCivic does not allow this for published research. Therefore, this research will only be able to focus on volunteers specifically.

Another limitation of this study is that all Christian volunteers are not of the same denomination. Different beliefs could lead to varying interpretations of the Scripture that will be presented within the training. Also, some of the inmates are unreachable by the volunteers, meaning they attend services, but have no genuine desire to conform to a religion. These inmates use the scheduled services to commit crimes or escape jail cells. Though the hope is that some can be reached, in other cases, the volunteer, and even the chaplain, will never be able to help them. It will always present a burden to the volunteers in prison ministries and is not controllable. Some inmates are also of a completely different religion and attend Christian services to supplement their own religion or worldview. These inmates have a chance of being converted, but it is still a limitation because they may not have any desire to do so, and like the

²² Y. Jewkes, B. Crewe, and J. Bennett, *Handbook on Prisons* (Routledge: Taylor and Francis, 2023), 8.

²³ K.C. Carceral and Thomas J. Bernard, *Prison Inc: A Convict Exposes Life Inside a Private Prison* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 11.

inmates who are just trying to get out of their cells, they may have no real desire to conform to Christianity.

A further limitation is the nature of security within the prison. Sometimes, the prison can be put on lockdown due to security issues due to various circumstances. In this case, no prisoner can move outside their cells. This leads to no religious services being available. Lockdowns can occur at any point in time for any length of time, depending on the security issue the prison is facing. The prison can also lock down individual pods due to security issues within that pod. In this case, the prison is not totally locked down. Still, if the pod contains several inmates regularly attending church, this can drastically affect the number of inmates attending the religious services. This is, unfortunately, unavoidable and can affect the attendance of services. If a lockdown occurs during the interview period, the interviews will be rescheduled to allow the volunteer time to hold services after they have undergone the six-week training.

Delimitations

This research will be delimited to persons that volunteered for religious services within Whiteville Correctional Facility. The volunteers will be further limited to persons that identify as Christian. This research will not study the volunteers' educational background, marital status, political beliefs, or sexual orientation. This study will also not look at the volunteer's background or denomination within Christianity, including anyone of a Catholic background, despite its differences from Protestant Christianity.

Thesis Statement

If the volunteers understand how to use intercultural discipleship within a pluralistic environment, they will understand how to implement specific discipleship and leadership methods that will allow them to connect better and relationally engage with those they serve. The

pre-interview will establish where the volunteer is currently in their ministry, their previous exposure to those in a pluralistic environment, and prior knowledge of a person's culture. Using this knowledge base, the volunteers will undergo six seminar sessions on intercultural discipleship, how to communicate inter-culturally, and how to evangelize respectfully in a pluralistic environment.

The volunteers will learn specific engagement tactics that focus on the background, previous exposure to religion, and developing an understanding of the person's current worldview. The training sessions will allow the volunteers to understand themselves better culturally and others culturally. By focusing on the person's worldview, they can disciple the individual using the Bible and other things to change that person to fit the worldview that comes from the Bible. When this is done, the underlying behaviors and characteristics change as the worldview changes. The volunteers will see an increase in attendance in their ministries and be able to develop authentic relationships within their ministries that allow them to disciple these individuals and help them grow in their relationship with Christ. When the training sessions are completed, a post-interview will be conducted with the volunteers to see what they have learned and how they have applied the research.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Significant gaps exist in the literature relating to this project. To overcome this, the writer identified sources that could connect to the subject matter. However, they do not directly address the thesis being researched. When observing the problem at Whiteville Correctional Facility and examining the current literature related to this problem, the following themes were synthesized and leveraged in this ministry project.

Literature Review

Prisons in the United States try to offer a rehabilitative environment for inmates from all backgrounds, cultures, and religions. It is the chaplain and volunteer chaplains' job to facilitate these inmates' needs when it comes to the various religions the inmates might follow. In the review of literature, pluralistic environments were mentioned frequently as an aspect of ministry outside of the four walls of a church.

The goal of this literature is to review current literature that pertains to the topic. When examining the various literature, there is literature concerning the topics listed within this research. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding training volunteers to disciple inmates. There is considerable literature on chaplaincy and chaplaincy within a prison, so the literature review will begin here. Since the volunteers are considered "volunteer chaplains," it would be helpful to touch on the literature pertaining to chaplaincy to understand better what literature exists relating to the research project.

Chaplaincy

The literature on chaplaincy does not closely address the research, but there are quite a few sources on chaplaincy itself. In the literature review, most literature starts out with the foundations of chaplaincy as a call to it. Chaplaincy is different from pastoring, as the focus is

not to provide a service but to provide spiritual care, generally in some kind of crisis, within a professional environment. Chaplaincy is intended to be conscientiously caring and supportive of the interests of those cared for. It is relational and depends upon the capacity to understand the needs of those being cared for and accept responsibility for meeting some or all of those needs.²⁴ In essence, they get in front of people that are facing spiritual pain. Chaplains identify the spiritual need and focus on how to meet it and best identify it.²⁵ The literature review shows that the chaplain has the qualities of a caregiver. Caring for others is a baseline for chaplains because chaplains tend to gravitate toward restoring and sustaining the well-being of others.²⁶ Due to the essentially pluralistic environment in which a chaplain serves and some areas in which one serves, such as a hospital, the chaplain often does not get to spend a long time with the individual. In some professional areas of chaplaincy, the ministry is primarily considered to be a ministry of presence. The “ministry of presence” is a form of servanthood characterized by suffering alongside the hurt and oppressed.²⁷

This type of chaplaincy is present in military, hospital, corporate, and prison chaplaincy. The goal is not to build a relationship. The goal is to be a “presence” or the invocation of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation.²⁸ Being a chaplain means that one is associated with some form of religious background, usually a Christian. The “presence” of the chaplain can be a calming force. When a chaplain arrives, the person knows that this person will have some kind of

²⁴ Christopher Swift, Mark Cobb, and Andrew Todd, *A Handbook of Chaplaincy Studies: Understanding Spiritual Care in Public Places* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 26.

²⁵ George Fitchett, Kelsey White, and Kathryn Lyndes, *Evidence-Based Healthcare Chaplaincy: A Research Reader* (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018) 26.

²⁶ Alan T. Baker, *Foundations of Chaplaincy: A Practical Guide* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 101.

²⁷ Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care, and the Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 178.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

religious background and will usually associate their “presence” with that of a person who lives a good life and presents themselves in a manner that shows Christ incarnationally. Often, in these types of chaplaincies, one meeting can be a defining moment of hope for the person during their suffering. Chaplaincy varies in its strategies. There are chaplains that focus on ministry of presence and chaplaincy that focuses on outcomes. In the ministry of presence, it means having no agenda and being present.²⁹ Outcome oriented chaplaincy focuses on using chaplaincy assessment, intervention, and outcomes to measure and improve outcomes within a chaplain’s work.³⁰ However, prison chaplaincy and prison ministry are entirely different.

A hospital chaplain may only get to visit a person once. If they have a longer stay, it may equate to a few more visits. A military chaplain may deal with a soldier that is involved in operations like Afghanistan and Iraq, and they have questions that arise from their involvement in these operations that can be extremely traumatic.³¹ The persons being ministered are communally serving a sentence of multiple years, not confined to a hospital bed for a few days. The chaplain can conduct regular services with the same people. Still, there are moments in prison chaplaincy where a death notification is required, or a situation has occurred where the inmate is suffering from disease. The difference is that the chaplain, barring certain circumstances, will have more time to connect relationally with the individual than in other areas in which one may serve. Chaplains in prison routinely visit cells to give words of advice, visit inmates in the medical area of the prison, and conduct services.³²

²⁹ Brent Peery, *Outcome Oriented Chaplaincy: Perceptive, Intentional, and Effective Caring* (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2021), 23.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Andrew Todd, *Military Chaplaincy in Contention: Chaplains, Churches and the Morality of Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 18.

³² Hosea Quinby, *The Prison Chaplaincy and Its Experiences* (Concord: D.L Guernsey, 2019), 14.

Intercultural Communication within chaplaincy has somewhat been addressed in *Pastoral and Spiritual Care Across Religions and Cultures II*. This book provides some incredible viewpoints about how spiritual care is provided across religions and cultures. This research project is more focused on discipling and building relationships with inmates, but within this book, there are views on relational conflict within an intercultural context. The authors provide a scenario where someone's brother committed suicide, and one of the family members wanted to recite a psalm that captured his feelings of grief. Another member of the family was against the reading of the psalm. The authors point out that the particularity of one's own truth is evident in an intercultural context. They conclude that the best way to overcome this is to understand everyone's spiritual convictions and accept them as their point of view.³³ In their own way, the authors point out that spiritual care must accept and respect the preservation of personal boundaries when it comes to religious life.³⁴ Though they do not touch on the point of incarnational living, it is almost implied. The authors write, "When pastoral care helps people to learn to live with limitation, it takes on an important function, it helps to bring about an empowerment that incorporates a sense of realism."³⁵ This does have an application to the research in terms of showing tolerance. Still, this research requires a chaplain conglomerate all views, no matter what they are, into one, all while presenting Christ through themselves.

The problem with this research is that when the focus is on limitation, the question must be asked: What is being limited? Is it God? There are ways to keep one's own worldview present in an intercultural context. The gospel has the power to transcend cultural boundaries in an

³³ Claudia Kohli Reichenback, Isabelle Noth, Pamela Copper-White, and Hansjorg Znoj, *Pastoral and Spiritual Care Cross Religions and Cultures II: Spiritual Care and Migration* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 88.

³⁴ Ibid., 89.

³⁵ Ibid., 90.

intercultural context. Not only by one's actions, but by one's words. In the presented situation, if a psalm means something to one but not another, could not another passage mean something to both while still showing respect for each culture and worldview? That is hard to answer, but the simple point is that the literature on spiritual care within an intercultural context focuses on limiting our knowledge of God to show tolerance and respect to all parties within the situation. The reality is spiritual care should be focused on the unlimited power and work of Christ to overcome cultural boundaries that exist while being respectful and tolerant of the worldviews that are present. This literature is not focused on a prison environment. Still, this situation is applicable given that deaths and suicides occur in prisons, and the chaplains and volunteer chaplain are tasked to handle these types of calls from time to time.

On content about chaplaincy within a prison, *Prison Ministry: Hope Behind the Wall* brings up crucial information. It is a book that does not focus on chaplaincy overall but on theological reflections relating to prison ministry and, thereby, reflections a chaplain should know. Pierce sites three valuable reflections on how an individual in incarceration moves towards reconciliation. Not necessarily all of these are correct theologically. Still, these three types of forgiveness are what inmates typically move towards. Punitive forgiveness, or by Pierce's definition, offering a form of repayment to achieve forgiveness, is the first.³⁶ Inclusive forgiveness, the process of accepting something to an extent but still having a fear of losing family or close individuals, is the second. Finally, Pierce sites Reconciliatory forgiveness as true forgiveness because they have both accepted what they have done, and their relationship with others is unchanged.³⁷ This is useful to understand where an inmate is currently at within their

³⁶ Dennis W. Pierce, *Prison Ministry: Hope Behind the Wall* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 52.

³⁷ Ibid.

forgiveness walk. Some inmates are further along than others in coming to terms with what they have done.

When it comes to chaplaincy programs within the prison, Pierce shows four types of inmate reactions towards a chaplain. The four are: High Privacy, High Safety, Restructuring, and High feedback.³⁸ High privacy inmates want interactions that move them towards doing things quietly.³⁹ So, a chaplain would wish to speak with this type of inmate privately and assign work for them to do alone in their cell. High Safety inmates often wind up in the protective custody population because of their fight-or-flight response. Ministering to them in a safe environment is vital.⁴⁰ Restructuring inmates will operate by the “inmate code,” and they only superficially mesh with other inmates and administration.⁴¹ These are the most problematic inmates to minister to because of their superficial nature, they may appear at first glance to be hearing you, but they have no plans of changing their ways. Finally, there are High Feedback inmates, and these inmates seek contact with the outside world to keep their perspective outside the prison they live in.⁴² If a chaplain can become a trusted contact with these types of inmates, they will probably see results in ministering to them.

Pluralistic Environment

Interactions among chaplains, volunteers, and inmates are common due to the unique role each plays within the prison. The unique environment of a prison is pluralistic in nature, and the impact of pluralism on these relationships brings about unique relationship dynamics. Some

³⁸ Pierce, *Prison Ministry: Hope Behind the Wall*, 52.

³⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

sources related this religious pluralism almost as a negative aspect in ministry. In *Chaplains to the Imprisoned*, Richard Shaw believes that ethnic and cultural differences lead to sensitivities that cause separation between the chaplain and inmates.⁴³ This pluralistic environment is being produced by globalization, migration, and urbanization within the United States.⁴⁴ Religious pluralism is a negative aspect in the context of making relational and spiritual engagement with others.⁴⁵ Connecting with anyone of a different culture is difficult because of the lack of shared experiences, but this is not an inherently negative factor. The problem of communication with others of a different culture is not a new one, and it has just never been applied in the prison ministry setting. There are different and unique circumstances to all environments that are pluralistic, but none so remarkable as those within a prison. The world that is being lived in is moving away from respectful evangelism into a world where the only thing one should share about their faith is their actions and walk. This is not inherently bad, and it can lead one to Christianity, but it is not the only way or the best way.

In his book, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, D. A. Carson shows that the definition of tolerance has changed from “the acceptance that different views exist” to “the acceptance of different views.”⁴⁶ This new definition now means that to be tolerant is to accept different views as valid. Carson writes, “A Christian pastor declares, ‘Christians gladly tolerate other religions:’ does this mean that Christians gladly tolerate other religions, or that Christians gladly

⁴³ Richard D. Shaw, *Chaplains to the Imprisoned: Sharing Life with the Incarcerated* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1994), 113.

⁴⁴ Jay W. Moon and W. Bud Simon, *Effective Intercultural Evangelism: Good News in a Diverse World* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 23.

⁴⁵ Richard D. Shaw, *Chaplains to the Imprisoned*, 113.

⁴⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 2.

insist that other religions are equally valid.”⁴⁷ Under the new definition and the currently accepted meaning of tolerance, the latter would be the response. Under this meaning, not only does one no longer oppose the position, but “tolerance” involves accepting that this viewpoint is honest, of equal footing, and similar ground. How will one know what is evidently real without opposition to another religious view? A return to respectful tolerance and accepting the existence of different views is required to be tolerant and still be able to connect and evangelize others relationally.

Ethical proselytization must exist because it encourages controversy and discussion on large and important subjects to kindle enthusiasm.⁴⁸ Although proselytization is discouraged in professional environments, there is no opposition to conversations about religion if asked. In any setting where a chaplain resides, questions about what the chaplain believes almost always arise from someone. It does not happen with every single visit, nor should every single chaplain encounter become about proselytization. If, however, it does occur, a chaplain should be ready, have a respectful attitude, and be willing to share in a way that does not show complete disregard for how the person believes. Carson states that one must keep preserving a place for truth, not only with one’s heart and mind but in⁴⁹ one’s interaction with the broader culture of the world.⁵⁰ Doing this would preserve the old definition of tolerance and remind Christians placed in an environment of pluralism that opportunities will arise and to act on them to spread the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The language that one uses inherently expresses the communicator’s choices, attitudes, and disposition.

⁴⁷ Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 2.

⁴⁸ Elmer Thiessen, *The Ethics of Evangelism* (Crwonhill: Paternoster, 2011), 134.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁵⁰ Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 163.

The literature shows that spirituality can transcend race, culture, and language.⁵¹ There are also great resources on how to evangelize in pluralistic environments ethically and effectively, how to lead with global approaches, and communicate interculturally. The “gap” in this is that none of this fundamentally relates these principles to a prison environment. Principles such as intercultural communication, intercultural evangelism, and intercultural discipleship could apply within a prison environment. However, different circumstances in the prison atmosphere could change the situation. For example, a discipleship plan for a group of people based out of Africa would look different for a group of people based out of subgroup of American culture that are criminal convicts suffering from issues like chronic drug abuse, sexual crimes, and even murder. Most of the literature review is not focused directly on overcoming intercultural barriers within the prison system.

As previously mentioned, the literature review offers specific insights that are useful given the problem at Whiteville Correctional Facility. In *Evangelism After Pluralism*, Bryan Stone notes that Christians should not allow pluralistic imagination to become habitual to the point where it opposes the gospel because the gospel's message in itself overcomes religious diversity by being a message unlike any other religion.⁵² Bonhoeffer writes, “Christ can untie a person’s immediate connections with the world and bind them to himself.”⁵³ Even though there is a gap in the literature regarding specifically overcoming the pluralistic environment within prison culture, the message is clear. Christ can overcome any culture, background, or religion.

Tying this all together, Ting-Toomey and Leeva, in *Understanding Intercultural Communication*, bring up the point that it does matter how a message is presented. God can do

⁵¹ Josiah N. Opata, *Spiritual and Religious Diversity in Prisons*, 172.

⁵² Bryan Stone, *Evangelism After Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 46.

⁵³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 160.

anything and overcome anything. To assume that He can't overcome different cultures and religions would put to shame all the missionaries around the world currently trying to do so. However, understanding where cultural differences exist, being creative in how one connects with that individual, and finding common ground makes the process of teaching, discipling, and evangelizing within a pluralistic environment easier.⁵⁴ Understanding what is underneath someone's worldview can dramatically affect whether they receive what is being communicated. This is often overlooked in the literature on communicating within the church simply because, a majority of the time, the cultures do not vary as widely as they would in a professional environment. If someone comes to church, it usually is because they have been coming and have a relationship with God or want a relationship with God.

It is a rare occasion in a Christian church to have someone that is Islamic, Buddhist, or Hindu attends a Sunday service. Outside the church, it is much more common to encounter someone with a different worldview. Therefore, though some do get it right, it is hard to apply teachings that focus on one or two specific cultural groups because that is what exists within the church community. As stated before, the Gospel of Christ does have the ability to transcend culture. Still, not many are exposed to the same pluralistic environment that would be encountered within a prison.

Within the prison, the richer the environment, the more opportunities that exist for community involvement, and therefore, the greater the likelihood is of inmates motivating each other towards specific opportunities.⁵⁵ A rich environment filled with different cultures, backgrounds, and religions, has a chance to spread like wildfire if one relationship or connection

⁵⁴ Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva C. Chung, *Understanding Intercultural Communication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 41.

⁵⁵ Laura S. Abrams, Emma Hughes, Michelle Inderbitzin, and Rosie Meek, *The Voluntary Sector in Prisons* (Basingstoke: Springer Nature, 2019), 34.

can be made with Christ by a volunteer. A pluralistic environment offers the same, or possibly more, opportunity to share the gospel. Why is there a literature gap on such a topic as training volunteers to connect within a spiritual environment relationally? It can only be that a prison ministry is held to as a “specialized” ministry. Not a ministry that all are called to. This writer would agree with the statement that not all are called to a prison ministry, but all are called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For those who can operate a prison ministry, they should understand the environment in which they will be working.

Prison Ministry Training

On the topic of Prison ministry training within the church, little material is available. Multiple websites offer resources on workbooks to give to the inmates and discipleship programs that one can follow. Training may exist within some churches on how to conduct prison ministry, but there is not much literature on the subject. The best literature on this subject is contained within *Prison Ministry Training: Basic Training*. Tobel, in his book, cites that calling, Scripture, and the mission field are reasons to perform prison ministry.⁵⁶ He offers five things to start one’s prison ministry. First, pray and fast for direction, determine the type of prison ministry, research institutions, recruit others, and have the vision to grow the ministry.⁵⁷ The rest of the book focuses on growing the prison ministry. How to grow the ministry relies on submitting one’s plans to the Lord, praying for the harvest, and training and equipping people.⁵⁸ The training and equipping of people rely on Exodus 18:14, which the author uses to show that the volunteer cannot possibly do it alone and instead rely on the other people recruited to help. There appears

⁵⁶ Gregory E. Von Tobel, *Prison Ministry Training Basic Training Part 1: Getting Started in Prison Ministry* (Woodlinville: Prisoners for Christ Outreach Ministries, 2017), 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 54.

to be no mention of how to engage relationally and connect with these inmates other than putting trust in God.

Relationship and Connection to the Individual

Another theme that runs through the literature is relationship and connection to an individual. It is a well-known fact that inmates run on trust, interests, and respect. This is why factions and gangs often appear among the incarcerated. In the literature, specifically a study on Florida's Faith Based Prison system, it shows that a group of individuals who were seeking to get commitments to Christ avoided having a service at all in the beginning of their ministry.⁵⁹ Instead, they mingled with the inmates, engaged in small talk, earned their trust and interest, and saw more results because they built a relationship and connection beforehand.⁶⁰ A ministry within a prison should not be built on formal meetings that occur during the month, but it should be built by mingling and getting to know the individuals who may decide to come to the service. This relationship and connection are critical for determining whether an inmate chooses to attend one's ministry session or not. Although some will attend every service no matter what, others only come to the services they like. More opportunities to reach an inmate can be had by simply having a conversation. This can be done by walking around the prison, going to the recreational yard and making introductions, or by going to the individual units to pass out literature. There are multiple ways that a connection can be made. Even though the book *Florida's Faith Based Prisons and the American Carceral State* has virtually nothing to do with training volunteers in prison to connect with the inmates, the individuals who decided to mix and mingle with the inmates before they started a service were far more successful than those who did not.

⁵⁹ Brad Stoddard, *Spiritual Entrepreneurs: Florida's Faith Based Prisons and the American Carceral State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 171.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Other authors present the theme of relationship and connection as well. In *The Voluntary Sector in Prisons*, the authors write how a chaplain's programs that focused on relationships and connections allowed the inmates to feel as if it was a "safe haven" and "break" from the various things that happened in prison.⁶¹ Ogden, in *Discipleship Essentials*, presented the fact that God made all for a relationship with Himself and with one another, as it offers a place to learn how to be intimate and self-revealing.⁶² Among prison chaplains, not volunteer chaplains, it is somewhat of an unwritten rule to make the chapel a place that exists outside of the prison. Most chaplains that do not achieve this do not for varying reasons, whether it is burnout, overarching administrative duties, or a general lack of motivation. However, when the prison chaplain does achieve this, the inmates know that it is a safe place to get away and breathe. It is not always easily achievable due to the variety of volunteers who lead prison services. However, achieving the growth and familial bonds that come with having this makes some inmates feel that they are not even in prison. Since God created all for a relationship with Himself, and He wants his followers to be intimate and self-revealing, this is an aspect of discipleship that is almost always presented within a church and not a prison. A churchgoer picks a church based on where they feel comfortable and where they feel love, appreciation, and the feeling of no judgment. Most prisoners did not wind up in prison by choice.

This relationship and connection to the individual should be seen as neutral to social location, income, race, gender, and politics.⁶³ This means that location, income, race, gender, and politics are neutral when a relationship and connection have been formed. These groups will not

⁶¹ Laura Abrams et al., *Understanding Intercultural Communication*, 35.

⁶² Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2018), 11.

⁶³ Bryan Stone, *Evangelism After Pluralism*, 27.

negatively impact the ministry being done. The literature shows that the best way to overcome cultural barriers, outside of the Gospel itself, is to form a relationship with a person beforehand. Even if cultural barriers do not exist, building a relationship with someone beforehand will help the minister in their task to reach others with the Gospel. Forming relationships is part of discipleship, but it can also be a part of evangelism. It is unlikely, though not impossible, to walk up to someone in the middle of the street and lead them to the Lord without any prior conversation. However, if a conversation has formed before running right into a track about salvation, the evangelist can find things in common that will help build mutual respect. The response is then more likely to lead to something that will be beneficial to the individual.

The literature review also speaks to relationships and connections regarding family and friendship. For the individual's spiritual formation, friendship characterizes the most basic of human relationships.⁶⁴ Building this spiritual friendship between one another calls for the gift of hospitality, presence, and dialogue.⁶⁵ A part of someone's spiritual formation is engaging and connecting with individuals during the discipleship process. It is straightforward to ask questions over a coffee break or lunch. This allows a minister to uncover more profound things about the person they are trying to disciple because they feel like they are in a safe space. In other words, trust has been built. The bible states that "as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Prov. 27:17). Building a relationship through friendship is suitable not only for the individual being disciplined but for the individual that is doing the discipling.

The literature review offers enlightening information on connecting and engaging with individuals before evangelizing or discipling them. The literature supports that this idea will work within a prison based on some of the material on hand having conducted studies within a

⁶⁴ Diane Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 115.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

prison. What the literature does not offer are ways to teach valuable discipleship methods to leaders and volunteers within the prison. As seen in the literature review, the prison inmates form a sense of community by engaging each other relationally and culturally. There appears to be a gap in teaching others how to connect and engage someone within the prison by other means than just small talk and interests. The question of how one begins that relationship is not present. The literature review only shows that building a relationship and connection works, not why it works.

Living Incarnationally as a Means to Help Others Grow

In the literature review, an important theme displayed is living incarnationally to see others grow. In a pluralistic setting such as a prison, relating and connecting to others is just one part of having a successful ministry. To continue to build a relationship and connection with an inmate, it must be maintained. As a person of faith who is evangelizing and discipling others, one must continue to show their faith by how they live their lives. If what is shown outward does not live up to what is being taught, it could affect the inmate. Faith is not just important but an essential part of an inmate's rehabilitation, for, without it, the chance of staying out of prison for an inmate is less than average.

Given that some inmates have no faith at all, the only chance that these inmates may have of ever experiencing faith is the chaplain or the volunteers that provide services within the prison system. Even outside of the prison, one never knows who is being entertained, so their life should present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every way possible. No one is perfect by any means, but all that is needed is to walk in the ways of Christ so that Christ can not only be shared with words but through the way one's own life, the way one handles situations, and acts.

Faith should be an outward expression that an inmate is able to see. Rather than attempt to secure converts to a new religion, the task of evangelism is to bear witness in such a way that

it can be taken seriously and imagined as an authentic possibility for one's life and the world.⁶⁶

The only way this imagined authentic possibility happens is through the outward expression of living out the faith of Christianity, not just teaching about its existence. Staff and volunteer chaplains have the unique opportunity to present themselves as possible sources of role models.⁶⁷

Each should model their approach to life since they could become role models for inmates in the future. Volunteers need to be more than just friends who the inmates can talk to and speak to; they need to be role models. Many of the inmates within Whiteville Correctional Facility face a long sentence, while others face shorter ones. With one role model and friend, an inmate can begin to change and come to have a deeper relationship with God simply by observing the volunteers who teach them. They can start to model their life after others, and through that, God will surely move and grow them to become something more than they have been previously.

The literature does not mention mentorship, though being a role model is mentioned. Being a mentor is one step further than being a role model. Within Whiteville Correctional Facility, there are specific pods where inmates can join a group with a specific facilitator. This group facilitator is not just someone who runs the group; they mentor the inmates, as they have much smaller groups. This is something that could become highly useful for the volunteers that hold services. The services hold anywhere from twenty to sixty-five people depending on the popularity. It is safe to say that the volunteers could never mentor all the attendees, but those who they build a relationship with and are a role model for could take it one step further and become a mentor for them.

The literature review highlights how the outward showing of faith can affect one's life. Ogden writes, "According to Paul, Christians are to live in stark contrast to the dominant culture

⁶⁶ Bryan Stone, *Evangelism After Pluralism*, 16.

⁶⁷ Brad Stoddard, *Spiritual Entrepreneurs*, 115.

out of which we have come. For them to see the person they are to be, Paul, in broad strokes, paints the picture of pagan culture in rebellion against its Creator.”⁶⁸ Therefore, in an outward expression of faith, one's life should not exemplify the negative aspects of the culture or background they were born into. Instead, the presentation of the new life that Christianity gives should be displayed for everyone to see. A staff chaplain or volunteer chaplain may be able to connect and engage initially. Still, in order to continue seeing growth within the prisoner, they must see in the staff or volunteer chaplain what the chaplain is teaching them to become. They must also be willing and able to provide the inmate opportunity for growth as they can do so.

The review also presented a unique perspective on the outward showing of faith in Moon and Moreau's *Intercultural Discipleship*. Specifically with proverbs. Not the book of Proverbs, but words of wisdom from the individual. Jesus used parables, which could be expanded proverbs, to convey messages. Moon and Moreau present another way to show incarnational living through the use of personal proverbs when they write, “When proverbs are used as vehicles to convey the intimate love of God, the Christian message is not regarded as foreign.”⁶⁹ Though Moon and Moreau do not touch on it entirely, sharing the wisdom one has gained through experience is a way to show how they are living incarnationally to the inmates. Moon and Moreau's literature on intercultural discipleship forms the theoretical basis for the intervention design. It is its principles of living out the faith and its themes of relationship and connection that make it a vital part of what is trying to be done.

The literature review in regard to incarnational living is excellent and applicable to the setting of the prison ministry. However, its engagement with the idea of incarnational living is light for something that is a fundamental factor in maintaining relationships with those that a

⁶⁸ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 199.

⁶⁹ Jay W. Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 149.

chaplain could be a role model for within a prison. There is a plethora of information on incarnational living, but it is primarily for personal evangelism, and the idea of incarnational living is only implied, not explicitly touched upon.

Discipleship

Understanding the background of discipleship literature is vital if this project seeks to succeed. The literature on discipleship is vast. The literature review has focused on discipleship literature that was more specifically focused and applicable to this research. Once again, there is a gap in the literature on discipleship within a prison environment and even in a place where pluralism is present. This is likely because not many professional environments where a chaplain works present a great opportunity to disciple someone. Prison ministry is on its own in this avenue, given that if the inmates are in prison, they have a sentence greater than one year.

In his book *Eschatological Discipleship: Leading Christians to Understand Their Historical and Cultural Context*, Wax provides three things that discipleship must be for it even to be named such. First, it must be balanced, meaning followers should be characterized by sound doctrine, known for good practice, and exude proper sentiment.⁷⁰ Finally, and most importantly, discipleship is worldview oriented. The disciple-making begins with conversion and presupposes a worldview of Christianity.⁷¹ Meaning that what the disciple is being taught is the Christian worldview.

Furthermore, Wax goes on to present his case that a historical and cultural understanding of the Bible, particularly relating to the Old Testament, wisdom, and the complete picture of the Bible, is necessary for discipleship, as well as the understanding that all will be brought about to

⁷⁰ Trevin Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship: Leading Christians to Understand Their Historical and Cultural Context* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018), 6.

⁷¹ Ibid.

a new creation.⁷² The focus of this book has eschatological underpinnings. For example, Wax's review of the Great Commission is to see it not just as a mission because Jesus has authority over "us," but because Jesus has authority over "all" people.⁷³ In other words, Wax's model of discipleship is endgame focused. Jesus is coming back soon to fulfill the Great Commission as told because all will bow to Him in the end.

This book has excellent points on discipleship that even this researcher had not previously thought about, but if there is one negative, it would be that this could provoke fear if presented incorrectly. If gone through thoroughly, then yes, the disciple would clearly understand that it is not based on fear. However, if an inmate is disciplined in a way that the only focus is to see other people saved because they are afraid of what will happen when Jesus comes back is not the correct way. People must be drawn to Jesus by the Holy Spirit, as seen in John 6:44. They must understand that one follows Jesus' Great Commission because Jesus has authority over all people. It is just not advisable to present this in a way that people are so scared that they come to Jesus. They come to Jesus because He is drawing them. If this were to be applied in prison incorrectly, it could potentially make an inmate give up because of their sin.

J.T. English in *Deep Discipleship* discusses how the church can make "whole" disciples of Jesus. His primary concept is that the local worship center is the primary place where God intends to make and form holistic disciples.⁷⁴ believes that discipleship within the church should be qualitatively different from discipleship outside of the local church because it has four

⁷² Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship: Leading Christians to Understand Their Historical and Cultural Context*, 221.

⁷³ Ibid., 51.

⁷⁴ J. T. English *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 34.

distinctive parts that set it apart: place, people, purpose, and presence.⁷⁵ Every disciple needs Scripture, doctrine, and spiritual habits.⁷⁶ The church must equip them to do each. The disciples grow by giving them increasingly challenging steps, information, and commitment.⁷⁷ However, formation is only done by the work of the grace of God, and their reception of the gospel of Jesus Christ creates a desire in disciples to grow in the gospel.⁷⁸

English's view on discipleship is not wrong. The local church should be the primary place to make and form disciples. It is hard to disagree that the discipleship that happens within the local church is not qualitatively different. The problem that is not ever addressed in English's *Deep Discipleship* is how these disciples are made, and what if there are people that cannot be discipled outside of the church? Why should discipleship in a prison look any different from what happens within a church? The book also does not speak about relational engagement or culture. This literature sums up most of the other literature on discipleship, and the points run primarily the same: be a church that makes disciples, help them grow, send them out, then they provide a list of things the church can do to make disciples that may or may not work for every church. It altogether ignores the fact that some people must be discipled outside of the church. It is not flawed thinking; most of the points are helpful, albeit for a church filled with Christians, not a pluralistic environment.

On literature that addresses multiple cultures, one can find things about missionaries and how to minister in different countries. Still, as far as topics that address a similar problem, there are two books that have applicable information to prison ministry. Moon and Moreau's

⁷⁵ English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus*, 34.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 145.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Intercultural Discipleship and Moreau's *Effective Intercultural Communication: A Christian Perspective*. In the first book, Moreau talks about the centered-set approach and the idea that discipleship needs to be under this. They mean to say that people center their lives on the kingdom of God. In the process, disciples' worldviews are transformed as they apply biblically faithful and culturally relevant responses to issues that move them away from the kingdom of God.⁷⁹ The idea is that different cultures' symbols, rituals stories, proverbs, music, dance, and drama can be overcome and changed to the worldviews within the Bible by introducing what the Bible says about these things and talking about the fundamentals of faith. Instead of attacking the problem of individual behaviors, one simply focuses on transitioning the person's worldview to the Christian worldview. This is an excellent concept and one that is certainly applicable to a prison context where pluralism exists.

In Moreau's second title *Effective Intercultural Communication*, there is a subsection on intercultural discipleship. It is explained that culture plays a fundamental role in how people connect with one another.⁸⁰ Here Moreau offers different perspectives on how discipleship occurs in justice-oriented societies versus honor-oriented societies. Connecting with individuals of various societies largely falls on understanding rituals of transformation, intensification, and crisis. Once the understanding is put in place and communication barriers are overcome, it falls back on using centered set theory to let the gospel be a model for the new culture that one experiences. The centered set theory states that instead of starting away from Christ, a disciple begins their discipleship by starting with Him. This is valuable knowledge for people ministering in honor-based societies and can even be applied to prison ministry. The only problem is that the

⁷⁹ W. Jay Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 58.

⁸⁰ A. Scott Moreau, Evvy Hay Campbell, and Susan Greener, *Intercultural Communication (Encountering Mission): A Christian Perspective* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014), 270.

culture largely varies only in the justice-based society, as the prison is made of Caucasians, Hispanic, and African Americans.

Burnout

The theme of burnout is a common problem among both professional secular workers and ministry workers. However, there is more content on burnout within a professional environment than the literature on ministry burnout. Though burnout is not a serious problem at Whiteville Correctional Facility, it is still useful to review the literature. Steven Case in *Help! I'm a Frustrated Youth Worker: A Practical Guide to Avoiding Burnout in Your Ministry* offers the following solutions to burnout: carving out prayer time, being a part of the church, not just a leader, continuing education, networking, and taking time off.⁸¹ The ideas offered are not insubstantial but hardly applicable to staff and volunteer chaplains within a prison. It is easy to see that burnout is a common problem multiple people face within numerous disciplines. Although the literature being reviewed has little to do with prison ministry, getting the general idea of what burnout is and how it happens can help this research tweak the general into specific using the Word of God. Secondly, discipleship is modeled; the disciple must become “a learner” and become an imitator of Christ.⁸²

The literature on burnout in a professional workplace is much more abundant and offers decent insight into why it might occur. Paula Davis has the cause of burnout being an imbalance between job demands and job resources.⁸³ Other literature gives the reasonings of exhaustion,

⁸¹ Steven Case, *Help! I'm a Frustrated Youth Worker!: A Practical Guide to Avoiding Burnout in Your Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 92.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Paula Davis, *Beating Burnout at Work: Why Teams Hold the Secret to Well Being and Resilience* (Wharton: Wharton School Press, 2021), 15.

cynicism, and lack of personal effectiveness.⁸⁴ This can be helpful and applicable in some categories of burnout in a chaplain. Not having enough resources to perform the demanding job of running a ministry in a prison could lead to burnout. Exhaustion is a typical reason for a chaplain to burn out. Inmates can be challenging to work with, and depending on the prison, there may be more hours needed than most to see a prisoner grow and start the path of rehabilitation. However, this is normal in a prison environment where most staff work twelve-hour days. With the shortage of employees due to the development of COVID-19, long hours continue to be the norm. The staffing shortages across the nation include volunteers. Volunteers often will have to juggle multiple activities in their life. Since they are not getting paid to do prison ministry, it is easy for volunteers to set their prison ministry aside to focus on other dreams within their lives.

Eilene McDargh states, “Overworking is the norm. It is not only the volume of work that pushes people into burnout but also the unwritten expectation that employees must constantly be ‘on’ even when they are home in the evening or on the weekends.”⁸⁵ A chaplain must be passionate about the ministry they are working in because of the difficulty involved with working with prisoners. Passion can almost become an obsession at some points, causing the chaplain to want to work with the individuals or groups more. This can lead to sacrificing other needs in life that require attention. Eventually, this will lead to burnout as the different pieces of their life have not been maintained.

On how to avoid burnout, Paula Davis studied Mayo Clinic’s program for reducing burnout. She states, “Central to Mayo’s success in reducing burnout is its Listen-Act-Develop

⁸⁴ Rob Bogue and Terri Bogue, *Extinguish Burnout: A Practical Guide to Prevention and Recovery* (New York: Society for Human Resource Management, 2019), 10.

⁸⁵Eilene McDargh, *Burnout to Breakthrough* (Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2020), 55.

model—a research-based strategy designed to address the institutional drivers of burnout, foster resiliency, and sponsor physician leadership development.”⁸⁶ Mayo Clinic made a way to listen to the concerns of their employees. When they hear those concerns, they act quickly and develop a solution. This method dramatically reduced burnout in their employees.⁸⁷ Sometimes workers just need to feel that they are heard. This would be the same case for chaplains and volunteer chaplains. Aside from a survey and a quarterly meeting specifically for volunteers, not much is in place for the volunteers to voice opinions. Volunteers often go to the staff chaplain to voice their concerns, and it is up to the chaplain whether they allow changes. This could be a contributing factor to the burnout and attrition in Whiteville Correctional Facility.

In *Don't Blow up Your Ministry: Defuse the Underlying Issues that Take Pastors Down*, MacKenzie and Shelley state that burnout and ministry failure occur because of “issues beneath the issues.”⁸⁸ They are adequacy, acceptance, value, and the corresponding fear or shame when our identity is broken.⁸⁹ These four things lead to the fear of rejection, not being loved, failure, and insecurity.⁹⁰ The answer to overcoming these matters is ironically the exact answer they are offering to others: Christ.⁹¹

Some literature on spiritual formation can be connected to show that burnout can be avoided. Still, spiritual formation literature does not hold the overall answer to why burnout occurs. Dempsey and Earley show that daily exercise and building consistency are the way to

⁸⁶ Davis, *Beating Burnout at Work*, 20.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Michael MacKenzie and Marshall Shelley, *Don't Blow up Your Ministry: Defuse the Underlying Issues That Take Pastors Down* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 56.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

build on spiritual formation.⁹² Though this book does not explicitly say it, it could be argued that if one builds up their consistency of daily exercise of the spiritual disciplines, they can guard themselves against burning out so quickly because they have built a relationship with Jesus Christ that can withstand any storm that comes through.

Wilson, Hoffman, and Hoff argue that there are practical safeguards to preventing high stress and burnout. The authors cite the spiritual disciplines but present more by showing that there are inward disciplines and outward disciplines. The inward disciplines begin with meditation, and the author says that meditation begins by carving out time in one's own life for reflection on spiritual truths, Scripture, prayer, or daily circumstances.⁹³ Reading Scripture, fasting, and praying are stated as the other inward disciplines, but they cannot be done well without prioritizing them.

The outward disciplines are simplicity, solitude, and submission. Simplicity is the “doing of whatever is needed to allow one’s heart to let go of desires for things that serve only to clutter their life: pride, power, prestige, position, money.”⁹⁴ Solitude is “experiencing God through silence.”⁹⁵ Finally, Submission is the ability to lay down one’s burdens and “getting out of their own way.”⁹⁶ With these inward and outward disciplines one can prevent burnout and ministry failure.

Conclusion

⁹² Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Spiritual Formation Is...: How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018), 76.

⁹³ Michael Todd Wilson, Brad Hoffman, and Brad Hoff, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers, and Other Caregivers*. (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 118.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 120

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 121.

To conclude, six main themes arose in the literature review: chaplaincy, pluralistic environments, relationships and connection to the individuals, discipleship, living incarnationally to help others grow, and burnout. On chaplaincy, there were no sources that directly related to volunteers/volunteer chaplains serving in a prison environment; however, it was necessary to review the literature to get a defined basis concerning spiritual care across religions and cultures and ministry within a prison. The literature on pluralistic environments dealt with understanding cultural and religious differences in the environment. There are good insights into how to communicate with Christ with different individuals, but the literature lacks specificity in a prison setting.

Relationships and connections were significant for the prison ministry, as the literature showed that prisoners and inmates valued connection and relationship. To achieve growth in this area requires ministry individuals to transcend cultural barriers and connect to the inmates by using Christ. The theme of living incarnationally as a means to see others grow arose, and it was determined that the literature would be vital to a chaplain's approach to an inmate. However, the literature lacked specifics on how to live incarnationally. The literature mainly focused on how discipleship occurs within the church. The other literature on discipleship was meant for ministering in different countries but can still essentially be applicable to the research project. Finally, the theme of burnout was addressed within the review of the literature. There is literature on both professional and spiritual burnout. The secular side focused on setting up committees to hear out frustrated employees, taking time off, and making sure someone can reignite their passion. The literature on spiritual burnout focused on overcoming one's burdens by managing stress, seeking out Christ, and carving out time to build up one's inward and outward spiritual disciplines.

Theological Foundations

The Great Commission

Several Scriptures form the theological foundation for this research when considering the thesis and topic. The most crucial and integral to this is the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. It states, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (ESV). This Scripture not only forms the means and basis of evangelism and discipleship, but the basis for evangelizing and discipling people of all nations. The phrase “all nations” does not reject the Jewish people but includes non-Jews, with Jews as part of God’s people.⁹⁷

In the first century, this was a critical thought. Gentiles were not accepted as a part of the Jewish tradition. After Jesus’ death, they were included among those who could commune with God and receive salvation. Thus, this Scripture sets a biblical precedent that evangelism and discipleship should occur among all people regardless of culture, race, background, or geographical location. Volunteers at Whiteville Correctional Facility experience a multicultural environment. This Scripture supports that intercultural discipleship is a part of the Christian life, and since it includes people of all nations, it should be a goal to minister to these individuals.

The Great Commission is a mission that Jesus expects His followers to practice. There can be multiple races in a prison environment, and although they are usually from America, they can have any range of religions. The mission that Jesus gave the disciples had initially been only to the “lost sheep of Israel” (Matt 10:6).⁹⁸ Meaning, minister to the Jews within Israel that Jesus

⁹⁷ Anthony J. Saldarini and John W. Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 137.

⁹⁸ Rodney Reeves, Tremper Longman III, and Scot McKnight, *Matthew* (Nashville: Harper Collins Christian Publishing, 2017), 567.

was the Son of God. The new mission was to take place in the entire world, which holds multiple races and religions. Why should the message of Jesus be a message to all people? What makes the way of Jesus better than all the others? The answer is offered in Matthew 28:18, before Jesus gives the Great Commission, which states, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (ESV).⁹⁹ The proof that all authority had been given to Jesus was based on his resurrection. By fulfilling all prophecies and his resurrection, Jesus had conquered the ultimate enemy of all humanity: death.¹⁰⁰ The Great Commission is to all people of all nations to spread the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His conquering of the ultimate enemy called death. The message is to be given because it is an eternal message that has implications beyond this life. Contained in the Great Commission is not just an explanation of how to be saved but a way to instruct and create disciples by teaching one to obey everything Jesus has commanded.¹⁰¹ The commandments of “love thy God with all thy heart” and “love thy neighbor as thyself” are the commandments upon which all the law hangs (Matt. 22:36-40 ESV). From Scripture, the way to make a disciple of all nations becomes clear. Teach them of Jesus’ death and resurrection, then teach them how to love God with all their heart and to love their neighbor as they love themselves. There is much more contained within that statement, but this is the simple form of how to make disciples.

The mission to “disciple” people is a mission of inculcating allegiance to Jesus as Messiah.¹⁰² The second part of this is to be baptized as a sign of a covenant to the triune God.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Rodney Reeves, Tremper Longman III, and Scot McKnight, *Matthew*, 567.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 568.

¹⁰² Jeanine K. Brown, and Kyle Roberts, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 215.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

On the obedience portion of the Great Commission, Brown and Roberts add that after Jesus' resurrection, obedience goes beyond the content of Jesus' teachings. It becomes about learning practices patterned after Jesus's ways of life.¹⁰⁴

For one to be discipled is to model their life after Jesus Christ himself. One must not only observe Jesus' commandments. They must try to live as He lived. The inclusivity of "all nations" now becomes clear. Jesus changed the entire world with twelve disciples. Imagine what could be obtained with hundreds, thousands, or millions?

If the Great Commission is the key verse to discipleship, then its inclusivity of all cultures, people, and races is the functionality of how the Gospel is spread throughout the world. America is a multicultural nation. However, we often see segregated churches, though this does not apply to all, not formed by some law but by complacency and comfort. It is not to say that where someone is comfortable cannot help the discipleship process. Most churches do not try to go outside of their comfort zone. However, there is no choice in a place like Whiteville Correctional Facility. Because the volunteers in this prison are so used to a church environment that only has people that are similar in the cultural and religious backgrounds, they are hesitant and confused about how to form relationships with someone outside of their own cultural and religious background.

Central to the Great Commission's theme is found in Matthew 22:36-40. Called the Great Commandment, Jesus offers two commandments upon which "All the Law and Prophets hang" (Matt 22:40 ESV). The commandments are to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37,39 ESV). It is easy to see why the law hangs on these commandments.

¹⁰⁴ Jeanine K. Brown, and Kyle Roberts, *Matthew*, 215.

If people love their neighbor and love God, they would not steal, kill, covet, or lie. There is a further point to consider in this commandment. Following these commandments allows one to adopt God's vision for the world. If a person truly loves God and their neighbor as they do themselves, then that person adopts God's vision of the world and sees people God does and treats him as Jesus would.¹⁰⁵ In short, this verse sets the biblical precedent for how others should be seen and treated. Love and respect are imperative within the prison for a successful ministry, especially because of the pluralistic environment. Viewing people as God does and treating them as Jesus would allow the volunteer to see them as not a criminal but as someone who needs God.

Prisoners are Important to God

Hebrews 13:3 states, "Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body" (ESV). This exhortation by Paul acknowledges that prison ministry has taken place in the past and urges that it should not lapse.¹⁰⁶ The word "Remember" means to act according to their needs because the church members had to supply food, clothing, and emotional support to brothers and sisters who had been imprisoned for their faith.¹⁰⁷ The ability to identify as one of them is meant to keep motivation up to continue their loving care of the prisoners.¹⁰⁸ Though the verse is attesting to those who have been imprisoned for their faith, there are even more verses representing prisoners within the Bible.

¹⁰⁵ Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, Ed., *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 8): Matthew-Luke* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021.), 251.

¹⁰⁶ David G. Peterson, Eckhard J. Schnabel, and Nicholas Perrin, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2020.), 316.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 336.

Matthew 25:34-40 forms the theological foundation for ministering to prison inmates. It states:

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me (ESV).

Matthew 25:34-50 is in Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats. Parables are stories with underlying messages. Theologically, for this project, the focus is on the giving to the needy portion of this text. Duguid writes that disciples discover their neighbors as they go out into the world of limitless needs of humanity.¹⁰⁹ The list of needs illustrates the love of neighbor, which Jesus and Paul promoted in their words and acts of compassion for the needy, wherever they met them.¹¹⁰ When the disciples asked when had they seen Jesus hungry or thirsty, they did not realize that they had served Christ as they went through life.¹¹¹ They acted spontaneously and were unaware of their merit, so Jesus repeats the entire list to allow them to understand that their acts of compassion in the past have meaning.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, ed., *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 8): Matthew-Luke*, 437.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

The needy, in this case, are any human beings who require aid from fellow humans, and “the judge” uses the expression *elachistoni* to indicate they are “the least.”¹¹³ Saldarini indicates one should be encouraged to strengthen the social relations that keep communities together and reflect concern for the weak and poor.¹¹⁴ Though this is a parable, the message is obvious that all should have a concern for their neighbor. Neighbors should include those who are poor, sick, and in prison.

Theologically, prisoners represent the so-called “least.” Just as Jesus served “the least,” so should all Christians. Albeit prison looks a lot differently in the twenty-first century than it did in the first century, there are certainly inmates within the prison that have no source of outside income to purchase basic needs outside of what is given to them by the state. These prisoners often have no one on the outside and nothing to return to when they finish serving their sentence. Prison ministry is a way to serve the needy as Jesus did and become something to them that they have likely never had in their life. This alone should be reason enough for all churches to have a prison ministry. Prison ministry is not for everyone. It is a dangerous place filled with sin. However, some inmates can be won over to Christ if the right person comes along. Someone within a church will always be capable of serving in prison because God has mandated that those in prison are in need. Based on scripture, if someone gives to an inmate, they have done the same for Jesus. There is no other choice but to ensure that the people in prison have a way to learn and be disciplined in Christ. To neglect the prison would be to neglect one’s neighbor, and by Jesus’ commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself,” this would be disobedient.

¹¹³ Anthony J. Saldarini and John W. Rogerson *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Matthew* (Nashville: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2021), 124.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

It is safe to say that most inmates have previously lived a life of sin within the prison. Mark 2:17 deals with the fact that it is the sinners that Jesus has called. Mark 2:17 states, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners” (ESV). To explain the context of this passage, Jesus is responding to the Pharisaic scribes. Jesus states his mission that he has come to call the sinners, not the righteous.¹¹⁵ Not that Jesus’ mission excludes the “self-righteous,” but his priority is to call the sinners.¹¹⁶ According to the Law, the Pharisees were considered “faultless” when it came to the law. Therefore, Jesus was instead making it known that his mission was to the neglected parts of the world.¹¹⁷ However, the Pharisees needed to acknowledge that the coming of God’s kingdom was connected to Jesus’ ministry.¹¹⁸

This passage can be seen to relate to the parable of the prodigal son. The older, righteous son is confronted with the father’s “lavish” mercy for the “lost” son, which the older son must acknowledge or find himself outside of the father’s house (Luke 15:11-12).¹¹⁹ Jesus' idea in this text is not to exclude the righteous but make it known that the sinners had a place in his ministry. Under the law, sinners were forced to make recompense by sacrificing certain animals. Jesus was instead making it known that the sinners would be at the forefront of his ministry. Under the current covenant of the law, the sinners were considered outcasts. Sinners could include tax collectors and anyone who performed acts outside the law. Jesus was trying to foreshadow his

¹¹⁵J. Schnabel Eckhard, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 73.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

death and his coming as the Messiah to the Pharisees. However, they were too caught up in their ways to recognize that Jesus was coming as a fulfillment of the Law.

The applicability of this scripture is not that one should ignore the righteous. As in the parable of the prodigal son, the righteous may feel left out, but their glory would come in the afterlife of eternity. Luke 15:7 states, “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-nine just persons, which need no repentance” (King James Version). Jesus was comparing himself to a physician: doctors are sent to the sick, not the healthy.¹²⁰ Jesus’ mission was to summon sinners to repentance and admonish Torah-observant Jews to appreciate his mission.¹²¹

Jesus was defending his outreach to the disreputable, not suggesting that some are exempt from his call.¹²² The Pharisees came to enlighten, and Jesus came to redeem.¹²³ Given that mission, it is as senseless for Jesus to shun tax collectors and sinners as for a doctor to shun the sick.¹²⁴ Jesus was showing that, in one sense, sinners were closer to God than those who perceived themselves as righteous because sinners are more aware of their need for the transforming grace of God.¹²⁵ It was both a rebuke of the Pharisees' sense of righteousness and an explanation of Jesus’ pronounced mission to include the Gentiles and the Jews.

¹²⁰ Craig A. Evans and John W. Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Mark* (Nashville: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 44.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Nashville: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 86.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Since Jesus' mission was to come as “doctor” to the sinners, should it not be one’s mission to reach the sinners? The grace of God extends to and overcomes the worst form of human depravity.¹²⁶ Theologically speaking, the righteous are not to be ignored, but they should be both wise and mature enough to understand that scripture states their reward will be in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20). However, the celebration of a sinner repenting and coming to righteousness is worthy of a celebration because they have not only come home, but they have overcome death and achieved an eternity in heaven. With discipleship, the sinners will eventually become the righteous, and just as they found their way to Jesus, they will be able to celebrate when other sinners have finally come home.

What better place to find sinners than within a prison? Though the sinners are spread worldwide, prison ministry should be a priority for those who follow Jesus. Prison is filled with people hungry for change in their life. Sometimes the inmates may find Jesus themselves, but more often than not, they learn about him through a person that comes to the prison intending to share Jesus. Though the theological implications do not directly address that Jesus went into the prison, what better place to find more sinners confined in one place than anywhere else? A church can certainly have sinners within its congregation, but like Jesus, the church should not ignore the sinners within a prison who do not even have the opportunity to come to a church.

Psalms 107:10-16 is another Scripture that mentions prisoners. The text describes the suffering of prisoners who sat in “darkness” and “deepest gloom” and ends by showing that the inmates realize their need for God and call out to him, and God answers by delivering them.¹²⁷ Though the inmates brought on their incarceration by their rebellion against God, he delivered

¹²⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 86.

¹²⁷ Gregory E. Von Tobel, *Prison Ministry Training Basic Training Part 1: Getting Started in Prison Ministry*, 15.

them not just by freeing them from prison but also by spiritual salvation.¹²⁸ Spiritual salvation is described in this context as a release from prison.¹²⁹ While God may not deliver an inmate instantly from their prison sentence, the message to inmates is that salvation through Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected is freedom. God can and does allow mercy physically but also spiritually. Even if the prisoner is not miraculously removed from prison, they can live unburdened by the salvation that Jesus offers. Theologically, detainees can be free while still being imprisoned, and this is why prisoners are so important to God.

Becoming Adaptable

1 Corinthians 9:20-23 speaks to winning people for the sake of the gospel. Paul states in this Scripture, “to the Jews I became as a Jew,” “to those outside the law I became as those outside the law,” and “to the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak” (1 Cor 9:20-22 ESV). Paul shows himself as adaptable and flexible in every situation to win others for the gospel.¹³⁰ In this Scripture, Paul is accommodating all people so that he might, by all means, save some for the gospel’s sake, so that he may be a partner of it.¹³¹ Paul does not change his identity as a Christian but gladly identifies with those of a different mindset to spread the gospel.¹³² An essential notion for all, including the Volunteers at Whiteville Correctional Facility.

¹²⁸ Robert L. Alden, *Psalms-Everyday Bible Commentary* (Chicago, Moody Publishers, 2019), 107.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, Eckhard J. Schnabel, and Nicholas Perrin, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 181.

¹³¹ B.J. Oropeza, *1 Corinthians* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 122.

¹³² Ibid.

For volunteers to minister successfully to inmates cross-culturally, they must be accommodating to those of different cultures to spread the gospel. Grosheide writes, “To the Gentiles, no better proof could be given of Paul’s accommodating spirit than by pointing out that he, for the sake of his missionary work, subjected himself to the difficult laws although he was free from them.”¹³³ To the Gentiles, the Jews were remarkable people with strange customs.¹³⁴ Ciampa and Rosner further clarify this by saying that Paul is clarifying how to minister in different contexts to different kinds of people.¹³⁵ He gives three examples, those under the law, those outside of the law, and those that are weak. In verse 19, Paul compares himself to an enslaved person to win as many as possible. An enslaved person was an outsider who brought no rights with him from the society he came from and had no claims on the society which maintained him.¹³⁶ Paul does not place himself within any of the three categories previously mentioned. Paul’s claim that in Christ he is “free with respect to all” is a position that transcends all cultural allegiances.¹³⁷

The message, theologically, is that one should be willing and able to make accommodations that do not usurp the commandments of Jesus. Paul is not saying that one should accept another’s belief as accurate, but they should be willing, because they do not defy the Christian belief, to meet others in a place that may require them to adjust what they are used

¹³³ F.W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Nashville: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019.), 212.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 213.

¹³⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Nashville: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 373.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 374.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

to culturally. Only for the sake of giving them the gospel. If it is for anything else, it would not be correct.

1 Corinthians 9:20-22 shows that when someone becomes a Christian, they are not subject to the rights or the claims of society on earth but subject to the treasures and holdings they are building up for eternity in heaven. Because of the freedom in Christ, one can adapt to minister to people of different cultures and religions. It does not mean that one takes up the religious rites and symbols that a different culture or religion might offer, but it means they can join someone where they are currently and be able to minister to Christ because of the freedom they have gained by coming to know Him. In other words, individuals of different backgrounds can see and recognize that freedom in them while they are adapting the ways they are trying to reach them.

It will not work for all, but as Paul writes, “that by all means, I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22 ESV). Some being saved is better than none. An important precedent to the thesis is that a successful ministry is not measured by the number of people who come to Christ. A fulfilling and successful ministry in prison can come just by some receiving Christ by adapting and being accommodating to all people of all nations. In the context of this passage, it meant that Paul might not partake of unclean meat in front of a Jew. Instead, he would eat what they ate, or the exact opposite, to represent his freedom because he believed in Christ. However, this may have an unintended effect of offending someone. The point is that Paul was free from the law. He could willfully choose to partake or not partake of the law at any point, based on what was appropriate to reach the people with the gospel.

Ciampa and Rosner write, “An enslaved person captured through war and sold to a Roman household will be expected to adapt to the Roman culture of the household. If sold to a Jewish household or a household of another cultural background, they will need to adapt to the

culture of that new household to become like them.”¹³⁸ Paul willingly and strategically placed himself in the role of a slave because he saw that such an approach, though it would have been extremely difficult to carry out, is of strategic advantage for the gospel.¹³⁹

Paul had to “step down” the social ladder and work with his own hands to support himself to make the gospel “free of charge” to the majority.¹⁴⁰ Paul, in this Scripture, is destabilizing the law as a point of Christian self-definition. He does this so he can become “as a Jew,” “as one under the law,” and “as one outside of the law.”¹⁴¹ It is a reference to one concerning the law no longer but in relation to Christ so that a new community can come into being, a community that includes those previously cut off from one another by “the law.”¹⁴² Paul was willing to sacrifice some of his individual rights or the interests of particular status groups to reach the fellowship as a whole.¹⁴³

It should be noted that this should be an essential part of the ministry process within a pluralistic environment. It should never look like the volunteer is subscribing to a person’s different worldview, but they should be different enough to show respect to those beliefs to show that they are free from all the beliefs that would tie them to specific food choices or cultural norms. The only cultural norm within Christianity is to follow Jesus’ commandments and pattern one’s own life to Jesus.

¹³⁸ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 375.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen C. Barton and John W. Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: First Corinthians* (Nashville: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021.), 63.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Avoiding Stumbling Blocks

Romans 14:13 can elaborate on this. The verse states that one should “not pass judgment on another any longer” but rather decide never to put a “stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother” (ESV). Though Paul, in this passage, is talking about the prohibition of certain foods, the application is that being sensitive to the different ways of different types of people is better than passionately defending a stance that could put a stumbling block in the way of a brother or sister believer.¹⁴⁴ Sin is still sin, what is moral is still moral, but the small things that can separate one from the other can be overlooked to spread the gospel's message.

Paul adds reasoning to why the “freedom in Christ” is restricted. The liberty they have obtained must be restricted whenever the behavior imperils the faith of a Christian brother or sister. A Christian may not do whatever they please if it puts a stumbling block in front of another.¹⁴⁵ The Gospel has created a new reality where one must no longer live by indulging in pagan immorality, losing touch with God.¹⁴⁶

There are many reasons stumbling blocks happen, in the Bible, it was mostly food. For example, it would be futile to try and convert a Jew in the first century at the dinner table and not eat kosher. They would likely hear nothing. In this case, it would be better to eat kosher to reach this person with the gospel. The issue is how one views the food because one must eat to “to the

¹⁴⁴ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Short Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 154.

¹⁴⁵ David E. Garland, Echard J. Schnabel, and Nicholas Perrin, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 281.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Lord.”¹⁴⁷ To risk grieving or even “destroying another believer over food is to fail to be able to walk in love; hence the person violates the true heart of the law.”¹⁴⁸

Just as 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 shows how Paul became accommodating to win people to Christ, Paul knew it could be taken too far. How far is too far may be complicated at first glance. For example, someone’s culture in the prison that is an active gang member may be to listen to rap music that advocates gang activity. This type of music would enable the inmate to continue this kind of activity, but if the person ministering to this inmate does not listen, it will not hinder ministering to the individual. However, if the minister advocates they should continue to listen to that type of music, this could be a stumbling block for that person. If, however, that type of music was present in the setting that the minister was trying to reach the individual, he or she could lose them altogether if they remarked, “turn that off,” or “you should not be listening to that,” in their very first meeting. Eventually, that would not be good for an offender with gang affiliations, but the time to address that would come after some initial rapport had been gained.

Living Incarnationally

In Galatians 2:20, Paul writes that he has “been Crucified with Christ” and “it is I that no longer lives but Christ in me” (ESV). Paul talks about Peter separating himself from the Gentiles when Jews were around in the last portion of this text. Paul comments on how he is justified in faith by saying, “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God” (Gal 2:19). In unity with Christ, Paul lives in the resurrection power, being crucified with Christ to the ways of

¹⁴⁷ Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), 166.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

the old age, old passions, and the world (Gal 2:19, 5:24; 6:14).¹⁴⁹ This sets the biblical precedent to show Christ through one's life and actions, not just words.

Paul is speaking specifically to the church in Galatia in the first century. An application from this Scripture brings along the thesis to this research. Christians should let go of their old ways, old passions, and the ways of the world to present themselves as one that has been "crucified with Christ." One's life should exemplify Christ, though none are perfect. A volunteer walking into the prison must be different. Their lives must emanate Christ within to reach inmates that are existing inside a very different world in prison. The message of the Gospel is to be spread through all nations. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and therefore a part of spreading the message is to show that through actions, not just words (John 14:6).

Paul had a personal testimony. He was initially a persecutor of Christians. Paul's testimony led many to the Lord. The theological implications are that a person with a past can exemplify the new life they live. They can do this with their testimony, actions, and words. In prison, this message is vital. The inmates have an opportunity to change their life while they are serving their sentence, and Christ offers the perfect way to let go of their old ways and passions. If a volunteer walks in and does not exemplify Christ, the inmates will know immediately, and they will probably try to manipulate them to their use or have nothing to do with them. The inmates serve time in an area where someone is always trying to "hustle" or "get over on someone." They can tell almost immediately if someone is genuine or not because they live in an environment filled with those who act one way around staff and differently around other inmates. For this reason, a volunteer must exemplify "Christ crucified" within their life, or they will be taken advantage of or have no attendees for their prison ministry. A volunteer must exemplify Christ if they stand any chance of having a successful ministry within the prison.

¹⁴⁹ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 178.

Theoretical Foundations

Theoretical foundations can be formed now that a theological basis has been established. Upon searching literature regarding this project, there are academic works on volunteers within the prison. However, research on teaching intercultural discipleship to volunteers to create a successful ministry and reduce burnout and attrition of volunteers in prison is not a topic that has been addressed directly. This research covers new ground concerning volunteers within a prison. Still, some theories on intercultural discipleship and evangelism can be utilized for this research.

In *Effective Intercultural Communication*, there are five unique approaches presented. Uncertainty reduction theory posits that because change is necessary for a new setting, the change must occur in the individual trying to communicate or the culture so that one or the other fits more appropriately.¹⁵⁰ The theory would likely not work in a prison environment because changing their culture's views might mean that the volunteer would have to change their worldview. The prison culture would not change because the environment cannot be changed quickly due to state regulations.

The second theory is Adaptation theory, and its premise is that over time one gradually adapts their communication skills to acquire competency in communicating with other cultures after these skills are learned. This could work as long as the change is only to communicate, though it may take more time. The next theory is called "Rhetorical theory," It pays attention to the rhetoric used and the context in which communication occurs within the culture.¹⁵¹ This is also a presentable way to propose communicating interculturally within a prison, though it is much more complex to understand and requires extensive knowledge of the person.

¹⁵⁰ A. Scott Moreau, et. al., *Effective Intercultural Communication: A Christian Perspective*, 42.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

Expectancy violations theory states that all cultures have expectations about communication behavior, and one can learn more about how to communicate by focusing on people's adherence to and deviations from those expectations.¹⁵² Again, this is more complex because one has to know what the expectations are before applying this theory.

Finally, Relational models theory, and the most applicable to a prison environment, says that communication takes place through four fundamental and innate forms of ways all humans relate and interact socially.¹⁵³ They are communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing.¹⁵⁴ Market pricing would not apply in a prison, but the first three are present within the prison and could be useful in understanding how to communicate better with an inmate.

Moon's *Intercultural Discipleship*, though not necessarily dealing with a prison environment, presents grand discipleship theories that use "culturally available genres."¹⁵⁵ Given the pluralistic environment of the prison, this form of discipleship could prove vastly helpful and could, with tweaks, serve as a basis for training the volunteers on how to disciple the inmates more effectively.

The current theory among Christians is a "bounded set." It is explained that one should imagine a circle and then a boundary outside of the circle.¹⁵⁶ Inside the circle are those closest to Christ, and those outside of the circle may not have Christ or do not know Him at all.¹⁵⁷ A

¹⁵² A. Scott Moreau, et. al., *Effective Intercultural Communication: A Christian Perspective*, 42.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Jay W. Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 61.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 54.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

boundary line clearly and sharply defines who is inside and outside of the set.¹⁵⁸ The line separating the two is drawn by the person who explains the Gospel, and listeners are invited to step within the circle.¹⁵⁹ The need for discipleship is very ambiguous and is different for every denomination. For some, it is baptism. Others it is coming to the front of the church, prayer, or even speaking in tongues.¹⁶⁰

Moon presents an alternate theory to the “bounded set” theory called center set discipleship. If one imagines a circle in the center of a blank page and labels it as Christ, those who do not know Christ are outside of it. It takes evangelism to get someone inside of the circle, but discipleship is the method for keeping them centered in Christ once they are inside of the circle.¹⁶¹ In this set, the circle extends far away from the other and includes some of the outliers. The difference is that there is no defined boundary, and using discipleship, someone can be brought in closer to Christ through discipleship.

Moon and Moreau cite the Great Commission as the central command to make disciples of all nations. However, they also say that the local church has fallen into two different kinds of ruts on discipleship: conforming to local culture and separating faith from large areas of life.¹⁶² Intercultural discipleship, based on the Great Commission, is used with deep engagement to Scripture and then finding how discipleship is expressed in the local culture of the person.

Moon argues that evangelism can get anyone into the set with Christ. Still, it takes intercultural discipleship to keep them there because someone of a different worldview and

¹⁵⁸ Jay W. Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 54.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁶² Ibid., 149.

background will probably not stay there. The centered set theory focuses on worldview transformation, not just targeting someone's beliefs and behaviors alone.¹⁶³ It is not that certain behaviors and beliefs are not a part of the problem, but if these are targeted alone, the full issue of getting them to stay with Christ is not being targeted. A person's worldview is why they behave the way they do and believe their way. If the worldview is addressed, then it is not just simply one piece of a bigger problem being tackled.

So, how does one address the worldview and not these individual problems? According to Moon and Moreau, the answer is to understand their worldview by looking at symbols, stories, rituals, music, dance, and drama and comparing that to what Scripture states. When Scripture is the main priority, they can see the Christian worldview. By using Scripture in any of these categories, the worldview within Christianity can become their new normal. This book's frame of focus is on people in third-world countries and people all around the world that have more extreme differences. There are considerable differences in America from person to person, but this application can still be applied to someone's culture and who they are within the prison. Who an inmate is within the prison can often differ from who they were outside of the prison walls.

The centered-set theory appears to be a great approach to transforming someone's worldview, but it does not discuss evangelism in a pluralistic setting. Specifically, a chaplain setting where proselytizing is discouraged due to the lawsuits that could occur upon the professional organization allowing the volunteer to do ministry within the prison. The best theory on this exists in Thiessen's *Ethics of Evangelism*. This book focuses on ethical ways to evangelize in a multi-cultural setting. Thiessen came up with several criteria for when evangelism should be used. His theory rests on the idea that evangelism too often focuses on

¹⁶³ Jay W. Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 58.

people as objects or statistics in an aggressive church growth program, which is why his views could be adapted for this research.¹⁶⁴ His criteria begin with dignity. Dignity is when someone feels valued. When someone feels valued and expresses that they are, an effective relationship has been established, and evangelism can occur. An example of this is simply engaging them, not just outright telling them to come to Jesus because it is how the proselytizer believes.

The second criterion is care. This one is relatively self-explanatory. The person knows that they are cared for and shares that in return. The third and fourth criteria are physical coercion and psychological manipulation. In these criteria, the person evangelizing should avoid trying to physically coerce someone or psychologically manipulate them into believing the way they do. The last criteria are social coercion and inducement. It is easy to force someone to a belief in a social setting with pressure. For example, one might say, “Why will you not convert? All of these other people are.”

Another listed reason would be inducement. Inducement occurs by giving gifts to someone so that they will believe the way the other person does. Some of these things do not happen in prison, but Thiessen’s theories could easily be adapted to the volunteers’ training because of the prison’s pluralistic environment. Proselytizing in a professional chaplain environment is not encouraged. Because of this, a chaplain or volunteer may struggle with what to say and what not to say. With the reasonings indicated by Thiessen, a chaplain or volunteer can better understand how evangelism is supposed to occur.

¹⁶⁴ Elmer J. Thiessen, *Ethics of Evangelism* (Presley Way: Paternoster, 2011), 160.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will focus on the methodology used to conduct the research. The intervention design will be discussed, with detailed tables and graphs explaining how the methodology was designed. In the following section, the intervention plan will be implemented, and the details of that implementation will be covered in-depth, leading to the results section of this paper.

Intervention Design

The methodology steps for this research will undergo the following steps:

1. Obtain IRB permission
2. Obtain Organizational Permission
3. Recruit participants
4. Initial Session to give information about the research design and sign the consent forms
5. Conduct pre-interview
6. Six training sessions
7. Conduct Post Interview
8. Analyze data to identify themes.

The researcher will note thoughts in a journal from step four to step 7. The volunteer will also be asked to compile a journal for each step. It will be used to limit any biases and notate any themes that arise.

Receive IRB Approval and Professional Approval

The first process is to get consent from the IRB and CoreCivic. For the IRB approval, the researcher will follow all guidelines to submit a formal request for approval of the research. To

get approval from CoreCivic, the researcher will send an email to the research analyst at CoreCivic, notifying her of the intent to perform research. A copy of this email is in Appendix A. A copy of the thesis prospectus will be attached to this email so that the board can review the material of the research that will be conducted. The director of chaplaincy at CoreCivic will then email the researcher back, notifying whether the research board at CoreCivic approves or disapproves. If the board disapproves, two options remain: adapt the material to what CoreCivic suggests and approve or use the appeal process set in place by CoreCivic, which could ultimately lead to the research being changed entirely if disapproved. If approved, CoreCivic will respond with the form that can be found in Appendix B.

Recruitment

Upon approval, the researcher will move to recruit for the study. For recruitment of the study, the following people, their names being changed for anonymity, will be asked to take part in this action research: Bob Jones, Miracle Lakeland, Patrick Smith, James Long, Jennifer Doe, Rachel Roland, John Miller, Jake Williams, Hunter Longman, Riley Wickman, Michael Thomas, Emma Prose, Troy Button, and Benjamin Harper. For the recruitment process of these volunteers, phone calls, texts, emails, and in-person verbal permission will be used. Other volunteers from Hardeman County Correction Facility, located roughly one mile from Whiteville Correctional Facility, will be contacted by phone, text, and email. If there are any new volunteers in the process of becoming volunteers, the same method will be used to recruit those individuals. The email that will be sent is in Appendix C, and the verbal script for phone or in-person recruitment can be found in Appendix D.

Consent

When the volunteers that have been reached out to show interest, they will be invited to a formal group meeting. This group meeting will cover the basics of the research being performed. They are: the expectations of the volunteer to be present at Whiteville Correctional Facility on agreed-upon dates, answer the interview questions open and honestly, keep a journal during the time of research, and ending with the signing of the consent form. The consent to participate in the research will only be presented to the individuals who have agreed to the expectations and can make the training session dates. The consent form, in Appendix E, will be signed by the volunteer and be stored with the chaplain.

Pre-Interview

Once participants attend the informational meeting and sign the consent form, they will be moved into the pre-interview process. This process is crucial to be able to recognize themes and perform an analysis of where the volunteer's thinking currently lies regarding the problem happening at Whiteville Correctional Facility. The interview will consist of fifteen open-ended questions designed to be imaginary and gain access to their current thoughts on chaplaincy, discipleship, culture, and burnout. The questions are designed so that the participant will give examples and give detailed stories of how they performed ministry before they undergo the six training sessions. The pre-interview questions are in Appendix E.

The Six Training Sessions

The six training sessions, see Appendix F for an outline of each training, as it stands right now, will follow the following concepts:

Table 3.1. Six Training Sessions Overview

1	Session	Introduction, and what is a Pluralistic Environment? What is Culture?
2	Session	Centered Set-Theory
3	Session	Appropriate Evangelism in a Pluralistic Setting.
4	Session	Intercultural Discipleship.
5	Session	Applications of Intercultural Discipleship
6	Session	Centered Set-Theory, Respectful Evangelism, and Intercultural Discipleship applied together.

The six training sessions were designed with specific goals and measures in mind. The below table shows what the anticipated goals were with the training sessions and how they can be measured.

Table 3.2. Goals and Measures for the Research

Goal	Measure
Become aware of the pluralistic environment in which the volunteer serves.	The volunteer's ministry became more successful-more turnout to their ministry

Become more accommodating of other cultures and backgrounds.	The volunteer became aware that their background and culture affects how they relate to inmates
Retain more volunteers-Volunteers do not leave or burnout	The volunteer made more relational connections to inmates-their ministry became more successful
The Volunteers became more aware of their outward showing of faith in Christ	The volunteer made more relational connections to inmates and moved them into the discipleship process because they exemplified Christ outwardly
The volunteers understand that the inmates can be different people within the prison culture, and their culture and background	The volunteer became more aware of prison culture and used the message of the Gospel to learn about the inmate
The volunteers see more inmates rehabilitated	The volunteer used the training tools, and an inmate started on the path of discipleship with the volunteer.

Post Interview

After the six training sessions have been completed, each participant will undergo an exit interview. The exit interview will not occur until the volunteer has had a chance to hold one service at a minimum after successfully engaging in the six training sessions. The exit interview will be held with the goals and measures in mind. Nine questions will be asked that specifically

focus on getting details, stories, and opinions relating to the training material. Each question is focused on getting the volunteer to answer in detail, using their imagination or stories that they have experienced in their ministries after the training sessions. The complete interview questions are in Appendix G.

Data Analysis and Identification of Themes

The last portion of the intervention design will focus on the material gained from conducting the two interviews. The researcher will start by compiling the journal entries and notating any potential themes that may have already arisen. The volunteer journals will next be gone through, and notes will be taken on their specific thoughts at each step. After this, the pre-interview questions by each volunteer will be analyzed thoroughly to identify early themes that stick out with the individual. Finally, the exit interview for each person will be inspected for new themes. The researcher will attempt to construct for each person qualitative results. Individual and collective themes can be scrutinized, and the researcher can see how the volunteer grew or did not grow. From these themes, the researcher can analyze whether the training affected the participants.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The process laid out in the previous section was followed to implement the intervention design. IRB permission for the research was approved (see Appendix H). The second portion of the intervention design, recruiting participants, yielded eight individuals. The chart below lists their name, number of years of experience as a volunteer, and their denomination of Christianity. As a reminder, pseudonyms were used for each participant.

Table 3.3. List of Participants

Participant Name	Experience in Years	Christian Denomination
Adonna Long	2	Assemblies of God
David Folly	15	Baptist
James Stone	2	Non-Denominational
Max Jameson	1	Baptist / Presbyterian
Randolph Chance	5	Baptist
Clayton Mathe	5	Non-Denominational
Selene Pat	20	Catholic
Daniel Clyde	20	Baptist
Riley Miles	2	Baptist

Each participant signed a consent form as requested, and organizational approval was obtained. The next phase was to interview each participant individually for the pre-interviews. Each pre-interview was video recorded via a computer. The questions in the pre-interview were followed, but follow-up questions were asked in cases where needed. Given the diversity of the participants and stories being the critical discussion points of this project, the researcher decided against using surveys, written questionnaires, and focus groups. Data analysis will be measured qualitatively and analyzed by what each participant had to say about each question. The uniqueness of this research meant that no expert was readily available to be consulted on the research. The research mentor will serve as an outside observer to the best extent possible.

This research aimed to get to each participant's stories about the questions being asked. After each interview, the researcher made notes and observations. No pre-interview was quite the same.

In the pre-interview, when it came to questions that pertained to strengths in their prison ministry, questions about culture, and sometimes the question related to connecting and engaging individuals were not met with many words. It may be because they did not have a good understanding of what the research would contain. However, the questions related to weaknesses, or questions that caused the participant to focus on something they do negatively, gave way to good conversation and excellent content. After seeing the results, the participants were conclusively anxious to learn but hesitant because they were unsure of what the research would be trying to teach them.

The seminars were then conducted over six weeks. The sessions were where the bulk of the results were gleaned. Each one ran over the one-hour limit due to extended discussions. In each session, the participants always had something to say. The researcher video recorded each of these sessions so they could be reviewed and analyzed for themes. After the seminar sessions, the exit interviews were conducted individually, each video recorded to be reviewed, and what the researcher could not get out of the seminar sessions, the exit interviews provided.

After the exit interviews, each pre-interview, seminar session, and exit interview were analyzed for themes by reviewing the video recording footage. At first, the researcher looked for common denominators among answers from all the participants. The participants seemed to understand they were in a pluralistic environment, as the prison setting is exceptionally different from most general settings, so they did not have much to say about the pluralistic setting itself. However, just because they knew they were in a different setting did not mean they knew what happened in the general population housing units. The seminars were not set up to talk directly

about this, but when it came up in conversation, the researcher saw an opportunity to share examples, leading to many participants speaking on how it impacted them.

Next, the researcher looked for conversations and stories related to the problem, and many examples were found and used collectively, though they may have been different answers to different questions being asked. This resulted in three out of the five themes. The lone theme addressed in Chapter Four-Contextualization was not even a part of the research. It came up in one seminar session and one exit interview. Only after reviewing the footage did the researcher realize its importance to the research. After the pre-interviews, the participants were always open-minded and willing to talk, and there were no “slippages or silences” in the data.¹⁶⁵ The answers and discussions were used extensively in the results.

¹⁶⁵ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 75.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

After conducting the pre-interviews, the six training seminars, and the post-interviews, this researcher quickly realized that the questions posed were mere guidelines to open up the conversation. Once the conversation began in all portions of the research, stories began to flood the conversation. It is through these stories that the results can be ascertained. There appeared, throughout the research, to be five distinct themes that arose. In each, using direct quotes from participants, one can conclude this research was successful. As stated in chapter one, all names that appear here have been changed.

Theme One: Relationships First

Participants learned about bounded-set discipleship, centered-set discipleship, and respectful evangelism in the seminar sessions. It is within these sessions and the pre-interview sessions that the theme arrived. The bounded set theory of discipleship states that a boundary line separates who is in the set with Christ and who is not.¹⁶⁶ In this example, the line is drawn by the Christian who is presenting the Gospel this way.¹⁶⁷ The example the researcher provided was a volunteer asking inmates to raise their hands to receive salvation at the end of a message.

Five of the nine participants stated they did this within their service and only now recognize the importance of following centered-set discipleship by pointing them to Christ through relationship. Adonna Long, an Assemblies of God volunteer at the prison, stated that she recognized this only recently through one of her services in a women's prison. She told a story about a young lady in prison who was an "alpha" and made it a point to tell Adonna that she was not a believer and was addicted to heroin, with a lot of charges to be faced. She only wished to

¹⁶⁶ Moon and Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship (Encountering Mission): Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, 53.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 54.

be out of the pod (the housing unit in which an inmate stays) and visit with her friend. Instead of trying to force her constantly toward salvation, Adonna said, “We just became really good friends, and through that friendship, I was able to help her see the core issues that caused her to resort to drugs in the first place.” Adonna went on to say, “I just feel like she is a spiritual daughter now, and when she got out, I took her to a rehab facility, and she is pursuing God now, and it is all because of the relationship that was built.”

David Folly, a participant with a local Baptist church, had an incredible realization about keeping relationships first. In his pre-interview, David said that preaching and teaching were the only tools he used to disciple the inmates that attended his service. David’s services were run like a standard church service, a couple of songs, a quick fifteen-minute message, and a “raise your hand” altar call. David Folly said in his exit interview,

I have realized that I have not been relationally based. Now I will certainly be more cognitive of what I can do to build a relationship with these guys, not everyone is the same, but I want to be more cognitive of what I can do to build a relationship and point these guys to Christ. You never know when you might click on someone’s hot button.

One participant, James Stone, was asked about how this research will affect his ministry. He said, “This research will open me up to more pragmatic approaches. I will be much more aware of how I can build a relationship. As a Hispanic, I come with a sort of approach to stereotyping these guys. I used to think these guys were from Tennessee. They are white, some black, and not many Hispanics are in prison. Most of them were raised here in the United States. After hearing what you said, their backgrounds are just so much more diverse, whether Christian, Wiccan, or Muslim. My awareness is just going to be so much broader of how I can relate to these guys, which will help me be more relational with these guys during my time at the prison.”

Max Jameson was asked in the exit interview if he had been able to use any of the intercultural discipleship methods in his church ministry since the time the seminars were completed. He had a lot to say about the subject of relationships. He stated,

This training has been huge for me in recognizing that there are other means and avenues for reaching and connecting with people and that this connection matters. The other day we had a guest at the church having a conversation about an old eighties rock band, and I was unsure whether to reach out to him. I overheard him speaking about music, and I used a particular band, Dokken, to spark a conversation. What it did was it created for them this reality that I am not some stuck-up pastor who lives under a rock with a Bible, burning incense, and praying the psalms all day.

When asked a follow-up question about if he felt he could connect better, he said, “I think that I have taken some of the pressure off myself that some things are off limits as a means to connect. I did not even realize I had that mindset, but I know I will be in a better place in my preaching and connecting with others.”

Later in the same interview, when Max was asked how he would use the methods of intercultural discipleship to make connections with individuals by using things like symbols, music, and background, he elaborated on how he used to go into the prison system thinking he needed to try and help correct the inmates. He stated, “This may sound backward, but I do not know how much I am going to use it so much as that I am going to relax and let it use me. Instead of seeing things as an opportunity to correct as much, I will see these things as an opportunity to connect, not correct.” In addition, he said,

These seminars opened my eyes to the fact that we have some preconceived notions and biases about these inmates. Recognizing how pluralistic of an environment the prison is at the outset will pull down some of the guardedness about my thinking or my way of doing things. We will recognize that by laying my thinking and my way of doing things aside, we are not putting it off permanently, but by putting it off long enough to connect, we can always return to our ways. If we hold that up in the first place, we may never connect in a way that benefits either of us.

Max went on to say after this,

When using something so simple as music to connect, that is what I mean when I say it is mutually beneficial. The connection allows them to relax and become teachable. They can recognize that I am just a person too, so it removes some of that sense of separatism where that pastor is just way up here, and they are way down there. I am not sure if it is an authority barrier, but it just removes that barrier that exists and allows a connection to happen naturally.

Max, in his pre-interview, when asked what makes him feel successful in service, “I will definitely feel better if I have numbers.” This question was meant to draw out if the volunteer was more concerned with the number of attendance or being able to build a relationship that leads to change. Confidently, Max’s thoughts on this have changed tremendously. “I am more concerned about connecting with individuals than the number that attend my service now. I don’t know that I have ever been caught up with numbers, but I view numbers in my service now as more of an opportunity to connect with individuals.”

Randolph Chance said that he became more aware of the surroundings and what inmates were going through. When asked if he had applied any of the material from the seminars to his ministry, He provided a story about some inmates he had been working with for five to six years. “I stopped and talked to some of these guys and learned that his wife has cancer, and I could stop and pray with them. I figured out that the saying ‘They do not care how much you know till they know how much you care’ is real.”

Theme Two: Contextualization

When the researcher began this research, contextualization was never considered as a theme that might even arise. However, once it was pointed out, it added much more to the research that was not considered. Contextualization is defined as the process by which the church becomes “inculturated” in the life of a people.¹⁶⁸ Simply put, it is the process by which one tries

¹⁶⁸ Bruce J. Nicholls, *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2016), 36.

to learn about another's characteristics of a culture or group to connect with that group when one may or may not have a differing background and culture.

As previously stated, it was not the goal of this thesis to present contextualization of the Gospel or contextualization at all. However, it did present itself through one of the volunteers James Stone. In the last seminar, he stated, when asked what may have presented itself that was not present in the research, "What you have been talking about that I do not think you realized is Contextualization. We have to be aware of the surroundings of the pluralistic environment we are working in. So, we have got to know the environment and figure out how to contextualize the backgrounds and cultures that these guys are bringing with them."

James was asked a follow-up question to this statement in his exit interview about what he thinks he would be good at now. James brought contextualization up again and stated, "I think this training has broadened my sensitivity to my audience when I am speaking. I will not say some corny joke against, for example, the rap you showed us they were listening to. I will be much more sensitive in how I communicate." Stone said, "I think because of the hostility, violence, abuse, and crime. I think that whatever is in their background is much more intense. People in the church are not as intense about their beliefs, experiences, or circumstances. When you go through a hard life, trauma, abuse, and crime, it just intensifies everything about you.

We must be super intentional about what we say." Stone gave an excellent example of what he meant.

Let us say there is a Mormon convicted of first-degree murder, and I have met a bunch of them, but let us say this guy left for whatever reason. If you negatively say something negative against Mormonism, this guy may take it in an extremely hard or extremely offensive versus just a regular normal Mormon who grew up that way and grew out of it. If you say something funny to the guy who just grew out of it, they may laugh with you and not take it offensive. However, the guy that's been abused, laughed at, and made fun of their whole life. They are going to take that much differently.

When asked if he thought this training would be helpful, Stone replied, “I would say that volunteers are very naïve on this issue, and they need to be taught about this issue so that they don’t come across so dogmatic, so that they do not lose an opportunity to reach someone. Knowing how to contextualize your denomination, your beliefs, and then contextualizing your beliefs with sensitivity to these guys is the best component of this training. This contextualization will be able to be cross-pollinated between the prison and in churches.”

To conclude on this topic, Stone was asked what he could do differently. He responded,

I maybe need to not be as hard and as dogmatic because it will only help your ministry. I was highly legalistic, highly dogmatic, and a highly educated apologist. Getting into an argument with me used to not end well for you. If you quoted me ten scriptures, I quoted you twenty in Greek. It just did not go well for you. I learned that I had to moderate myself as a pastor. This had helped me in terms of being in the prison ministry when I had such high-profile positions. Sensitivity to the background and who a person is are the key to success in prison ministry.

James Stone was the only volunteer to comment on contextualization directly, but Clayton Smith had this to say about prison ministry, and it directly relates to contextualization. He noted, I state it this way: “Meeting men where they are at, we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. We are to be affirming since we are created in the image of God Almighty. We are loved unconditionally, have a Savior who died for us, and He is the only way to the father. It is much simpler than we assume to communicate.”

Clayton Mathe told a story about interviewing one of the inmates for his halfway-house.

I am interviewing a man one day and was very direct during our introduction. This was a man that had served thirty calendar years. I asked him, “who is Jesus to you?” he responded, “I am open to that concept.” I said, “okay, let’s go to the Lord in prayer.” I did not preach at him, or even try to sell him on anything. It was not the right time. A little over two months later, he was granted parole and released from the prison. Within his first thirty days, he shared he wanted to know who Jesus was. Twelve months later, he stood on stage and thanked everyone at his graduation celebration and affirmed that he found Jesus. Had I not just met him at that moment where he was, maybe he is not there standing on that stage. It was not anything that I did but because of the power of the Holy Spirit allowing me to be able to meet him where he was at in that moment.

Clayton also told a story about how he went to Honduras. He states,

When I ventured to Honduras for a mission trip. I was part of a group of forty men that built an orphanage. We went to local town for church on a Sunday and I will never forget watching all the people walking into a cinderblock building with windows that were broken out, no air conditioner, no church pews or chairs, no electricity, no running water, no bathrooms, and no carpet. Yet they were there to worship Jesus. Yes, the people in Honduras have very little-materialism and money means little to them. Prisoners are similar. Their choices have stripped them of what most Americans view as important. We cannot try to do ministry the same way when they have been through such differing circumstances.

Theme Three: Prison Environment

When performing this research, it came to light that the volunteers did not understand the inmates' conditions. It is not by any means a third-world country, but they did not understand the cultures, the underworld economic systems they lived by, the types of violence, the drug use, even the music that they were living with. Considering contextualization arising as a theme, the unawareness of the environment is likely why the volunteers did not understand that they needed to be sensitive to their different circumstances.

In the seminar sessions, the researcher presented the volunteers as a part of the intercultural discipleship discussion, the living space, the culture, the type of music that was listened to, the violence, and the drug use that occurred were explained and shown. David Folly, in his exit interview, said when asked what he learned,

I do believe that I'll have more awareness of the environment that these guys are coming from and are going to. They are hungry for peace according to the atmosphere that they live in. I have noticed in the prison that the guys are just desperate to get our services. It's obvious they are not getting this when we are not meeting. I am going to be more compassionate towards these guys looking at their circumstances and how they have to comport themselves. I just have more compassion for them. Knowing what I know now of what they are experiencing, I am trying to delve into their life and try to encourage them into what they are trying to do.

He said, "Sometimes they have their head down because they feel like they have the whole system against them. I just want to be an encouragement to them now, instead of just coming in

and doing a service.” He added, “I’m getting a little bit bolder because I have more insight into what they are living like and how they are being treated by other inmates.

This life they are living is not a cakewalk, it’s not a walk in the park.” Folly continued, “I’ve been in prison ministry for fifteen years. Never have I heard stories about what it’s like in the pod, like I heard in this training. Like the fact that when new guys come into the pod sometimes and if they have a certain charge, they must give up something financially or even physically. It’s horrendous to me to think about that. He has to affiliate himself or take the lone road and to me, that’s like being on an island that can be attacked from all sides. Satan is running rampant in this place. None of this deters me, it only amplifies my want-to to go into the prison because I know now, they really need the Lord. This training has enhanced my awareness of all that goes on. As a volunteer, we’re the go-get them guys.” Folly finished by saying, “

The atmosphere these guys must live in when they are not in service with us ate me up, how they have to suffer. Even how they have to surrender themselves to the system that is around them. If they don’t fit in, they are going to be pounded and pounded until they are flat. That’s why I believe our services are so important. That’s why I know why the Lord works on these guys when they are in the service. It’s almost like sometimes you can cut the Holy Spirit with a knife. They really are there to hear something. They want and need to be encouraged. All of this has just given me a different perspective on things. As someone else said, ‘there but for the grace of God go I.

Selene Pat, a Catholic volunteer, really surprised the researcher with her unawareness of the prison environment. She has been a volunteer at the prison since it opened in 2002. She stated, “Something that was profound to me is the conditions in which the guys live. It goes back to walking a mile in my shoes. I’ve been there, and I have been back in the pods. It’s not like it’s a cesspool or anything, it’s clean, and they have heating and air, tables, and televisions, but it is never quiet. I treasure quiet. I like to be active and hear music too.” She continued,

The fear factor though, I see those guys coming down the hall and some look compassionate and some of them look fearful, and we talk to them. Whether they are Catholic or not, they see Father Arnold’s collar, and they ask why we’re there, and they will stop and talk about making apple cider and his past. He had been in Italy, in the

military. I was like, how did you wind up here? The divorce that occurs from a life of purpose to being here in the prison and what kind of danger you are in. It really struck a chord even though I knew it. When David Folly brought it to light, I realized. It's a terrible place to be. I am not a bleeding heart at all, there are people who have done things that need to be in a corrective environment, but do they deserve the length of time? I don't know. How many of the guys are more or less victims? Of course, the drugs and the alcohol which, makes them crazy.

When asked if anything would change in her ministry knowing this, she said, "There were lots of things that were good. As far as an action plan, I think it will be extemporaneous. Once these guys get together, and the awareness of the prison culture, I'm sure I'll do things differently." She added,

Being a mental health professional, I see so much mental illness in the facility that I know it's a lot cheaper to deal with in the facility. There are guys out there that have committed crimes because they didn't have any help. They might have been hearing voices, seeing images, or being manipulated because of their lack of ability to think through. The ministry is incredible. The manipulation that the chaplains have to deal with is just astounding. The bottom line is, we are pretty much on the same page. Jesus made it clear how we are to treat those in prison, and it is something we have to do despite the circumstances of the environment in which we serve.

Adonna Long was asked if anything would change in her ministry after this research. She said, "I think I will have more of an empathetic view towards people. Maybe if a person that I see is being negative, I can hone in on why that's coming forward, whether it's coming from the background, the culture inside, or they just have a bad attitude. I'm going to be more confident when things do not go as I thought they would go."

In response to the presentation of themes in intercultural discipleship, after hearing about the culture inside of the pods, Daniel Clyde said, "I probably need to be more patient. I tend to be straightforward and blunt, sometimes a little too blunt. I have to be more aware of where these guys are coming from and what they are living in. Everybody takes a different path to find Jesus."

Theme Four: Living Incarnationally and Using Unconventional Means for Outreach

Living incarnationally and the applications of intercultural discipleship were a part of the fifth seminar session. Since the previous session was meant to present Intercultural Discipleship, not many people were able to speak. This session was meant to allow them to have a voice and converse with each other. The session went over by thirty minutes because of the engagement that was being received. It is therefore useful to consider this as a theme in the results.

In the workshop on incarnational living, a point was made about how inmates see more of a person's life than they do hearing their words. Selene Pat responded to this,

The necessity of humility and it incorporates with the incarnationality in the flesh. If we are in the flesh, we have to be humble and show our humility and our willingness to accept and listen. Hopefully, we can resolve things with the inmates. They need to see humility, with so much lacking. We have a media-generated population that wants their fifteen minutes or three seconds of fame. "Me, me me," is the idiom of our society. Humility is getting kicked down the road, and it is so important to let these guys see this in you.

Randolph Chance, in his exit interview about incarnationally living and unconventional means, said, "When I became a Christian, all my previous relationships were gone. I have no social media; I don't like being accessible on social media. There have been a lot of my old friends, when they come to that point in their life by being in jail or something happening, then they knew where I was and what happened to me. There are quite a few people that have called me, or I have met to have lunch and dinner simply because they knew the person that I am now. I don't have social media because I wanted to draw the line and walk far away from the line. Also, if we're different, then we're different. When someone is looking for a difference, they're going somewhere different. They are not in the same associations, culture, and environment with those people. It's a fine line. We are in this world, but we are not in this world."

Mr. Chance noted, “Zacchaeus is a good story about this. Zacchaeus is up in the tree and goes to working where God is working. When we see God working in someone’s life, people want to go where God is working.” Randolph went on to say,

When I used to be on drugs, I could always tell when I was someone’s evangelistic target. I could also tell when someone generally cared about me. We want to be people that generally care about people in the prison. I think it’s good for us to know that there’s a melting pot of people that we are dealing with. It’s the same message, but we should never compromise the Word of God. This was not about comprising the Word of God in any way. It’s about working with people where they are at and helping them get to where they are at. I care less about numbers and now I care about depth. I understand that being a Christian in prisons is hard, it was hard in Babylon, in Egypt, and when King Herod reigned. My goal for myself is to not be influenced by our culture, but to influence our culture. That’s our mission, that we all grow up and mature in Christianity, stable, sound mind, sensible, and faithful.

Riley Miles was asked the question of how unconventional means can be used in his exit interview. He said,

I was thinking of Scripture, where Peter said I will never deny, and Jesus said you will deny me three times before the rooster crows. I think sometimes people’s expectation, if they get to the point where they say, “Oh, I do not sin anymore.” That is a serious issue, because if you do not know that there is a fight, you are going to lose it. No one can be perfect, but people are looking at us even when we do not see it.” Riley Miles then said, “I remember God spoke to me through the Lion King. I preached last week that you need to look back into your reflection and look harder because of who you are in God’s eyes. People might say, “that’s a secular cartoon.” God has universal truth that he is using and sometimes we need to let the Spirit guide us to the universal truth that God is trying to teach them.” Selene Pat added to Riley Miles’ statement and said, “I think that we are obligated to offer up the sensitivity to what’s going on culturally in the world. You like apple pie; I like peach pie. Why? We have to be charitable enough to open up that window, but not necessarily buy into the things of the world but listen.

James Stone was asked about this same question. He responded,

It’s different pastoring in the prison. We’re preaching to convicted felons. It’s different from a normal church. We must embody the virtues of humility, those characteristics that Jesus demonstrated over and over in his life. That’s central to our ministries within the prison. A lot of these inmates have only known anger, pride, violence, hurt, and pain. So, coming in with those virtues is essential. It should be one of the first things we do. The regular evangelical conditions may never work. Sometimes we have to use unconventional methods to reach people. You may not be able to go down any road to find someone, but God will go down any road to find you. We may be the person that

God sends down that road to find people. Although that one person may seem insignificant, they may become a cataclysmic force for Christianity.”

He added to his statement,

We definitely know that unconventional processes were used in Scripture. Jesus went to the parties of tax collectors and sinners. If you study any first-century parties, they were highly sensual. There would have been half-naked women there. Yet, we know that Jesus attended some of these parties because he had an agenda for vile sinners. We know that Jesus broke conventional patterns. He broke six cultural barriers when he met the woman at the well. The disciples confirmed this at a distance, saying, “Why is Jesus doing this?” Why are they asking this? Because he is breaking unconventional patterns. God in the Old Testament broke conventional patterns. He told a prophet Hosea to marry a courtesan. Esther when she went in to the Persian king’s bedroom all night to see if she would be elected as the queen. They were not playing monopoly. Do any study of the Persian Empire and their cultural influences and the things that the king did? Kings had to sleep with women to choose which one they would marry. That’s not easy for pastors or scholars to swallow, but it is there. She spent all night, pleased him, he marries her, and that saves Haman from killing the Jews. We do not like saying these things and we avoid these things in the pulpits. The point is cheap legalism is not going to work either. We can get so holy that we are impractical and not reach anyone. That’s what the desert monks did for years until someone said, “you’re up there in a tower for years becoming holier than everyone else but reaching no one.” While we may not compromise the gospel or ourselves, I do think there is a place where we do come to the point where sometimes we have to break conventional patterns to reach people. Nothing is cookie-cutter. God will do anything, even if in our eyes it may seem odd. We just have to look for the opportunity and be willing to be used.” Max Jameson brought up using unconventional means on his own in the exit interview. He said, “I think we always tend, especially the more educated we get that we overestimate what we can do and underestimate what God can do. It’s been a healthy reminder. There may be disagreements on methodology on how we get there, but no matter what is said or done, God can use it to point back to himself. The reality of this is astounding and needs to be a part of the ministry we have.

David Folly, in his exit interview when asked about using unconventional means to connect with others, said,

We don’t have a whole lot of time. We have, hopefully, forty to fifty days per year, for one hour at a time. I try to encourage those guys to come back, they have made a commitment to come, and they are standing out in their pod. We are just trying to shoot them full of Jesus. I am going to do my best to connect with them on things like hunting, fishing, and sports to try to build a relationship with these guys. I cannot forget that I am not there to just do a service and leave for my own self. I am there for the inmates. It really all boils down to the fact that we have those conversations to lead into talking about God.

Theme Five: Changing Behaviors and Doing Proper Invitations Relationally

This specific theme came up in the second seminar session when bounded, and centered-set discipleship was being discussed. An example of bounded-set discipleship was given by a volunteer at the end of a service within the prison asking inmates to raise their hand if they would like to be saved by saying something like “Come to Jesus, he will change your behaviors, he will change you.” The point of this was not to say that Jesus didn’t change someone’s behaviors, the point of the seminar session was to show that if the worldview was changed, then the behaviors would change within the inmates. This initiated a discussion where the minority of volunteers that did not do this in their service got most of the volunteers within this session to realize they may not be doing their ending of service the right way and had the wrong thinking when it came to how they should invite them to Jesus. This was brought up in the exit interviews as well and as a part of the results, this is a noteworthy theme. It should be noted that the researcher does not think that God cannot operate or save someone by a raise your hand invitation. The point being made in the session is that a relationship beforehand and ensuring that God is doing the drawing should be firsthand.

The researcher used an example of a drug addict ministry that had been running for three years, and the pastor noticed that if they sat in front of a drug addict and they said, “stop doing drugs, get away from the hustle mindset, get away from this or that certain thing.” The researcher explained that this has a chance of success, but what are they really changing about this person? They are really saying, change your behavior, and then you can find Jesus.

Clayton Mathe responded to this example used in the seminar by saying, “Changing behaviors does not point someone to Jesus, people can choose to do something different. That does not necessarily point someone to Jesus.” Randolph Chance replied to Mathe, “Being someone who was on drugs. The Bible says that worldly sorrow leads to death, but godly sorrow

leads to repentance, not to be regretted. I had to feel a deep conviction of my sins in my life before I was ready to change. The Holy Spirit has to convict a man before they are ready to change.” Riley Miles then commented, “God can change someone on their behaviors, but if we are going to beat up someone who is lost, we’re doing them no good. This morning I had a sermon about a painting of the Prodigal Son that was sitting in the garbage, and it was a Rembrandt painting. If someone would take it out of the garbage, the value of the painting would be astronomical, but most would just look at that and think that it is not worth the time to restore it. People are people and they are valuable in God’s eyes.”

Selene Pat in response to a question on changing behaviors in her exit interview said,

I have realized through this that people have to have a desire to take that leap to go from a world from all the friends that they have to the point where they say, “I cannot do this anymore. I desire something better. I do not know who Jesus is. I hear people talking about him.” They have to have the desire and they have to feel the love to come to that point. To come forward when a call is made for a profession of faith, we don’t know what’s in their heart when they come forward unless we know them.

In the workshops, a conversation started about inviting individuals at the end of the service to raise their hand and draw a line, like the theory of bounded-set discipleship. Daniel Clyde answered immediately. He said, “If God does not draw the person, then it, then you are doing the manipulating and the convincing. The Word of God must do that, feelings change. People have been manipulated by this silly thing called an invitation. If God does not draw the person, they cannot come to Christ. It would be man-centered.” Randolph Chance said to this question,

We see a lot of men who made a profession of faith when they were young. According to the Word of God, it’s a lifestyle. Jesus was not a used car salesman. I think God can work in any way he chooses to if he wants to, that is not to say that God can’t still allow someone to be saved this way. Jesus said, “anyone willing to lose their life for my sake will find it.” In church in America and in the prison, this is something that I’m passionate about. Every time I go on a trip to the prison, I do not do a raise-your hand invitation. Instead, I try to help mature the Christians. A guy that has come to my service for four years brings people with him, like fifteen to twenty every time. I think the way change is

going to happen is if we try to focus on maturing those individuals, they will go out and make disciples as well. Sometimes more people are worse. Sometimes meeting with just five people is more fruitful for my ministry.

Miles Riley responded to Daniel Clyde by saying,

I said a prayer was young, but I really did not know what I had done until I was confronted by my sin and was broken. We need to be careful that we look for opportunities, I mean think of the woman at the well. Jesus gave the Word and the woman at the well realized it, but Jesus pointed back to himself. There are deceptive ways that this can be done as well, but there is also fruit hanging off the trees after a while. If I were to base my evangelism on a fifteen-point discipleship it may never happen, I may never see the guy.

Riley expanded upon this statement saying,

However, I see the value of making sure it's a God thing and not a manipulation. I have seen this at Mid-America, where they are all the numbers and claimed to have one hundred and fifteen people saved when some of the inmates are the same guys that raise their hand every single service.

What I see from this research is that Christ-centeredness is going to bring them to better behaviors, not focusing on the behaviors. I have used this with inmates on drugs, and I might say to them, 'You need to focus on Christ, you cannot focus on the thing that you do not want or else you will eventually give in.' The model of centered-set discipleship is amazing because it's always about pointing them towards Christ.

Daniel Clyde then added,

You make disciples by first having someone that knows the Lord and has been saved before you can start the discipleship process. Even the Word goes as you go and as you walk. Christ was always very clear about the price that we pay to follow him. That is not something, even in outside churches I see. I sit in the corner sometimes when other prison ministers come in, the cost of discipleship to follow the Lord is to die to ourselves and our worldly desires. It's not just a behavioral change, it's a lifestyle change.

Clayton Mathe was asked about proper invitations within a service within the prison. He stated,

There are churches all over America that are quantifying salvation on a week-to-week basis. What happens after that decision? If you do not have anyone to come along beside you and disciple you, you are in trouble. I do believe there can be Christians in cults. Because sometimes we lead someone to Christ, and they end up in the wrong hands. It is because they did not have the discipleship they needed. Same way in the prison, these people just get left behind sometimes because the focus is on quantifying how many people have been saved. They have one hour to be there, who is really watching these

guys and being accountable for these guys. Not that God cannot operate this way, but we have to build a relationship with these guys to ensure their success.

He added,

It's all about the numbers for a lot of the organizations that come into the prison. A lot of organizations walk away from relational discipleship. For me, once I received Christ, I got handed a book that was about my first thirty quiet times. I'm reading the Word of God for the first time, and I have fifteen questions. In the prison, if you are one and done and thirty people come up, and you see them the next time, what happens between those services? This guy is doing what he has to survive, and there are no other believers in his pod. Guess what? If there is no discipleship and we're not following up, chances are they are going right back to the way they are. Relationship is the key for evangelism, discipleship, and binding us together overall.

Max Jameson, in the final moments of his exit-interview, was asked a follow-up question as to why he thought counting on a number of salvations in a sermon may not be the best. He responded, "If you try to quantify something, you are not going to feel successful unless more and more become saved. We're driving ourselves into a wall. For example, if we set a goal of five, that may continue up and up. Really, we're driving ourselves down to nothing left."

James Stone was asked a similar follow-up question on drawing a line for salvation. He responded, "If someone comes to know the Lord, they could be at any distance from him as they are growing and maturing and being discipled in Christ. That may look a little different for everyone. I like the point that we should always keep them pointed towards Christ, whether with him or without him, and I will make sure I implement that."

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The results of this action research project were fascinating, satisfying, and surprising at times. There is no doubt that the thesis was correct concerning using intercultural discipleship for pluralistic environments, but in other areas, the research became much deeper than just showing volunteers how to build better relationships with inmates. This section of the paper will conclude how the research project compared to the published works analyzed, what the researcher learned implementing the project, where the research should go from here, and how the research might apply in other settings.

What the Researcher Learned Implementing this Project

The thesis of this paper was to use intercultural discipleship to show how a volunteer can better connect and relationally engage the inmates. The participants readily recognized that they were unaware of stories, music, and symbols being able to help them build this relationship. Upon this front, the research proved this. However, the problem held deeper roots than initially realized. The volunteers ranged from brand new to multiple years of experience, but no one had thought to present what the inmates must deal with behind bars, how inmates have a differing economic system and the different cultures in prison. The researcher wanted the participants to understand that there were two different cultures inside of a prison: the culture, background, and behaviors behind bars, and the actual culture, background, and behaviors of the person when they are free from their housing units.

Does using intercultural discipleship solve the problem of understanding differing cultures? Not necessarily, but once it is used to build a relationship, the inmate would expand upon things that go on in the prison. The most crucial facet of the research is to allow the volunteers to understand the different cultures of the prison before they volunteer. However, some volunteers did not have this, so it took fifteen years to understand it in at least one case.

This understanding needs to be shared with any brand-new volunteer. Words cannot describe the researcher's shock factor when they did not have this understanding. Realistically, volunteers are not at the prison five days a week like a chaplain. They are not permitted to the housing units unless they are a volunteer chaplain, or the chaplain takes them, and they only come and go to the chapel. It could be argued that if they had this understanding of the inmates, they might have more compassion and willingness to build a relationship with them to disciple them, and then altogether, the problem at Whiteville Correctional Facility with the volunteers may have never even been a problem.

As pointed out in Chapter One, the participants are not trained on specifics that go on in the housing units where the inmates stay. The participants are not meant to know unless they become a volunteer chaplain. Inmate manipulation, rules of entering the prison, PREA laws, and dress code are the major priorities of training for an individual and rightly so. None of the culture that exists in the housing unit is ever promoted by the prison itself. It is regularly monitored and if the inmates are caught betting, stealing, selling drugs, trading commissary, or performing gang activity, it is met with disciplinary action. However, it's hard to catch when there are fifteen hundred inmates in one place.

Letting the volunteers know about this culture and lifestyle can help them become more compassionate toward the inmates instead of viewing them as inhuman. They already have some sort of compassion for this type of environment, otherwise they would not have volunteered their time to come perform a service. It is clear the facts about the prison need to be shared with the new people the moment they step in to start their ministry so they can have the best understanding possible. Over time, they will pick up on signs that certain things are happening and with this knowledge, they will connect with the inmates better because they have a working knowledge of what goes on in the prison.

The researcher also learned that some volunteers focused on their “brand” of church and spreading that “brand” to the inmates, some without realizing it. What qualifies this as happening? First, the service is just a numbers game with the idea of “how many can be saved?” The second qualifier the researcher discovered is that the service is branded with the idea of doctrinal ideas that fit within that specific church group. This is normal and not an issue, but it is part of what goes on in prison ministry. Third, there was a lack of focus on the inmates, and it was more of the picture of “these people from insert-church-name-here went to the prison this week and had a service for the inmates” so they could send word back to the church and spread the news. There are no problems with sharing news that people from a church went into the prison and preached to inmates, and some were saved. However, it becomes a problem when there is no follow-up. In this type of service, there was no meaningful interaction with the inmates. There was no dedication to learning about the people behind the number that the volunteer would report.

The volunteers that attended this training do not do this. No emphasis in the training was put on “branding,” per se, but the subject did come up. The volunteers that attended training learned more from each other, discussing the subjects at hand during the seminars. The researcher expected learning to occur from discussion in the seminars, but not to the level that it occurred. This research is an example of inter-denominational learning. Though each participant had their differences they certainly became connected and learned from each other despite their differing beliefs. All the volunteers that participated are in regular contact and they became friends connected by their ministries within the prison and undergoing the seminars.

In the weeks that followed the completion of the research, the volunteers were all a part of a revival. The revival contained the Assemblies of God, Baptist, Church of Christ, non-denominational, and Presbyterian volunteers. It was a revival that was not denomination specific,

but a blending of different beliefs that came together with a singular purpose of seeing inmates come to know Christ. Forty people came to Christ and twenty, with more on the way, were baptized. Most importantly, all the volunteers that participated in the revival and the training recognized how important it was to continue their relationships with these individuals. The participants formed their own discipleship groups have been set up on a weekly and/or monthly basis.

The researcher expected the participants to connect with the inmates better, but the expectation of the participants becoming friends and even ministering together at times was unexpected. It speaks to the fact that not only can one become more connected to inmates when relationships are first, but inter-denominationally people can become connected with each other, even doing ministry together. The denomination specifics can be put into the discipleship groups, but what matters most is that the inmates are led to this point by using intercultural discipleship methods to get to there. Two of the volunteers in this training have resolved that they can have discipleship classes simultaneously despite denominational differences.

How the Results of the Project Compare to the Published Works

The research performed was unique compared to the studies within a prison that have been done. Therefore, the results must be compared to published works about the training that participants underwent. Material from Moon and Moreau's *Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* was at the core of the seminars. Moon and Moreau's reasoning for writing the book was that Christians are getting stuck in spiritual growth. They are not moving to maturity and are instead stagnating.¹⁶⁹ They state that disciple makers are searching for discipleship patterns that will free them from the tight grip of the surrounding

¹⁶⁹ W. Jay Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship (Encountering Mission): Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, 16.

culture that conforms to them.¹⁷⁰ Finally, they state that by disciplers practicing the same methods repeatedly, disciplers seem to be wedged even deeper in the proverbial “mud.”¹⁷¹

The researcher found that Moon and Moreau had it right, with one exception. The research found that participants did not even realize they were stuck in the first place. Why? That is hard to answer; perhaps it is complacency, or perhaps it relates to the “brand” some participants were trying to present within their services. The one thing that holds unequivocally true is that the participants changed once they realized they stagnated in their relationship with those attending their services.

Another realization by the participants in this book came from recognizing a centered-set theory over a bounded-set theory approach. As seen in chapter 4, the participants of the seminars had an enormous response to these theories. Moon and Moreau used these theories to help articulate the difference between discipleship and leadership training.¹⁷² In leadership, not everyone fits the guidelines in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. Therefore, there must be a set line for them to cross, and the bounded-set theory applies. In discipleship, it only matters that they are pointed to Jesus, whether or not they have accepted Christ already. If they are pointed toward Jesus, they will get closer to Jesus and grow in maturity, and that is what centered-set discipleship's focus is on. Moon and Moreau did not recognize that people may mix this up, but that was not their goal. Their goal was to provide applicable theories to discipleship and leadership so they could show the differences to the reader. The research proved that not only is bounded-set theory happening in leadership, but it is getting mixed in with discipleship incorrectly.

¹⁷⁰ W. Jay Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 16.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 57.

The theories may have never been thought of in this way until applied in a pluralistic environment that is not in a regular church setting. This research conclusively shows that the mixing up of these theories is not only happening but seven of the nine participants, before undergoing the seminars, did discipleship this way by only offering an invitation at the end of their service. It took knowing about it for the participants to realize it was getting in the way of connection and relationally engaging the inmates. The researcher believes the teaching of these theories is why the participants that have a weekly or bi-weekly service decided to add discipleship groups to accompany prison worship services.

Moon and Moreau presented “intercultural” discipleship methods to engage people with symbols, rituals, stories, proverbs, music, dance, and drama. They stated that to transform a person's worldview, they needed to use cultural forms that exist in culture and infuse them with Christian meaning.¹⁷³ When presented with this, the participants transformed it into something different from what Moon and Moreau present. It became more about reaching people through unconventional means, most of the time not even infusing a Christian perspective. The research participants recognized that their love of football, hunting, or eighties rock music made the inmates feel more comfortable talking and opening up before they even tried to share or present the gospel. It does not mean that the participant conformed to the world or compromised themselves by doing something sinful; however, they found that those little connection points helped in engaging with the inmates in getting them to open up. That was not the point of Moon and Moreau’s research. Their research possibly applies to people in different countries with highly different cultures. That can be found in prison, but they still feel and understand American culture if they are in the American prison system. The participants saw the presentation of intercultural discipleship and used it as a footstool to something that was not the same as what

¹⁷³ W. Jay Moon and A. Moreau, *Intercultural Discipleship*, 132.

was presented in the book. To the participants, it became about using their likes and dislikes to connect with someone before bridging over to the gospel.

The Ethics of Evangelism by Elmer J. Thiessen was used in the seminars to talk about respectful ways to evangelize. The participants received it well, and all agreed that coercion or inducing someone was not the best way to do evangelism. The idea behind presenting this was to ensure that the participants knew evangelizing was different inside a prison, where proselytization was heavily discouraged. However, this became much more than respectful evangelism and more about how one's life shows the gospel. In retrospect, *Evangelism Is...* by Dave Earley and David Wheeler should have been used in the seminars as this related more to what came up in the research. Earley and Wheeler state that one must be an ambassador for Christ, obligated to serve as a representative sent from the kingdom of God into the kingdom of darkness.¹⁷⁴ They also write that Christians can be like light and salt, light to attract the Light of the world and salt to cause people to thirst after the Water of Life. One's usefulness depends on their distinctiveness. The more Jesus is allowed to shine in one's life the more His light will shine through. Even though *The Ethics of Evangelism* was helpful in the seminars, incarnational living is most certainly present in published works.

Where the Research Should go from Here

After performing the research, there are points that could be followed up on to further the research. The first is monitoring the volunteers to see how their ministries have changed. This would just require time. Allow one year to pass, then interview the same volunteers with the same questions and see if anything has changed in their ministry or if there is anything that has changed their perspective on intercultural discipleship. Understanding if the research will affect

¹⁷⁴ Dave Earley and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is...* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 18.

them in the short-term or the long-term would be beneficial. Do the volunteers forget about it and need to be reminded and trained again every so often, or is it so impactful that they will not forget it? That is a great question that could use follow-up. Following up in a year would allow for some quantitative results to see how their ministry has changed over the last year. The chapel maintains records of every service; one could see not just qualitatively but quantitatively how their ministry has changed over the year after undergoing the research.

The researcher presented the lifestyle of the prison inmates to the participants before discussing the intercultural discipleship topics to show the participants what most inmates listened to, even about gang activity, to supplement the basis of intercultural discipleship using things like symbols or music. That a participant who had been involved for twenty years did not really have an idea of what was going on came too late, with the research being almost finished by the time it was presented. In *Doing Time in the Depression*, Blue mentions how con bosses linked productive forces of prisons to informal economies based on violent and sometimes sexual causes to pit the prisoners against each other rather than a formal coming together cause.¹⁷⁵ More research on the best way to present the lifestyle of the inmates to volunteers should be done. If the volunteer had learned this twenty years ago when they started, how different might their prison ministry be? The researcher thinks the problem statement focused on would not even be a problem. Knowledge of inmates' lives, gang activity, and manipulation stir up compassion. The question needed to be answered here is whether more compassion for the inmates leads to more desire to connect and engage with the inmates. If it does, is knowledge enough, or must they experience it first-hand? Does this help their ministries without the

¹⁷⁵ Ethan Blue, *Doing Time in the Depression: Everyday Life in Texas and California Prisons* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 101.

methods of intercultural discipleship, or are intercultural discipleship methods necessary with the new compassion they have for what inmates must go through?

Research can be done on the inmates themselves. What is their experience with intercultural discipleship? What do they think they need more of from the volunteers? Interviewing inmates on what they want from services and volunteers and what they think will help others would be invaluable to see what works in this research and what does not. Though the researcher, in informal discussions with inmates, has discussed some of the research with them, the focus has been on the volunteers at the prison. Now would be the time to get the other end of the perspective and find out what the inmates think.

Most inmates will eventually leave the prison. How does an inmate's experience of intercultural discipleship methods carry over as they re-enter society? Does the research provided to the volunteers offer any help with recidivism rates? Given that the training is about building better relationships with inmates to help their spiritual growth, it might be that this research has a considerable impact on recidivism rates for Christian inmates.

The researcher, having been exposed to this learning well before the participants, detailed in Chapter One, started a “make-believe-church” with the idea of separating the culture from the prison from the typical culture of a church. This church would have no real leadership. An inmate will give the announcements, take up donations given to the unit managers for indigent inmates, and inmates coming out as leaders in the discipleship groups are given the opportunity to preach. The researcher set the chapel aside and told the inmates that politics, economics, and securities did not apply when they walked through the chapel doors. Over time, this created a magnificent culture in the chapel, where inmates come together to worship, regularly work out issues, and grow.

This has given the inmates a feeling of freedom, even though they walk into a locked cell daily. It was all created by using intercultural discipleship and connecting with inmates, making them feel as if the researcher cared. It was also passed on to the research participants in a non-formal way during the seminars as just a way to show how the studies were already actively working. More research needs to be done on how to create a culture outside of the culture they are living in. It could be labeled, “How does one create a culture of unity in a pluralistic environment?” How does one ensure that someone in a setting like a prison can experience something entirely different from what they are used to inside and outside of prison? These are burning questions that would certainly deserve a follow-up.

Further research could also be done on how the inmates receive what the volunteers have been trained on. Like this training, a group of volunteers can undertake the pre-interview, the seminars, and the post-interview and then be set free to do their services. A separate group of volunteers who did not take the training at all can then be monitored. One would then gather the results from each of the groups. In addition, the inmates could be interviewed to determine how practical the training was. It would allow a deeper understanding of not just how the volunteers are affected but how the inmates themselves are affected by the research.

As seen in Chapter Four, contextualization, appeared without previous research. Though the researcher has a limited understanding of contextualization, how does this apply in prison? Kraft writes that in Acts 15:2, Paul argues fiercely against the early church's majority position for Gentiles' right to follow Jesus within their sociocultural contexts.¹⁷⁶ The question then becomes, how do we contextualize the gospel to inmates whose sociocultural contexts involve using hard drugs, stealing, etc.? Sometimes an inmate may have grown up not knowing that

¹⁷⁶ Charles H. Kraft, *Issues in Contextualization* (Pasadena: William Carey Publishing, 2016), 26.

stealing was wrong but a way to live. Kraft defines contextualization as doing whatever is necessary to ensure Christianity is expressed in ways appropriate to insiders and their context.¹⁷⁷ Given the vast differences in lifestyles that inmates have to the chaplain or volunteers, how does one even know how to contextualize the Gospel appropriately to murderers, sex offenders, thieves, and drug users?

None of the focus of this research had to do with recruiting volunteers. There is a significant amount of literature about recruiting volunteers in prison ministry. It might be worth researching how teaching intercultural discipleship methods affect the recruitment of volunteers. Can this training be taken to the outside world and used to gain new volunteers in the environment where the researcher serves as a chaplain? Covid-19 had a devastating effect on the prisons, and volunteers were at an all-time low. How does a chaplain reach new volunteers that want to disciple and relationally engage the inmates.

Finally, can this training benefit the staff at a prison? Correctional Officers are not supposed to be relational building as it can be seen that they are fraternizing with the inmates. However, are there tools in intercultural discipleships that prison staff can use to get them to more religious services and hopefully reduce recidivism rates? There are many complaints from inmates about Correctional Officers, many unsubstantiated. Is there a way that the chaplain can help promote a culture inside the prison that reaches not only the inmates but the staff as well? Instead of transforming the chapel into a different culture, can the entire prison be transformed? Can a culture where gangs, immorality, and unethical decisions run rampant be transformed?

Angola Prison in Louisiana transformed from the most violent prison in the United States to one with very little violence. They have a seminary, an inmate minister program, and many other Christian programs that led to its transformation. It would be worth looking at how it

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 66.

happened and if any elements of this research can be seen within the transformation of that prison. They may also use discipleship and evangelistic methods that have not been thought about in this research that could be applied to Whiteville Correctional Facility.

How the Results Might Apply in Other Settings than a Prison

There are two main settings that the results of this research might apply to, a standard church ministry and a halfway house ministry or drug addiction ministry. A church environment is not usually pluralistic, but outside of the church doors in the United States, the environment is undoubtedly pluralistic. Every service the church provides may provide an encounter with a visitor who may or may not believe the same way. Even if the pluralistic environment is taken away altogether, the results of this research have applications within a church. In *Stride: Creating a Discipleship Pathway for Your Church*, Willard and Schreiner discuss how to create discipleship in one's church. They start by telling the church to get a committee ready to prepare classes for discipleship. The committee is to cover the topics, the name of the classes, the teachers, and how often the classes will be held.¹⁷⁸ Willard and Schreiner's discipleship process focuses on community, building relationships and connecting, learning, reading, teaching, growing, and serving by giving people a mission and doing outreach.¹⁷⁹

There is nothing wrong with this process. *Stride* contains many examples of what church discipleship might look like. *Stride* even offers ways to get members on board by setting a table out for sign-ups, announcing it, and creating a good graphic. All of this is very useful, and the authors follow it up with how prayer, reading of the Word, and worship should be included in these classes, as well as opportunities for participants to serve and find leadership positions.

¹⁷⁸ Ken Willard and Mike Schreiner, *Stride Creating a Discipleship Pathway for Your Church* (Abingdon: Abingdon Press, 2017), 47.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Where this research can apply is by ensuring that churches consider other means, maybe “unconventional” ways of reaching people. Is setting the table and getting mass sign-ups the best way to incorporate someone into a discipleship program? The researcher thinks it is not. Though *Stride* and many other discipleship books reviewed in the Literature View in Chapter Two focus on the relationship, they do not do a perfect job of how one is to build that relationship. This is where intercultural discipleship comes in. Anything from symbols, proverbs, and music can be a connection point in reaching someone. This way people are put at ease. Again, this is never done to compromise the Gospel itself, it is only used to connect with someone. When the connection is in place, then the worldview of Christianity can be presented to the person in discipleship. It applies both to discipleship and evangelism.

Intercultural discipleship methods can also help a church reach further into its “natural market” of people. In Acts two, on Pentecost, many people speaking different languages were presented with the gospel. How did the Holy Spirit accomplish its work? By letting the multitudes hear the gospel in their language. In its most basic form, Intercultural Discipleship is what one sees in Acts 2. It is reaching people that may have never been reached before. If this were applied in a church, it would likely add to the diversity of the church. The focus would not be on changing someone's behavior. It would be on presenting that person with the ability to understand the gospel knowing their background and culture. A connection point can lead to a relationship. A relationship leads to discipleship; discipleship leads to growth, maturity, and spiritual formation.

The research results similarly apply to the building a “brand” topic. As experienced in this research project, some churches focus more on their “brand” bringing the gospel than just people bringing the gospel. With mega-churches like Hillsong, Elevation, and Bethel, so much of what is being done is branded with their label. Because it has the label, people show up and buy

their items. Though these churches are mega-churches for a reason, often their outreach ministries, as seen in this research, sometimes focus on how they did this outreach ministry and how many people received Christ and were baptized. Prison ministry is one of those outreaches. This research shows that this type of “branded” ministry effort is like a shell one might find on the beach. On the outside, it is beautiful. On the inside, there are cracks and rough spots, people not being reached, and phony numbers being given for salvation that one might receive. The research can be applied to the church by focusing on the individual, not the numbers. The numbers will come if the individual is reached first. Consider this example: A church planter starts a brand-new church and meets one thousand people over six weeks, spending an average of five minutes with each of them. On the opening day of this new church, they have five hundred, but in the second week, they have three hundred people, and instead of growing, they end up declining to around one hundred and fifty people until growth happens again.

If this same church planter instead connects with one hundred people and spends, on average, one hour with each over six weeks. Instead, two hundred people show up to the opening day because they have spoken to their friends about what kind of person the pastor is, their beliefs, the music he likes, and the pastor's vision. Attendance, instead of declining, keeps growing and growing. This importance of connection and relationship is intercultural discipleship's focus. It could help a church reach new diversity heights, build better individual relationships, and increase the average person's desire to come to church and be discipled.

This type of discipleship would be crucial inside a halfway house ministry or drug addiction ministry. In Chapter One, it was noted that the volunteers from halfway houses usually have high intentions of building a relationship with the inmates but instead come and recruit inmates to their re-entry service program. It is not the case with all halfway houses, however. Men of Valor, a major re-entry service program in Tennessee, intends to build discipleship

groups for inmates while in prison. Most of the time, these inmates are past addicts and are usually required to exit a rehabilitation program.

The research applications show that inmates desire and long to connect with the volunteers within the prison. A rehabilitation ministry would perform even better if its focus were not just recruiting them but starting the evangelism and discipleship process while in prison. Most of the time, an inmate must spend six months to one year in a rehabilitation program for parole purposes. Initiating a discipleship program to build a relationship with these individuals would only increase the time they can influence the gentlemen within the prison. If a rehabilitation ministry can identify individuals that would be a good fit one year before they get let out of prison, they would instead be able to disciple the individual for an extra year, which would drastically affect the recidivism rates. It would also increase the number of individuals they can reach.

When the time is taken beforehand to build relationships, a word about their ministry usually spreads. Not only would they see better results within their ministry, but they would see growth. Often a halfway house can seem like a revolving door, with the same person entering and exiting the halfway house multiple times before repeating the cycle. Maybe this is because they have not built a good enough relationship because most halfway houses are trying to change the individual's behavior and more than their worldview. More research would need to be conducted to find out if this is true or not.

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Appendix A

3/27/2022



Dear CoreCivic

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my research project is Discipleship Methods for a Pluralistic Environment, and the purpose of my research is to give volunteers at Whiteville Correctional Facility training on discipleship methods that can be used in their prison ministry. It is being done to gain insight into seeing if new discipleship methods that focus on intercultural communication can help the volunteers grow their ministry inside of the prison.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to [REDACTED] A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Adam Rimmer



Appendix B

PERMISSION RESPONSE FORM

04/02/2022

Adam Rimmer

[REDACTED]

Dear Adam Rimmer

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Discipleship Methods for a Pluralistic Environment at Whiteville Correctional Facility, we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at Whiteville Correctional Facility

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☐ We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Appendix C

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Volunteer,

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to provide better intercultural discipleship methods to volunteers and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and an active volunteer at Whiteville Correctional Facility. Participants, if willing, will be asked to attend 6 training sessions and individual interviews. It should take approximately 6 weeks to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please complete the attached contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

A consent document will be given to you one week before the study begins. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the first session.

Sincerely,

Adam Rimmer
Chaplain/Pastor

[REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Appendix D

RECRUITMENT VERBAL SCRIPT

Hello Volunteer,

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to provide better intercultural discipleship methods to volunteers, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and an active volunteer at Whiteville Correctional Facility. Participants, if willing, will be asked to attend 6 training sessions and individual interviews. It should take approximately 6 weeks to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Would you like to participate? [Yes] Great, can we set up a time for an interview? [No] I understand. Thank you for your time. [Conclude the conversation.]

A consent document will be given to you one week before the study begins. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the first session.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

Appendix E

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about your Prison Ministry?

Tell me about a time you felt like quitting within a prison ministry or any ministry? If not a prison ministry, ask a follow-up question of have you ever felt like quitting the prison ministry.

Tell me about a time that you felt burned out?

Tell me about a time where you felt like you experienced a different culture? Does this experience relate to anything you have experienced within your prison ministry?

Tell me about how you engage others?

How do you disciple someone, and what do you base that on in scripture?

Tell me what you feel you are good at within your prison ministry? Can you give an example of where you displayed these strengths?

Tell me what you feel like your weaknesses are within your prison ministry? Can you tell me a time where these weaknesses were on display?

Can you tell me about your prison ministry, using examples of why or why not you currently feel you are successful or unsuccessful?

Using some examples, tell me what an ideal prison ministry would look like? Does your prison ministry look like this and why or why not using examples?

Tell me about a time where you felt like you were connecting with someone in the prison ministry?

Tell me about a time where you felt like you weren't connecting with someone in the prison ministry, and what do you think you may have done wrong?

Tell me about a time in your prison ministry or other ministry where you felt like you didn't fit into the culture. What went through your head? What do you think you or the others could have done differently?

Tell me about a time where you connected with someone else of a different culture. What did you use to connect with them? Did the gospel play a part in this?

Knowing the basic details of this training, imagine you have completed the training. Tell me what your prison ministry looks like after this training? What do you imagine your takeaway will be?

Appendix F

OUTLINE OF TRAINING SESSIONS

Outline of Training Sessions:

Session 1	<p>Introduction, and what is a pluralistic environment?</p> <p>What is culture?</p>	<p>Introduce the volunteers to basic prison principles. Talk about what a pluralistic environment is. Give examples of different pluralistic environments outside of the prison.</p> <p>Talk about personal culture, what culture is, what it means to each individual. Matthew 28:19–20.</p> <p>Give the initial survey.</p>
Session 2	Centered Set-Theory.	<p>Introduce and go into detail on Centered-Set-Theory out of <i>Intercultural Discipleship</i>. Talk about worldview transformation through Christ.</p> <p>Use Galatians 2:20 with this.</p>
Session 3	Appropriate Evangelism in a Pluralistic Setting.	<p>Talk about appropriate evangelism. The prison does not want proselytization. Go over the core reasons for ethical evangelism. Dignity, Care, Physical Coercion, Psychological Manipulation, Social Coercion, and Inducement.</p>
Session 4	Intercultural Discipleship.	<p>Go over symbols, rituals, dance, music, and drama and how this affects how one can be disciplined. Give midway Survey.</p>

Session 5	Applications of Intercultural Discipleship.	Talk about how the theories of Intercultural Discipleship are applied. Talk about 1 Cor. 9:20–22 and Romans 14:3. Accommodation does not mean transformation.
Session 6	How to implement Intercultural Discipleship in prison ministry.	Group Discussion on ways that this can be implemented into each volunteer's prison ministry. Additional scripture and talk about Centered-Set Theory and what that looks like in a real-world setting.

Appendix G

Exit Interview

Tell me what your prison ministry looks like now after this training. Give me an example or story where what you learned from this training applied to your ministry?

Tell me what you see when you imagine culture and how it plays into the Gospel. Give me a specific example or story where you saw culture appear in your prison ministry and how you connected and engaged with the individual/s.

Tell me what you feel you are good at within your prison ministry after taking this training. Give an example of where you displayed these strengths after the training.

Tell me about a time you used intercultural discipleship after participating in training.

Tell me what you think other volunteers in prison ministry might look like using what you have learned.

Do you think the training is useful or not? Can you provide a scenario where it did or did not work within your ministry?

Tell me how you feel about your prison ministry. Does it look like what you imagined when I asked you in the pre-interview, using details and examples?

What would it look like if all prison volunteers underwent this training, or can you provide a scenario of what it might look like for others if they had been trained in what you have been?

Tell me what your next ministry year in prison ministry looks like. How do you feel now, burned out, reinvigorated, the same? Now take that feeling and give an example of what that looked like in your most recent ministry session, explain how you were received by the prisoners.

Appendix H

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Date: 12-4-2022

IRB #: IRB-FY21-22-961
Title: Discipleship Methods for a Pluralistic Environment
Creation Date: 4-12-2022
End Date:
Status: **Approved**
Principal Investigator: Adam Rimmer
Review Board: Research Ethics Office
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	No Human Subjects Research
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Darren Hercyk	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Adam Rimmer	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Adam Rimmer	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	