

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**A College Outreach Initiative to Connect Paine College Students with Thankful Baptist
Church**

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

by
Christopher J. Waters

Lynchburg, Virginia

December 8, 2023

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Dr. Kevin E. Gift, Mentor,
Adjunct Faculty

Dr. Ray Moran, Reader,

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Christopher J. Waters

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, 2023

Mentor: Dr. Kevin E. Gift

ABSTRACT

College students' declining attendance and participation at Thankful Baptist Church is a growing concern for the congregation and its leadership. For over one hundred years the church has had a strong outreach to the students at Paine College, a local HBCU and private Christian institution. However, over the last five years Thankful Baptist Church's outreach to Paine College students has declined significantly.

This research project implemented training for ten outreach volunteers and six weeks of mentoring for ten Paine College students to revive the declined college ministry to Paine College into an active ministry which attracts and retains college students and implements methods to ensure the continued viability of this ministry. Data was researched from the online library system of Liberty University to discover trends in college outreach ministry, compared with data from current books and journal articles analyzing outreach programs and ministries that have been successful in mentoring and discipling college students. The intervention questionnaires, interviews, and data journals were used to determine issues of concern, effectiveness of the research project and the results of the research project.

This research will be helpful to other churches with older congregations as a model for revitalizing their congregation through outreach to college students. The results of this project demonstrate that as an intervention it can be scaled up or down depending on the size of the church, and available resources to mentor, disciple and attract college students to connect with their local church.

Key Words: Mentoring, Discipleship, Outreach, College Students

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late mother, Peggy Joan Whorton, who instilled a love for learning in all her children very early in our lives. I know if you were alive today you would be my biggest supporter. Thank you, mama, for laying the foundation of my Christian faith through your preaching, as a minister and teaching as our Sunday School Superintendent growing up. You never stopped helping others, advocating for the downtrodden, outcasts, and poor in our little town of Calhoun, Georgia. You showed me what it meant to be faithful unto God through the good and the bad. Even as your health failed, you never blamed God but kept on preaching, teaching and being faithful. Thank you for teaching me how to pray, to trust God through all circumstances and to find a way through every roadblock along life's way. I thank you for being such a loving, protective, and encouraging mother for the short time you lived on this earth. I pray I have made you proud in my service to God and academic achievement thus far. Every time I hit a stumbling block while pursuing this Doctor of Ministry degree, I could hear your voice saying, "Christopher we fall down, but we always get back up. It's okay to stumble, it's okay to fall, but it's not okay to stay down. Now get up and finish the job!"

Appreciation

I am deeply appreciative of my wife and my son for your support and understanding during the completion of this Doctor of Ministry degree. You have been gracious and my biggest supporters. I am thankful for my church family, at the Historic Thankful Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia, and the students at Paine College who participated with this research project for allowing me to take of your time and glean from your life experiences for the past few months. I am grateful to the administrators and the Paine College Choir director for giving me access to the students at Paine College. Without your kindness and willingness to support my research project I would not have been able to finish my research project requirements. I especially thank the participants from Thankful Baptist Church who allowed me to take your time, endured my training sessions, surveys and interviews. Your faithfulness to outreach and college students was an inspiration to me. Lastly, I'm grateful to my advisor Dr. Kevin Gift, and all my Liberty University instructors for your guidance, patience, and the grace you've extended to me in completing my assignments, and this research project.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Ministry Context	2
Aging Church Membership.....	3
Leading by Example	7
Need for More Church Volunteers	8
Aging Church Leadership	9
Problem Presented	9
Purpose Statement	10
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	18
Literature Review	18
Theme One: Effective Outreach	19
Theme Two: Engaging the Culture.....	21
Theme Three: Attractional Church Model vs. Missional Church Model	23
Theme Four: Mentoring and Discipleship	25
Theme Five: Transforming from an Inward to an Outward Focused Church	26
Theme Six: Spiritual Formation.....	28
Theological Foundations	31
The Call to Witness.....	33
The Call to Discipleship.....	34
The Call for Ministry Balance	34
The Call for Cross-Generational Ministry	35
The Use of Small Group Ministry	37
Theoretical Foundations.....	38
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	43
Intervention Design.....	44
Implementation of Intervention Design	60
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	66
Theme One: Church Participants' Perspectives on Church Outreach	69
Theme Two: Conflicting Demands	81
Theme Three: Spiritual Health.....	87
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	94
Research Applications	94
Research Limitations	97
Further Research	98
Generation X Church Volunteer Recruitment	98
Recruiting More Men to Serve as Mentors.....	100
Final Thoughts	93
Providing Support and Encouragement	107

Equipping College Students to Be Disciple-Makers	109
Conclusion	110
Bibliography	112
Appendix A.....	120
Appendix B	122
Appendix C	126
Appendix D.....	131
Appendix E	132
Appendix F.....	140
Appendix G	141
Appendix H.....	150
Appendix I	153

Illustrations

Figures

Figure 1. TBC Research Participants' Involvement with Paine College Students in Last Twelve Months	63
--	----

Tables

Table 1. Annual Church Profile of Thankful Baptist Church	50
---	----

Abbreviations

DMIN	Doctor of Ministry
PC	Paine College
TBC	Thankful Baptist Church
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter one introduces the ministry context for Thankful Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia. The author presents the problem faced by this congregation, explains the importance of this project, provides the purpose statement, basic assumptions of the project and relevant terms and definitions used throughout the thesis, and lists the project's limitations and delimitations. The author concludes chapter one with the project's thesis statement.

Thankful Baptist Church has a 182-year history of being faithful to the Christian faith. A thorough investigation into the history of Thankful Baptist Church shows a once thriving and highly engaged church membership with strong ties to the local community.

Historically, one source of the congregation's positive spiritual and numerical growth was its outreach, mentoring, and evangelism to students from Paine College, a local Historically Black College and University. This outreach to Paine College students helped Christian students who were away from home connect with a local congregation. This connection helped students combat loneliness and battle the spiritual decline many college students experience while attending college away from home. This outreach to Paine College also ignited the passion for Thankful Baptist Church members to actively engage in discipleship of college age kids and helped in the growth of the congregation. Students who attended Thankful Baptist Church during college often remained members after graduation from Paine College.

Unfortunately, in the last thirty years, as the church endured congregational splits and high turnover of pastoral leadership, the outreach to Paine College students has experienced a slow decline. The outreach efforts of Thankful members who are alumni, employees or retired employees of Paine College has also declined over the last three decades. As a result, Paine College students are less likely to attend TBC's worship services. Specifically, in the last five

years, the researcher, who also serves as Lead Pastor for Thankful, has observed Paine College students' disconnection from Thankful Baptist Church increase. During the researcher's thirteen-year tenure, there has been a noticeable decrease in college students attending, participating, and joining Thankful Baptist Church.

This lack of Paine College students' involvement in TBC's ministry has impeded the church's in-reach and out-reach to college age young adults in the church and community. During the thirteen-year tenure of this researcher as Lead Pastor of TBC, the researcher has observed the significant effectiveness of students evangelizing students and how their presence and participation is critical for the church to fulfill Christ's mandate through the Great Commission.

Paine College students as well as Thankful Baptist Church have suffered from the years of TBC's declining outreach. PC students who would have attended Thankful Baptist Church were left to find a local church on their own, and many were not successful. At the same time, TBC's congregation continues to age and has struggled to attract and retain college students and college age young adults in recent years. This project will provide an intervention to reengage Thankful Baptist Church's congregational outreach to Paine College's students to help them battle spiritual decline and disconnection from local church participation during their matriculation through college.

Ministry Context

Thankful Baptist Church is in the heart of the Olde Town Community in the downtown area of Augusta, Georgia. Thankful Baptist Church was established in 1840 by enslaved African Americans. The congregation was gifted land from the City of Augusta to establish the church. The members were a part of the Historic Springfield Baptist Church, one of the oldest Black

Baptist churches in America. However, due to the uprising of slave rebellions in the late 1830s, plantation owners did not want their African slaves traveling a great distance from the plantation to go to church. Therefore, the slave owners on the city's east boundary asked if their slaves could establish their church. According to TBC official history, Historic Springfield Baptist Church authorized the establishment of a new church near the city's east boundary and sent these founding members of the church their first pastor.¹

The original name of the Church was Independence Baptist Church.² They began holding services on the property given by the city, and the church grew steadily. After two years, the church's pastor purchased his freedom and participated in the "Back to Africa" movement that resettled freed African American slaves to Liberia.³

Thankful was without a pastor and wrote a letter to Historic Springfield Baptist Church asking for another suitable minister. Church tradition suggests that this letter included a long list of qualifications for the minister being requested. The demanding tone of the letter offended the leaders of Historic Springfield Baptist Church. So, Historic Springfield Baptist Church sent a letter in return acknowledging that they received the request for a new minister and notified them that one would be sent. The letter concluded by saying, "Though you are Independent, we pray that you will be Thankful with whomever we send to pastor your congregation."

At the first meeting with TBC's new Pastor, the letter from Historic Springfield was read. Afterwards, the new pastor suggested that the church officially change its name from

¹ Official history record of Thankful Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia, January 29, 2023.

² Historical Marker Project, accessed July 11, 2023, <https://historicalmarkerproject.com/markers/HMX1Q-back-to-HMX1Q.html>.

³ Wilson Jeremiah Moses. *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 10.

Independent Baptist Church to Thankful Baptist Church. The members of TBC voted unanimously to change the church's name at the new pastor's request. After the end of the Civil War and the freeing of African slaves, TBC grew substantially.

In 1894, there was a need for a larger sanctuary, and construction began immediately. The pastor at that time was an architect and drew the plans for the new church sanctuary.⁴ The men of the church who were carpenters and brick masons worked together and constructed the new sanctuary themselves. The building was completed by 1896 as the largest black church building in Augusta. This sanctuary has been renovated numerous times over the years and still serves as a worship facility.

The National Register of Historic Places recognizes the church.⁵ It received this designation in 2015 for its history as a part of the Underground Railroad during slavery. The basement of the church was used as a hiding place for runaway slaves who were heading north to escape slavery. TBC was also active in feeding the hungry during the Great Depression. The women's auxiliary of the church established a soup kitchen that fed hundreds of families every day for over ten years. After the Great Depression, the church continued feeding the poor residents of downtown Augusta through its food pantry.

During the early part of the 20th century, TBC played a vital role in the civil rights movement. Famous black civil rights leaders W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington gave speeches at TBC advocating for education among African Americans to build stronger communities and improve race relations.⁶

⁴ Thankful Baptist Church Official History, 3.

⁵ Historical Marker Project, accessed July 11, 2023, <https://historicalmarkerproject.com/markers/HMX1Q-back-to-HMX1Q.html>.

⁶ Ibid.

During the height of the civil rights movement in the 1950s through the 1960s, a young Morehouse College-educated pastor, Rev. Nathaniel T. Young, led Thankful. He partnered with other black pastors in the city and formed a ministers' conference that addressed racial inequality in the Metro-Augusta area.⁷ Along with several other young pastors, he started the first N.A.A.C.P. chapter to fight segregation and voter suppression in Augusta, Georgia. Rev. Young was also a mentor to students from Paine College and was instrumental in sending many TBC high school graduates to attend Paine College.

Rev. Young helped organize Paine College students to stage sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters, the city buses, the parks, and lakes, and his efforts successfully won voting rights access for African Americans in Augusta when other cities across the South were refusing to abide by the voting rights act of 1955. As a result, he was asked to run for a seat on the Board of Education. He won by a large margin in 1968.⁸ Rev. Young's accomplishments on the Board of Education drew many African American educators to join Thankful Baptist Church.

In an interview with one of TBC deacons, John Gilchrist, the researcher was told that, by the 1970s, the Old Town Community surrounding the church consisted of majority African American residents. TBC benefited from the growing number of black families who were within walking distance of the church.⁹ During this time, the church was spiritually healthy and thriving, and the pastor was so well respected that his pastoral tenure extended to forty-six years. He retired in 1989 after battling a series of health issues.¹⁰

⁷ James Dotson, "Pastor, Civic Leader Retiring," *Augusta Chronicle*, April 27, 1989, 2B.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John Gilchrist, personal interview, January 30, 2023.

¹⁰ Amanda King, "Monument dedicated in memory of pastor, civil rights leader Nathaniel T. Young," *Augusta Chronicle*, accessed July 12, 2023, <https://www.augustachronicle.com/story/news/2017/11/04/monument-dedicated-memory-pastor-civil-rights-leader-nathaniel-t-young/14245115007/>.

Shortly after Rev. Young's retirement, the church experienced a power vacuum. Several deacons and trustees fought for control of the church. In 1991, a young pastor with a military background in the Navy was called to be the new pastor. His tenure ended after eighteen months and resulted in a congregational split. The membership of the church declined from 1000 to 600 members within months of the pastor's resignation.

The church hired an interim pastor for the next two years, but more internal fighting among church leaders led to a second church split in 1995. Two hundred of the church's younger members, between thirty and forty-five years old, withdrew their membership and organized a new church a few miles from TBC. The church hired another interim pastor to lead the church until Rev. Gregory Young was called to serve as Pastor in 1998. In 2006, Gregory Young resigned and started a church in the city. About fifty members joined the pastor's new church while many in the congregation simply joined other churches or stopped attending.

Since 2006 the church has maintained an average membership of 300 members. The church has an aging congregation composed of current and retired educators, retired military soldiers, small business owners, and school-age youth. The church is close to one historically black college, one state university, a medical school, and a dental school. The church is located near the medical district, the county government buildings and offices, courthouses, and it is two blocks from the scenic Savannah Riverfront and downtown business district.

In 2009, the researcher was called as the new pastor of Thankful Baptist Church. In the first three years there was a small revival of the congregation. In 2010 the church began construction on its new Community Outreach Center, which is 8500 sq feet in size, and houses a computer lab, commercial kitchen, a dining room, and Sunday School classrooms. During this

period the church continued to gradually grow with new members and a renewed zeal for missions.

Aging Church Membership

Thankful Baptist Church has maintained an average active membership of 300 members over the last decade. Unfortunately, due to the growing elderly population of the congregation, in the last five years many of the church's most active members who were dedicated to outreach and evangelism have passed away or become physically or mentally unable to participate in church outreach ministries. The loss of these members' presence and participation has caused a decline in congregational morale, loss of hard-working volunteers, and decline in overall membership attendance and participation. While new members have continued joining the church and families continue having children who are raised in the church, over the last five years, the death of highly active church members and the resulting inactivity has caused many of the remaining members to become discouraged regarding the church's future. The numerical growth simply replaces those elderly members who are lost to death each year.

Leading by Example

As lead pastor, the researcher began building mentor relationships with students from Paine College and encourage members who are Paine College alumni and retired faculty members to join in supporting Paine College community programs. The researcher has ministered in the Paine Chapel, served as keynote speaker for several student organizations and regularly takes small groups of students to lunch for fellowship and to provide them a free meal.

The researcher's efforts encourage church members' passion to disciple and evangelize students at Paine College as well. The researcher has observed that each time he organizes an outreach project for members of TBC to mentor and fellowship with the students at Paine

College, there is an increase in congregational zeal for outward missions, and students from Paine College increase attendance at Thankful.

Need for More Church Volunteers

Unfortunately, due to volunteers advancing in age, and dying, it is becoming more difficult securing dedicated volunteers to help reach out to Paine students. In the past, volunteers recruited other church members to volunteer, but in recent years apathy for outreach has set in the hearts of church members. While they believe we should be discipling and evangelizing the local college students, it's become too common for church members to look for the pastor, paid staff, or the Deacon's Ministry to do the work alone.

This attitude has been cultivated over the last thirty years as the church experienced infighting and divisions, and the leadership asked the members to be patient and allow the pastor and deacons to handle the conflicts. Over the last three decades members have come to expect the church leadership and paid staff members to handle everything. The result is staff reporting feeling burned out, lost zeal for ministry, and a lack of support volunteers to help fulfill Christ's mandate of the inward and outward mission of the church.

The good news is that the church members still desire to see the church healthy and are willing to address the problems that have caused the decline in its work on behalf of the Great Commission. Despite the decline in participation with outreach overall, there is still a strong emotional connection to reach students at Paine College. The church still financially supports the school's scholarship fund and incorporates student participation in several special worship services throughout the year.

Aging Church Leadership

Most church leaders, ministers, deacons, trustees, and lay leaders are over the age of sixty. The researcher who is in his mid-forties is often the youngest person in the room when meeting with church leaders. The lack of representation of younger members is a new phenomenon at TBC. Before 1990, age groups were equally represented. The oldest deacon serving Thankful Baptist Church is ninety-one years old, but he was ordained as a Deacon at twenty-eight years old. Most of the deacons reported being ordained in their thirties and early forties. The trustees, ministers and lay leaders are also mostly over fifty years of age.

Younger members who were elected to serve over the last decade often resigned within their first two years. The reasons given were often schedule conflicts or family obligations. The older generation often sees the resignations by young adults as a lack of faithfulness to the church and a justification to choose older members to serve in leadership. However, they do realize that younger leaders are needed if the church is to survive and thrive into its future.

Therefore, outreach to local college students is pivotal to the overall health of TBC. Those students will be mentored, loved, and discipled through the most formative years of their lives. With the right intervention, undergirded by the theological foundation of the scriptures and a functional methodology for engaging young adults with the gospel, Thankful Baptist Church can revive its college outreach ministry to Paine College students.

Problem Presented

This project seeks to address the church's decline in college students' attendance, participation, retention, discipleship, and connection to the church's local congregation. Compared to previous generations, Thankful Baptist Church's outreach to local college students

has significantly declined. As a result, TBC has developed a generational gap in membership attendance and participation.

Most of the active adult members are fifty years or older. The second largest group are students from kindergarten through high school. As the congregation increases in the number of elderly members, more programs have been developed to satisfy the needs of the baby boomers in the congregation. The baby boomers justify this inward focus by pointing to their loyalty as volunteers and tithers, as well as the length of time they have been members of TBC. As a result, there are numerous outreach programs to senior citizens and financial support for them in the annual church budget. However, funding and support have declined for outreach ministries to Paine College students. The fewer resources available to connect with Paine College students, the fewer students are attracted and become involved with Thankful Baptist Church ministries each passing school year.

This study will examine the possible reasons for this decline in Thankful connecting, mentoring, discipling, and involving Paine College students in its church ministries over the last five years and offer an intervention to reverse this decline. This decline must be addressed to fulfill the Great Commission and bridge the gap caused by missing young adults in the church who will help the church grow.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to attract, mentor, disciple, and connect students from Paine College with Thankful Baptist Church's congregation to help students grow in faith, remain connected to a local congregation during their college matriculation, and participate in revitalizing the church. Therefore, connecting students with seasoned Christian mentors from TBC to help students grow in faith, and become connected to

TBC congregation is imperative to ensure the current and future health of Thankful Baptist Church.

To this end, an outreach ministry will be implemented based on a sound biblical evangelism and mission's model to renew the church's efforts to attract, mentor, disciple and retain students from Paine College by meeting their spiritual and fellowship needs. The church's outreach to students at Paine College is to present the love of God from a local church to students and foster a true biblical fellowship for these young adults who are often away from home for the first time in their lives.

The church leadership will be interviewed to determine what has caused the decline in Thankful Baptist Church's outreach to Paine College students and their participation in the church's ministries. Research shows that college students are often disconnected from their families, their hometowns, and home churches.¹¹ They need to find new connections with fellow Christians to help them remain strong in their faith and navigate them through the life struggles of becoming adults. "The transition from high school to college represents a critical period for young adults, during which many experience a decline in religious involvement. This decline is influenced by the absence of familial and community structures that previously reinforced religious participation."¹² Thankful Baptist Church can fill this vital role in discipling Paine College students, strengthening their relationship with Christ, and connecting them with a local church to meet their spiritual needs. This research project's findings will inform and empower church leaders and outreach volunteers with a biblical evangelism strategy to reverse the decline

¹¹ Gary L. Underwood and Elizabeth F. Morgan, *The Church and the Campus: A Guide to Ministry in College Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017), 18.

¹² Ibid.

of Paine College students' connecting and participating with Thankful Baptist Church currently and in the future.

Basic Assumptions

The researcher assumed that the slow decline of Paine College students attending Thankful Baptist Church over the last five years is directly caused by the decline in TBC outreach to the students at Paine College. It is assumed that Thankful can increase student attendance, participation, and retention by increasing outreach, discipleship, mentoring, and evangelism for students on Paine College's campus. It is assumed that a modest increase will be seen during the six weeks that TBC volunteers and this researcher meets with students on the campus of Paine College as a part of this research project. This increase in Paine College students attending and participating in Thankful Baptist Church's ministries is attainable. An immediate increase would be seen by each TBC volunteer inviting at least one Paine College student to attend church during the research project and the student accepts.

Notwithstanding, the researcher acknowledges that there is no guarantee that students will accept an invitation to attend worship at Thankful Baptist Church. Secondly, six weeks may not be enough time to increase Paine College student attendance and participation with TBC ministries on a consistent and permanent basis. Third, the lack of an invitation to TBC may not be the only reason that college students are not attending worship services at TBC. Students may have options for worship that are closer to campus or that provide transportation. Other reasons for students not attending worship may be the lack of convenient parking, the age of the church building, the fact that the church has a generational gap in membership, or the style of worship or genre of music.

Next, the researcher assumes the participants' survey, questionnaire, and interview

responses will be truthful and unbiased. It is also assumed that members from Thankful Baptist Church will be eager to revive the church's outreach to students at Paine College. However, the researcher anticipates some hesitation to participate with the research study due to continuing fears of older church members regarding the spread of Covid-19 virus. Reluctance of TBC leaders and members to participate in the project may impact the project's results.

Nevertheless, the researcher hopes that church members' participation with the research project will ignite their passion for more outreach to students at Paine College and result in members connecting with students, faculty, and staff beyond the conclusion of this project. As TBC leaders and members spend more time engaging Paine students, a greater fellowship will develop. Members may bond and grow closer as they participate in outreach ministry together and over time. The more visible TBC members become on Paine College's campus, the more member-student connections will be made, and these relationships may be the key to reversing the decline of students' attendance, participation and joining Thankful Baptist Church.

Definitions

Baby boomer. This is a person born in the years following World War II, when there was a temporary marked increase in the birth rate between 1946 to 1964.¹³

Disciple. A term used to describe a follower and student of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

Disciple making: Odgen stated that multiplication and reproduction are only possible when disciples internalize the mission, thereby giving them the motivation needed to pass the

¹³Richard Fry, "Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (April 28, 2020). <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/>

¹⁴ Cynthia A. Jarvis, and Elizabeth E. Johnson, *Feasting on the Gospels-Mark: A Feasting on the Word Commentary*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 64.

desire of discipleship on to others. Ogden also stated, “Everything has to center on Jesus; knowing Him, loving Him, believing Him, and being committed to Him.”¹⁵ The model proposed by Ogden indicates that to prepare disciples, people must first see someone living as an example of a Jesus disciple. This is a process of leading converts through the spiritual transformation which causes one to take on the image of Christ in attitude, actions, conversation, and mindset.

Evangelism. This is a theological term that Martha Grace Reese defines as “people sharing with others their personal understandings that life is better, richer, truer if one has faith in Christ and lives in a faith community.”¹⁶ This project’s research will encompass a theological foundation based on the evangelism model of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and Paul in the book of Acts and Titus. Both Jesus and Paul demonstrate that the foundation of evangelism is love for God and sharing God's love with others. Their evangelism models also show the power of mentoring, compassion, inclusiveness, honesty, fairness, and humility in kingdom building.

Paine College Student. Paine College students are those currently enrolled as a student at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. The student body currently has approximately 448 enrolled students. Paine College’s religious affiliation is with the United Methodist Church and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. It is a four-year undergraduate private Christian college. However, students come from several Christian faith traditions, and the campus religious services are ecumenical. The student body is composed of 251 female students and 197 male students. Ninety-five percent of the students receive financial aid, which means most come from

¹⁵ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 33.

¹⁶ Martha Grace Reese, *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism* (St. Louis: Chalise Publishing, 2006), 6.

lower to middle income households.¹⁷

Emerging Adults. Many people wrongfully lump all young adults into the millennial generation category. According to The Barna group, millennials are those who are born between the years of 1984-2002.¹⁸ That is a wide age gap. It is wise to remember that college students are on the younger end of the millennial generation and even they are not a monolithic group.¹⁹ Emerging adults are unique and must be treated as such. Studying their behavior is key to evangelizing them effectively. For example, today's college students have grown up using technology in every aspect of their lives. They are highly dedicated to social media platforms and spend a great deal of their time engaged in online media consumption, communicating, shopping, and engaging with peers who share similar interests. Many claim to be spiritual but not religious.²⁰ They may appear to be resistant to organized religion, but research shows they just value their time and things that add value to their lives.²¹ Churches that attract young adults understand the needs of this age group are unique from other generations.

Limitations

The congregation's social context may lead to several limitations in conducting a comprehensive research study. For example, respondents' honesty to surveys and other research tools will be a limitation. The rapidly changing demographics of the Olde Town Community

¹⁷ Paine College Admissions Process: Facts and Statistics, accessed July 11, 2023, <https://www.paine.edu/web/admission/apply/admissions-process/facts-and-statistics>.

¹⁸ "Making Space for Millennials: A Blueprint for Your Culture, Ministry, Leadership, And Facilities," Barna Reports, edited by David Kinnamen, (Ventura, CA: Barna Group and Cornerstone Knowledge Network, 2014), 5.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Alyssa N. Rockenbach and Matthew J. Mayhew, *Faith on Campus: How Religion and Spirituality Matter in College Students' Lives*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 52.

²¹ Ibid., 43.

surrounding the church due to regentrification may be a limitation. Also, given the advanced age of most adult members of the church, the church's leadership and congregation may be resistant to embrace a new initiative or what some may consider a change. TBC was established in 1840, and older churches often have deep rooted traditions which may make it difficult to establish a new ministry, such as a college outreach initiative. The location of the church may pose another limitation given that TBC is not within walking distance to Paine College and the church currently does not have full-time drivers to provide consistent transportation to students who may not have vehicles. Another limitation is that the small sample size of available respondents may limit the research analysis. Finally, this project may be limited by time considerations.

Delimitations

This study was undertaken to determine the reasons for Paine College students' decline in attendance, involvement, and membership at Thankful Baptist Church and offer an implementation to reverse the decline. The researcher focused on this as well as the researcher's congregational outreach to Paine College and the Paine College student body as primary delimitations of this project. Next, the study was limited to Thankful Baptist Church leaders, and currently enrolled African American Christian students who are members of the Paine College Chapel Choir.

The participants and students were divided into small groups with mentor-mentee pairs placed together. The researcher hoped that these church volunteer and Paine College student pairings would create bonds that helped form Christian fellowship, created an environment that allowed trust to be built, created long-lasting relationships that allowed the gospel to be shared more readily, and enabled connections to TBC congregation to form with students. A further delimitation in this research project will be the prioritizing qualitative research methods of

interviews, observations, along with the quantitative research method using questionnaires for participants. A final delimitation was the abundance of research material on the topic of starting an effective college ministry, evangelism, and discipling young adults.

Thesis Statement

If Thankful Baptist Church implements a collegiate outreach and evangelism plan to recruit, mentor, disciple, and connect students at Paine College with the church, then Paine College students' participation and attendance will increase at Thankful Baptist Church. Historically, Thankful Baptist Church's involvement in the community and specifically with outreach to students at Paine College was healthy and vibrant. This researcher has observed that TBC past outreach initiatives with students at Paine College often resulted in an increase of student's involvement with Thankful Baptist Church worship services and special events. By the end of this research project, TBC volunteers will increase their outreach to students at Paine College from a few times each year to a minimum of once a week. Thankful Baptist Church's volunteer participants will actively recruit Paine College students to form mentoring relationships and encourage students to become involved with TBC ministries during their matriculation in college.

While the aging and deaths of past church members who led the outreach ministry to students at Paine College may explain why the congregation's involvement at this local college's campus has declined over the last five years, the on-going outreach for senior citizens in our surrounding community shows that the church can implement and sustain other effective outreach ministries, such as one for students at Paine College. This research project will seek to bridge this gap with students at Paine College and sustain this connection for a minimum of six weeks.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Thankful Baptist Church has an inward church focus problem. To analyze and understand how to transition a congregation to become outwardly focused, the Conceptual Framework will include a literature review that considers the research of others who have addressed the various issues surrounding this research topic and the possible solutions to this problem. The project's theological and theoretical foundations reflect the missional life of Jesus and Paul and the methods they used to engage their local communities and the world with the sharing of the Gospels.

Review of Literature

This literature review will help in understanding the decline in Christian college students' attendance, participation, and retention experienced by local church congregations. Students withdrawing from local church involvement while matriculating through college is nothing new. Mel Walker writes, "More than two-thirds of emerging adults in the United States depart from the church between the ages of 18-29."¹ It is critical that churches understand what is influencing college students' withdrawal from local churches, and in many instances, their Christian faith. David Kinnaman asserts that young adults who withdraw from church attendance during their collegiate years will be completely disconnected from the church by the age of thirty years old.²

Thus, the researcher's review of literature will provide understanding of the social, cultural, and peer group influences contributing to the decline in the number of college students attending

¹ Mel Walker, *Inter-generational Youth Ministry* (Chinchilla, PA: Vision for Youth, 2013), 91.

² David Kinnaman, *Faith For Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 15.

and participating with a local church. The researcher examined literature on the changing attitudes of college students regarding (1) effective outreach, (2) engaging the culture, (3) the missional church model vs. the attractional church model, (4) Mentoring and discipleship, (5) Transitioning from Inward to Outward focused Church (6) spiritual formation. Lastly, the researcher examined scholarly works focused on the practical theology of collegiate ministry needed to reverse college students' decline in church attendance and participation.

Theme One: Effective Outreach

The decline of outreach to college students leads to a downward spiral of spiritual health among congregations and the neglected college students. The less a local church reaches out, the less college students attend, and the more congregational apathy for evangelism and missions is spread through the congregation.³

Thom Rainer declares that lower attendance is only one part of evangelism decline. Rainer states that a decline in outreach is accompanied by a decline in the spiritual life of the church, such as a decline in the prayer lives of church members, a decline in biblical instruction and the decline in the church's involvement in the community at large.⁴ Mark Clifton argues that these conditions make a local church susceptible to permanently closing its doors.⁵

Sharing the gospel to the community is required for the local church to remain healthy and growing. Conversely, college students' spiritual health is greatly influenced by their continued connection with a local church and resulting biblical instruction, mentoring, and spiritual guidance provided by church attendance, involvement, and retention.

³ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 24.

⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁵ Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 30.

This time in a college student's life is when most take ownership of their faith, select mentors, and locate communities of faith that are capable of challenging and nurturing their spiritual growth over the long haul of their adult life.⁶ One mistake in evangelizing college age students is believing that they only desire to worship with other college students.

Chuck Bomar claims that many churches wrongly believe that they must specifically tailor a ministry to the preferences and needs of college students to attract them to the church. The truth is most college students want to be a part of the larger church, not just of a weekly meeting with only college students in attendance.⁷

Thus, the aim of the local church should be to develop a college ministry that bridges the gap between the established congregation and college students who need connection to the full community of faith. While some argue that the important issue is college students' being a part of a ministry that nourishes them spiritually, Bomar debunks this belief.

He purports that college students need to be connected to the life of the local church, and not just the college ministry gathering. Bomar suggests that college ministries can offer a deeper connection to students by focusing on being a bridge for students to find relational connection to the life of local churches.⁸

He concludes that relational connections to the life of the church are the keys to retaining college students' participation in the life of the church long after college.

⁶ David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1-2.

⁷ Chuck Bomar, *College Ministry from Scratch: A Practical Guide to Start and Sustain a Successful College Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 24.

⁸ Ibid., 25.

Theme Two: Engaging the Culture

Notwithstanding, Powe argues that churches must find a way to reclaim their historical identity and witness. He states the old models of ministry will not work in our present cultural shifts.⁹ The local church must develop new practices and new ideas. Developing those new practices requires a clear understanding of the community's cultural shifts and a willingness to evangelize and disciple its community.¹⁰ The early Christian church regularly engaged the culture with the gospel. The Spirit empowered them for the purpose of taking the gospel to the community. The Christian church still has this purpose today.¹¹

Thabiti Anyabwile offers three practical solutions to reach emerging adults. First, he reminds the church of the authority of scripture and the need for congregations to base their identity and function in the community on God's Holy Word.¹² While Powe placed the responsibility of revitalizing a church on pastors and church leaders, Anyabwile points to the whole congregation as being responsible. Anyabwile does agree with Powe that spirit-filled church leaders must lead churches that need revitalization. However, it is the entire church body's responsibility to share the gospel with the community and witness Christ in their lives.

Second, Anyabwile notes that emerging adults value churches upholding their biblical identity and not being influenced by secular society.¹³ He contends that there should be a distinct difference between the actions and behavior of Christians and of non-Christians. Christ established

⁹ Douglas F. Powe, *New Wine, New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 36.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ P. Adam McClendon and Jared E. Lockhart, *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), 101.

¹² Thabiti Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 190.

¹³ Ibid.

the church to be unique from secular institutions whose morals, values, ethics, and practices do not align with the Word of God. As churches lose their distinctive identity, they are also less appealing to younger generations of college students, who want to be a part of something unique and grander than themselves.

Lastly, Anyabwile addresses the responsibilities of church members and their call to be mission-led to ensure the health of the Lord's Church. Evangelism is the responsibility of all Christ's followers. Local churches that desire to reach and disciple college students must intentionally encourage their members to serve as witnesses for Christ. A good witness shows love, concern, and a desire to build fellowship with those who hear the gospel.¹⁴ Anyabwile writes that one must get to know a person to minister to them effectively.¹⁵ Churches cannot simply throw together a generic outreach program without thought nor community input and then expect to have fruitful results.

Other authors point out the authentic concern the early church evangelists demonstrated when approaching people with the gospel. Their engagement was not to attract an enormous crowd but rather to see the lost come to Christ and receive salvation. The early church was successful because the people built relationships; and by helping people, their reputation always proceeded them. McClendon & Lockhart write that having favor with all people requires being known by all people.¹⁶ The early church in Acts was known in their communities because they actively engaged the culture around them and God blessed the church as a result.¹⁷ TBC involvement with the

¹⁴ McClendon and Lockhart, *Timeless Church*, 82.

¹⁵ Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church*. 192.

¹⁶ McClendon and Lockhart, *Timeless Church*, 99.

¹⁷ Ibid.

community in the past was pivotal to its success of attracting, involving, and retaining students from Paine College. For the spiritual health of the church and students at Paine College, local churches must remain committed to outreach to the college campus.

Theme Three: Attractional church model vs. Missional church model

Rainer explains that many Christians in America have shifted their attitudes from one of self-sacrificing to God and worship of God, to a consumer-focused, self-serving mindset.¹⁸ This shift in personal preference from focusing on pleasing God has become a critique of the attractional church model. While some pastors have grown their congregations into mega-churches using the attractional model, many church leaders are searching for new methods of reaching college students that lead to spiritual growth, a deeper connection to God, and true involvement with local congregations and not just a connection to their weekly college ministry meeting or service.¹⁹

Gary Gibbs states that while the early church shaped the culture around it, the modern church is being shaped by the culture. The culture is one based on materialism and consumerism. Gibbs argues that the church is filled with consumer Christians who choose where to worship based on worship style, preaching ability of the pastor, how comfortable the worship space is, how much attention is given by the pastor, or the quality of the coffee and donuts after service.²⁰ If consumer Christians are turned off, bored, or offended by something said in the sermon, they

¹⁸ Rainer, *I Will*, 30.

¹⁹ Mark A. Noll, "The Attractional Church Model: Assessing its Effectiveness in Contemporary Evangelistic Outreach," *Journal of Evangelism and Church Growth*, no. 3 (2022): 42-58.

²⁰ Gary Gibbs, *The Discipleship Lifestyle: How Disciples Develop* (Nashville, TN: Media Ministries Publishing, 2021), 30.

will stop coming and find another church that satisfies their wants.²¹ Church membership has been reduced to a “feel-good” factor. Gibbs argues that the attractional church model has too much reliance on a business model of customer service to truly be a lasting effective model of a spiritually healthy church.

On the contrary, the missional church model offers several distinct benefits compared to the Attractional church model. Firstly, the Missional model emphasizes contextualization and engaging with the surrounding community in a meaningful way. This approach fosters relationships, addresses local needs, and demonstrates the relevance of the church in the lives of those in the community. As Alan J. Roxburgh argues, “the Missional church model emphasizes holistic mission and community engagement, allowing the church to have a transformative impact in a post-Christian context.”²²

Secondly, the Missional model encourages cross-generational relationships and a family structure of church structure which promotes a more diverse and inclusive congregation. Roxburgh argues that “this emphasis on diversity and cultural sensitivity enhances the spiritual experiences of both the congregation and the college students involved.”²³ Lastly, the Missional model focuses on discipleship and equipping believers to live out their faith outside the four walls of the church. This approach aligns with the Baptist faith’s doctrinal belief in the concept of the priesthood of all believers and promotes a holistic view of faith. In contrast, the Attractional model tends to prioritize attracting people to events or programs within the church,

²¹ Ibid.

²² Alan J. Roxburgh, "Missional Church Model: Engaging the Unchurched in a Post-Christian Context," *Journal of Missional Practice* 4, no. 2 (2013): 95.

²³ Ibid., 104.

which may lead to a consumeristic mindset and superficial faith commitments. Thus, the Missional church model offers a more holistic and transformative approach to church life and community engagement. The researcher believes the missional church model will be more advantageous for a church reaching out to form a bond with local college students.

Fourth Theme: Mentoring and Discipleship

Jim Putman advocates for a new church ministry model centered on discipleship. Discipleship is not determined by any exterior qualities, like being wealthy, or being of a certain gender, race, culture or from specific geographic areas in the world. Putnam declares that discipleship must be taught and reinforced by qualified teachers. This is vitally important because discipleship empowers Christians to be more like Christ, and devoted disciples attract people outside the church.²⁴

In addition to discipleship college students benefit from mentorship from mature Christians. Mentoring was a key part of training Jesus' disciples to become apostles of the early church. Putnam contends that it is not enough to simply preach to students. If the church wants to connect with them and build a long-term relationship, then relationships must be formed beyond Sunday morning church service.²⁵ Jesus' mentoring style was characterized by a combination of personal investment, intentional instruction, and transformative modeling. According to John 15:15, Jesus shows that his disciples were not treated as subordinates, but were in a close personal relationship, in which he provided them with encouragement, guidance, friendship and emotional support. As a mentor Jesus also imparted knowledge and wisdom to his followers

²⁴ Jim Putnam, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2018), 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

through teaching parables and then helping his disciples understand the true meaning behind the parables. Another example of Jesus mentoring his disciples is found in John 13:14-15, in which Jesus models the behavior he desired to see in his disciples, such as humility, selflessness, and sacrificial love. Mentoring was a powerful tool to train, equip and mold Christ's disciples into leaders who would carry on his mission in the world. The similar benefits realized by Christ disciples can be provided by churches to college students.

For example, research shows that college students who participate in mentoring programs with church leaders or members experience a greater sense of belonging, reported increase attachment to the local church and improved mental health.²⁶ In addition, it has been shown that mentoring promotes increased academic performance, higher rates of graduation, and improved overall well-being.²⁷ The spiritual guidance provided by church mentoring programs helps students navigate the challenges of college life, develop a sense of purpose, and strengthen their faith.²⁸ Overall, church mentoring programs play a vital role in supporting college students' holistic development and contributing to their success.

Fifth Theme: Transforming from an Inward to an Outward Focused Church

The typical church member seldom does much to share the love of Christ with their community, neighbors, friends, and even family members. Satan has convinced them that they

²⁶ John R. Anderson, "The role of church mentoring programs in the spiritual development of college students," *Journal of Religious Education* 45, no. 2 (2020): 89-104.

²⁷ Rachel A. Smith, "The effects of church mentoring programs on academic performance and graduation rates of college students," *Journal of Higher Education and Spirituality* 12, no. 1 (2018): 43-57.

²⁸ Anderson, "The Role of Church Mentoring Programs," 95.

can remain comfortably silent as long as they are good people themselves.²⁹ Rainer writes that when churches decline, members tend to blame the pastor. However, the reality is that every individual in the church is at fault. The decline is a sign that the church has decided to disobey Christ's command in Matthew 28:19 to go.³⁰ The refusal of Christ-followers to go, often starts with the immediate community surrounding declining churches. Thom Rainer reminds us of Christ's words in Acts 1:8, where Jesus leaves his followers with his last words: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria."³¹ Jerusalem symbolizes the immediate community of the church. Yet, this is often the most neglected mission field.³²

Davis contends that congregations need to saturate the entire church in prayer to prepare the people's hearts to share Christ in their communities!³³ Donald S. Whitney agrees with Davis that prayer is essential to empower believers to go forth in their world and boldly proclaim the truth of Jesus.³⁴ All the church revitalization books in this researcher's review of literature prioritize prayer as essential to revitalizing declining churches. They further agree that church revitalization is a spirit-led activity. To shift the focus of Christians from inward to outward

²⁹ Thom Rainer, *I Will: Nine Traits of The Outwardly Focused Christian* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 61.

³⁰ Rainer, *I Will*, 61.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 62.

³³ Davis, *Revitalize*, 95.

³⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for The Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishers, 2014), 72.

requires the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁵ Prayer creates the space in the hearts of Christians for the Spirit of God to touch the lives of each church member.

Other church revitalizers offer steps to move a person from inward focus to outward concern for their community. Early and Dempsey state, “Whether we are talking of seekers needing to be won as believers, believers needing to be trained as disciples, or disciples needing to be developed into disciple-makers, I have found that the elements needed at each step are essentially the same.”³⁶ I see seven of them in the ministry of Jesus and Paul: (1) intercede, (2) invest, (3) inquire, (4) invite, (5) instruct, (6) involve, and (7) inspire.³⁷ In contrast, Whitney claims that successfully sharing the message of the gospel is not just a learned technique or having the right personality type. For example, a person can be introverted, but if one asks God for opportunities to share the gospel, God will provide the right environment for even an introvert to successfully share Christ.³⁸ The key to being an outwardly focused Christian starts by believing that there is nothing more important than someone having a relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior.³⁹

Sixth Theme: Spiritual Formation

The spiritual development of college students is a critical aspect of their overall growth and well-being. Many students experience significant changes in their perspectives, beliefs, and values during their college years. This formative time is critical for churches to actively engage

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Dave Early and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is ...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 79.

³⁷ Ibid., 80.

³⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 73.

³⁹ Thom Rainer, *I Will*, 65.

with and guide college students in their spiritual formation.⁴⁰ The spiritual development of college students is a critical aspect of their overall growth and well-being. Many students experience significant changes in their perspectives, beliefs, and values during their college years. Consequently, churches have recognized the importance of actively engaging with and guiding college students in their spiritual formation.⁴¹

Local churches can provide the supportive religious community where students can connect with like-minded peers and seasoned Christian mentors. The local church may offer numerous avenues to engage college students, such as, Bible studies, Sunday worship service, mentoring, discipleship classes, service to the community, and fellowship meals to increase interpersonal relationships with church and college students. These activities foster a sense of belonging, facilitate spiritual growth, and encourage students to integrate faith into their daily lives.⁴²

Additionally, research suggests that regular attendance at church services and participation in religious activities are associated with greater religious commitment, increased spiritual well-being, and a stronger sense of purpose.⁴³ Churches that prioritize spiritual mentorship and discipleship programs have been particularly effective in fostering holistic spiritual growth among college students.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Josephine Soboyejo, *Spiritual Formation 1: Class Notes/Curriculum for Students* (Somolu, Lagos: JOES Publications, 2019), 13.

⁴¹ Josephine Soboyejo, *Spiritual Formation 1: Class Notes/Curriculum for Students*, 13.

⁴² John Robinson, "Faith Integration and Intellectual Formation: The Role of the Local Church in College Student's Spiritual Growth," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 13, no. 1 (2020): 32.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 33.

Critics however argue that students should not be proselytized by local churches but rather should be free from religious pressure to practice a certain faith or participate with a particular church. Manuel Gonzalez argues that college campuses need to be a safe space for students to express intellectual doubts, and free from influence of one religion over another.⁴⁵ Gonzalez believes churches should use a no pressure approach to provide resources to college students but must be sensitive to the diversity of students and should use best practices when engaging students. Notwithstanding, ongoing efforts are needed to adapt to the changing needs of students, foster inclusivity, and collaborate effectively with college institutions. Further research is necessary to explore best practices and evaluate the long-term impact of church involvement on the spiritual formation of college students.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed in the six themes above offers several solutions to the problem presented: Thankful Baptist Church's congregation's increased inward focus on catering to their needs and wants, causing a decline in evangelism, stagnation in member's spiritual growth, and disobedience to the command of Christ to go make disciples. First, TBC must recognize the signs of decline within its congregation. They must be willing to acknowledge that cultural shifts have taken place since their heyday and commit to engaging the culture with Jesus Christ's truth. Third, they must examine their spiritual health and seek God's face to revive the church's spiritual life. Fourth, they must embrace change and be willing to implement a new approach to evangelism and discipleship. fifth, they must shift their inward focus from satisfying their own wants and preferences in the church to an outward focus committed to sharing Christ with the community. Finally, the church must accept its vital role in

⁴⁵ Manuel Gonzalez, "Service and Outreach: Fostering Spiritual Formation in College Students," *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (2018): 345.

supporting the spiritual formation of Paine College students and the need to provide a foundation for their ongoing faith journey while in college.

The project supports the literature review information that TBC can be revitalized with prayer, patience, and a New Testament approach to evangelism as displayed by Jesus and Paul. This approach requires members to share Christ with emerging adults in our community through volunteering to disciple and mentor Paine College students in a church-sponsored collegiate outreach ministry. The goal is for Christ to be shared through individual relationships with college students. The more relationships TBC members form with Paine College students, the greater number of young lives that can be touched with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Theological Foundations

The first foundational scripture for shifting the focus of the congregation from inward to outward is Matthew 28:19-20. The theological foundation reveals a viable ministry approach for revitalizing the church's spiritual life through establishing a collegiate ministry. Members must be given an avenue to serve. It is the responsibility of church leadership to create opportunities for members to fulfill their call to make disciples. The continued practices of holding events only for members to participate in, or providing benevolent help only to members, and supporting programs that directly and exclusively benefit TBC members will further turn the focus of the congregation inward.

This unbalanced approach to ministry stands in opposition to Christ's command in Acts 1:8 for the early church to be witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. In other words, Christ's followers are commanded to share the gospel within and outside the church. There is immense value in sharing this message in one's community where he or she has a familiarity

with their neighbors, in social organizations and in places people gather. Familiarity with people makes it easier to share one's faith.

Also, working in small groups helps people get to know each other, strengthens their fellowship, and allows close relationships to form. From these close relationships, it is much easier to influence the values and faith of others. Once people are converted, they need a circle of support. The Bible encourages believers to grow and mature in Christ with others (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 5:12-14). Jesus' approach to training His disciples in a small group gave Him the flexibility to model His way of life and teachings before His disciples who would carry on His ministry and spread His teachings throughout the known world. This model of making apprentices who learn and mature in small groups became a valuable discipleship process for the early church. In the letter to Titus, the Apostle Paul shared that spiritually healthy churches have mature Christians who are willing to teach the true gospel to the younger generation (Titus 2:2-3).

The research has shown that college students are not as fond of joining large groups and organizations as previous generations. They highly value one-on-one connections and often connect with a ministry group or church through other people.⁴⁶ Therefore the small group ministry will be utilized to increase the relational contact of TBC participants and PC students. The church will be invited to pray for all the research participants to increase awareness of their biblical mandate, reach out to the immature in Christ, and provide a living example of a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Sharing the gospel creates joy and fulfillment to those sharing with others. Paul celebrated his joy from sharing Christ and His life with the young converts (I Thessalonians 2:18). In summation, the theological basis for this research project calls for

⁴⁶ Mel Walker, *Inter-Generational Youth Ministry* (Chinchilla: Vision for Youth, 2013), 19.

Christians to maintain and nurture an outward focus in ministry by sharing the gospel with the spiritually immature and forming discipling relationships to provide Godly direction and guidance for the young in Christ.

The Call to Witness

Based on Matthew 28, Christ's work of redemption was completed. However, some of Jesus' disciples still held doubts regarding the resurrection. Jesus assuages His followers' doubts by exercising His authority by way of the Great Commission to His disciples and all His followers that would come later. First, the Great Commission ordered Christ's disciples and modern believers to go make disciples (Matthew 28:19), then baptize those new disciples.

Finally, the Great Commission commands Christ's followers to teach the newly converted the good news that has been taught to them. The key phrase in this commissioning is "make disciples."⁴⁷ Making disciples is not limited to one method, but it certainly involves evangelism. In Romans 1:16a, the Apostle Paul writes, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." The preaching of the gospel is Christ's means to transform sinners into believers. In Romans 10:17, the scripture reaffirms the role of preaching for transformation. The scriptures say, "So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

The Apostle Paul knew the efficacy of preaching and dedicated himself to preaching only in places where the gospel had not reached. In Romans 15:20, Paul writes, "And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named so that I would not build on another

⁴⁷ Mel Walker, *Inter-Generational Youth Ministry*, 22.

man's foundation." Thus, Paul demonstrated complete obedience to Christ's commission with his commitment to reaching the unchurched with the preaching of the gospel.

The Call to Discipleship

Jeannine K. Brown states that "Jesus' commission to disciple all the nations involves two activities of ministry: discipleship and teaching."⁴⁸ Brown asserts that Christ commands this activity of evangelism, and thus leaders carrying on this missionary work will be operating on the authority of Christ.⁴⁹ The use of Christ's authority comes with specific instructions to preach and teach. A revitalizing leader must be obedient to Christ's commands. Learning the teachings of Jesus and growing in faith continues throughout the life of a believer. "Luke Johnson calls 'learning Jesus,' a lifelong endeavor and commitment based on God's initiative in our lives."⁵⁰ In short, it is what being a disciple of Jesus Christ entails and what doing Christian discipleship should be. Thus, discipleship and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ will be two essential components of the college ministry.

The Call for Ministry Balance

The church must have a balanced approach to their outreach and to converts' spiritual growth.⁵¹ The collegiate ministry effectively engages persons in our local community while fulfilling the obligation to carry out the Great Commission. Most importantly, the lives of college students will be greatly impacted as they are discipled, and the word of God is imparted to guide

⁴⁸ Jeannine K. Brown, *Matthew: Teach the Text Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 320.

⁴⁹ Jeannine K. Brown, *Matthew: Teach the Text Commentary Series*, 321.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Grant R. Osborne and Clinton E. Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010). 1081.

their life decisions.⁵² Through the discipleship, mentoring, and teaching sessions, both the participants from Thankful Baptist Church and the students from Paine College will be spiritually enriched and encouraged to share their zeal for soul winning to other followers of Christ.

The Call for Cross-Generational Ministry

A key component of the mission of TBC is winning the lost for Christ beyond the four walls of the church. The collegiate ministry will facilitate needed training for older adults at TBC to gain skills, understanding of college students, and practical training to participate in cross-generational evangelism. Just as Jesus trained His disciples to be witnesses of Christ to all people, the ten participants from Thankful Baptist Church will be provided specific training in mentoring, disciple-making and connecting with college students. The training will focus on personal spiritual discipline, mentoring cross-generationally, and discipleship-making.

In Luke 5:1-11, Jesus' evangelism to His disciples shows His willingness to go where they are. He did not seek followers inside the temple. Instead, Christ looked for disciples along the fishing docks. He conducted evangelism where the people who needed the gospel message most would be. Like the fishermen who worked all night and caught nothing to sell or feed their families, in Luke 5, many college students struggle with life issues that appear completely outside their control. The collegiate ministry will provide opportunities for worship, Bible study, prayer, and mentoring from mature TBC church volunteers.

France writes, “Those who would be part of this community would ‘be his disciples, obeying his commandments and sustained by his unending presence among them.’”⁵³ Colin

⁵² Ibid., 1080.

⁵³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 1108.

Kruse remarks that the scriptures demonstrate "the disciples' primary mission was to 'harvest' men and women for the kingdom by their witness to Jesus, by word and deed, alongside the ongoing witness of the Holy Spirit." Thus, "There is a sense in which all believers are privileged to share in this commission, in so far as they all are recipients of the Spirit whom he bequeathed to his disciples."⁵⁴ Jesus' ministry was to seek and save those who are lost. The church was given this ministry responsibility to carry on until Christ returns.

Through the college ministry, TBC will be witnesses to the world, in the example of Christian discipleship taught, preached, and lived by Jesus. As Jesus prophesied to Peter that He would make him a fisher of people, the church is called to do the same. The collegiate ministry will provide students with ministry sessions on their campus. TBC will show the unconditional love of Christ by offering the gospel, friendship, and fellowship. Finding lost souls for Christ and discipling them into a growing relationship with Jesus will honor the Lord and grow all who participate with the ministry.

One barrier is cross-generational evangelism. In the Gospel of Matthew 19:14, people bring their children to Jesus so He may bless them and lay His hands on them. The disciples rebuke the children from coming to Jesus. Jesus responds with the kind of love, compassion, concern, acceptance, and inclusiveness necessary to build a new kingdom of people who will emulate Him and obey His commands. The scripture shows Christ's support of cross-generational evangelism. Jesus' message is clear. He has come to win the lost. Age will not be a barrier to coming to Jesus.

⁵⁴ Colin Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 447.

The Apostle Paul advocates the importance of cross-generational ministry in Titus 2:1-8. Paul commands Titus to develop relationships with elderly members in the church who could help lead and guide the people. Titus was a pastor who needed guidance pastoring Christians much older than himself. Paul urges Titus to cultivate relationships with the people as he preaches the gospel. Paul admonishes him to have the elderly men and women serve as mentors for the young men and women. These relationships are beneficial in both directions. There must be mutual respect for mentor-mentee relationships to work. Murchison writes, "These relationships have depended upon a climate of mutuality and have not developed overnight."⁵⁵ In fact, mentor-mentee relationships often do not form when there is a rigid hierarchy present.

The Use of Small Group Ministry

Following the evangelical approach of Jesus, Thankful Baptist Church's collegiate ministry will implement small groups, as Jesus did when He taught the disciples. The small group model is designed to evangelize and disciple new converts, build leaders, and influence them to abide by Jesus Christ's teachings. Mentoring relationships builds the trust necessary for individuals to accept the discipleship process. In the ministry of Jesus, He called common laborers to be His disciples. It was not from the synagogues that He chose the men that would follow Him, but the fishing docks and among the ordinary laborers of his day. He trained, mentored, and empowered them with the Holy Spirit to carry on His work of making new disciples (Mt 28:19-20).

The cornerstone of spiritual mentoring in the discipleship process is the relational methodology Jesus used to develop His disciples. The TBC Collegiate Ministry will utilize

⁵⁵ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 43.

Jesus' discipleship development model as a proven strategy to transform the lives of college students. Jesus modeled person to person discipleship as an effective means of meeting the spiritual needs of those He chose to be His disciples. Greg Ogden purported that personal attention is the central ingredient in the discipleship process.⁵⁶

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical foundation used in research related to this thesis is regarding revitalizing traditional congregations with aging parishioners through cross-generational training in evangelism. In addition, the training of participants in community missiology strategy along with a renewed passion for sharing the gospel with students from a local college should spark a spiritual awakening in the hearts of Thankful Baptist Church members.

Second, the theoretical foundation explores established models of disciple-making, and evangelism training for reaching one's local community with the gospel. The researcher will be looking to discover tools for measuring spiritual growth in church members who are provided outreach training and the opportunity to put their training into practice by mentoring and discipling students at Paine College.

Finally, the researcher justified the research conducted on developing and launching a collegiate ministry and developing church participants to transition from an inward focus to an outward focus while embracing the mission of the church. Additionally, the literature review revealed the following themes: 1) Effective outreach; 2) Church revitalization and engaging the culture, 3) Attractional Church Model vs. Missional Church Model, 4) The need for Mentoring and Discipleship to attract emerging adults, 5) Transforming from an inward to an outward-

⁵⁶ Ibid., 44.

focused church, and 6) The vital role of the local church in the spiritual formation of college students. Each of these themes supports the need for developing avenues of community engagement to awaken the spirituality of TBC members, mentor and disciple local college students and fulfill the Great Commission.

Joshua Mitchell, author of the dissertation, “Bid Them to Come: Engaging Black Millennials in Discipleship Development,” wrote that, “like Jesus, local churches have an important choice in reconciling the distance between themselves and the people they wish to engage. Congregations can sit idly in their ‘mountainside’ church campuses and staff meetings, hoping that these disciples will recognize the impact of the church's absence in their lives and turn around to meet us on the shore. Or, congregations can mobilize their presence, power and proclamation, and like Jesus, ‘go out to them.’”⁵⁷ The key point to Mitchell's work is that the church must be willing to evangelize the largest generation in America in environments where they are spending most of their time. Another key is that churches should identify where unchurched young adults are gathering and accessible to focus the church's resources.⁵⁸ Jesus did not wander around Israel looking for persons to share the gospel. Instead, Jesus strategically chose places where large groups would gather, such as Jerusalem, during a Jewish festival. If the lost souls are not coming to the church, then the church must go out to the lost souls.

Another barrier that must overcome is the fear of member resistance to change. In his book, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying and Divided Churches*, Brian Croft writes that church leaders should expect confrontations from adversaries when they lead the

⁵⁷ Joshua Mitchell, "Bid them to Come: Engaging Black Millennials in Discipleship Development," (Doctoral Diss., Virginia Union University, 2017), 68.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

church through a revitalization.⁵⁹ These conflicts often lead to pastors resigning and moving on. However, those truly called to be church revitalizers will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to stick it out, develop skills necessary to lead through opposition, and with wisdom, they will see the slow turnaround of those declining and dying churches if they stay and serve in faith.⁶⁰

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus's approach to calling Matthew the tax collector to be His disciple is simple and straightforward. Jesus called, and Matthew obeyed. Jeff Iorg writes in his book, *Leading Major Change in the Church* that the story of Matthew's call was recorded precisely in this way to make a point.⁶¹ Jesus was providing a major change in evangelizing the world. First, He was calling whosoever would believe. "The kingdom of God was dawning, made up of people like Matthew whom most religious leaders of their time considered embarrassing socially, inferior culturally, and anathema spiritually."⁶² Iorg notes that the Matthew model of evangelism required only that a person hears the call of Jesus and obeys. Today, to revitalize the church, those leading the change to reach outside the church must discern the voice of Jesus, then get in step with Christ's instructions.⁶³

This New Testament model of evangelism is not prescriptive but rather descriptive. It shows that each successive generation must take the time to get to know the younger generation, so the church is better equipped to minister to each generation that arises after the next.⁶⁴ This

⁵⁹ Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying and Divided Churches* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2018), 117.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Croft, 115.

⁶¹ Jeff Iorg, *Leading Major Change in Your Ministry*, 25.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁴ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 114.

last author, Keller, raises critical questions about past models of church growth and evangelism approaches. Keller points out that in the church growth era of the 1970s and 1980s, much of the literature focused on laying a biblical-theological foundation but often gave little practical instruction on how pastors and church leaders could revitalize their churches.⁶⁵ During this time, another genre of how-to books arose from authors such as C. Peter Wagner and Robert Schuller. These books focused on the mindset, the programs, and the ministry methods used by these mega-church pastors to build their large congregations.

Finally, another type of literature arose in the 2000s that criticized the how-to books and their lack of biblical foundation. While these types of books had good ideas that would help pastors and church leaders, they were not a universal answer to church decline in other ministry contexts. For example, an outreach program in a church in West Virginia may not work at all in New York City.

Keller claims that for his church, Redeemer, it was not so much the ministry expression that made them successful, but rather the process of thinking deeply about the character and implications of the gospel, the culture of those in the neighborhood surrounding the church, the sensibilities of the Christians and non-Christians in their midst and the emotional as well as the intellectual landscape of the city's center.⁶⁶ The character of that analysis and decision-making process yielded their ministry fruitfulness and not the programs themselves.

In the New Testament, Jesus is providing a process for fruitful evangelism. This research project is necessary to develop a unique process of transitioning a traditional congregation from

⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 16.

an inward focused to an outward focused congregation with a burden for reaching college students, their peers and other emerging adults in the local community.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents and details the methodology used to address the research problem described in Chapter One. This section comprises a detailed description and overview of the intervention design. A timeline is provided for the implementation of each phase of the research project, along with details for the evaluation of the study sample and research instruments used to collect data. This chapter provides an explanation of the data collection process and the process the researcher used to analyze the data. Lastly, the chapter summarizes the research, and the researcher restates the process this project utilized to complete this analysis.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN research project is to attract, disciple, and connect students from Paine College with Thankful Baptist Church's congregation to help Paine College students connect to a local congregation during their college matriculation and participate in revitalizing the church. This research project seeks to address the decline in college student attendance, participation, and connection to Thankful Baptist Church. Therefore, connecting students with seasoned Christian mentors from TBC to help students grow in faith and become connected to the local church is imperative to ensure the current and future health of Thankful Baptist Church.

Thus, underlying factors that contribute to Paine College students' declining attendance at Thankful Baptist Church will be examined, and an effective strategy be developed as well as implemented to engage and retain Paine College students participating within TBC.

Additionally, the research will explore the social, cultural, and spiritual aspects impacting college student's religious involvement and seek to identify new approaches and interventions that can encourage meaningful partnership and connections, spiritual growth, increased

participation with Thankful Baptist Church from students at Paine College. The main objective is to revitalize the relationship between TBC and Paine College students while promoting spiritual growth among church volunteers and college students, while building community connections within this demographic.

Ultimately, the project wants to fulfill the command given by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20, “to go make disciples of all nations.” Apart of this focus on making disciples is the desire for Thankful Baptist Church leaders and volunteers to reach local students at Paine College, who otherwise may become disconnected from local church participation during their four-year matriculation through college. Thus, this research project's findings will inform and empower church leaders and outreach volunteers with a biblical evangelism strategy to reverse the decline of Paine College students’ connecting and participating with Thankful Baptist Church currently and in the future.

Intervention Design

The purpose of this project plan is to: (1) describe the methodology employed to complete this research project, (2) bring awareness to the need for greater outreach from TBC to the students at Paine College, and (3) reverse the decline in Paine College students' attendance and participation in TBC church worship services and college outreach ministry. This intervention design will address the ministry context problem and research question outlined in Chapter One. The project's objective was to increase Paine College students' participation and attendance at TBC in six weeks. As the pastor of TBC, the researcher, recruited six associate ministers, and four lay leaders to serve as mentors for Paine College student participants. The TBC participants were led through four sessions of mentoring and discipleship training. TBC

participants completed surveys and participated in four training classes on how to disciple, mentor, and invite Paine College students to connect with TBC.

The four training sessions for church participants were held in the fellowship hall of TBC. Participants were reminded of meetings by telephone calls and text message the day before each training session. The researcher maintained a reflective journal to capture responses from church participants, to record feedback, and to note potential biases the researcher may discover during this research project.

After the successful completion of the four sessions with church participants, the researcher paired each TBC participant with a Paine College student for six weeks. The adult mentors provided spiritual guidance and emotional support to their college student. They also offered prayer, and encouragement to students facing academic stress, relationship issues, financial struggles, and mental health pressure. The researcher started the Intervention Design on January 29, 2023 and concluded on April 31, 2023. The study occurred in five phases.

Phase One: The researcher recruited ten participants from Thankful Baptist Church for training (see Appendix B). The researcher recruited ten participants from Paine College student body to participate in the research project (see Appendix E, Appendix H). The church members recruited are long time members of Thankful Baptist Church. They are all college educated, and have some connection to Paine College through personal attendance, past employment, or have immediate family who attended Paine College. All the church volunteers have spent time on Paine College's campus, and financially contribute to the Paine College scholarship offering which Thankful Baptist Church raises annually for the school. The Paine College students are all undergraduate students who participate in the college chapel choir. Nine out of the Ten participants are from another city, and do not have a church home in Augusta, Georgia.

Phase Two: The researcher provided all twenty participants with a questionnaire to be completed and returned to the researcher (see Appendix F, Appendix G). The questionnaires helped the researcher plan the focus of the church participants' training sessions and the themes of the small group Bible studies with the Paine College Students.

Phase Three: The researcher provided training to church participants in four sessions at TBC. The sessions occurred on Wednesdays and Saturdays for ninety minutes. The sessions began with devotional singing, prayer, the purpose of the session, a scripture lesson and training. The training followed a detailed outline which was provided on a hard copy for each participant (See Appendix I, Appendix J, Appendix K, Appendix L).

The first lesson was conducted in-person in the classroom building of the Thankful Baptist Church Outreach Center. Each participant was given the outline of the training session that is provided below.

Outreach Training-Lesson 1

Topic: How to Disciple College Students

Focus Verse: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:19)

Biblical Case Study: Mark 10:42-45

10:00am-12:00pm

1. Devotion
2. Opening Prayer
3. Purpose of Training
4. Training Session
 - a. Part I-Discipleship Making (The Call)
 - i. Disciples Making Disciples
 - ii. Characteristics of a Disciple
 - iii. Disciples vs. Christians

- b. Break-(10 Minutes)
- c. Part II-Discipleship Making (The Commission)
 - i. The Great Commission
 - ii. Go-Ministry Outside the Church Walls
 - iii. Tell the Truth
 - iv. Initiate-Sharing Jesus
 - v. Each One, Teach One-Learning to Live for Christ
- d. Part III-Discipleship Making (The Community)
 - i. Building our Christian Family
 - ii. Show Don't Tell
 - iii. Christ Witnesses
 - iv. Making Space for Others
- 1. Part III-Planning/Calendar Preparation Session...Group Work
- 2. Final Thoughts
 - i. As team members in this ministry, each of us must pray for one another, help maintain harmony, and share ideas to improve the outreach to Paine College Students.
 - ii. Hold each other accountable.
 - iii. Be passionate about reach college students for Christ.
 - iv. Thank you for Participating with this research project.
 - v. May we all go forth and serve God by serving others. Amen.

Suggested Personal Development Books to read:

1. *Mentoring 101*. By John C. Maxwell
2. *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*. By Juwanza Kunjufu
3. *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. By Stephen R. Covey
4. *Purpose Driven Life*. By Rick Warren

The researcher designed this training session to teach the model of mentoring and discipleship Jesus describes in the Gospel of Mark 10:42-45. This scriptures' focus on servant-leadership by Jesus to his disciples emphasizes the need to lead with humility and a desire to place the needs of others ahead of the needs of the leader. The researcher considered the relationship of Jesus to his disciples as a model for the relationship of the TBC volunteers to the

Paine College Student mentees. The goal was to teach the TBC volunteers to disciple like Jesus. The first step was presenting the biblical command Christ gave in Matthew 28:19-2, “go make disciples of all nations,” as the foundational scripture the outreach initiative was based. Using the great commission given by Jesus to his disciples, the first lesson focused on how to disciples like Jesus. The lesson was broken out into three parts.

The first part focused on the definition of a Christian disciple, the characteristics of a disciple, and the difference between a person who genuinely follows Christ and one who only carries his name. Part two of the lesson focused on how to engage and evangelize college students using the great commission. Church volunteers were asked to share their past experiences engaging in outreach and evangelism initiatives of Thankful Baptist Church. The researcher used the stories of the participants past evangelistic experiences as examples for engage the Paine College students. Part three of the lesson focused on building a community of believers outside the church. The researcher shared information about the most effective forms of communication to reach college students.

The researcher showed the church participants the college students who followed the researcher on social media and how they actively engaged in posts, asking questions and their willingness to share their faith. The researcher shared that multiple avenues would need to be used to reach and include college students into the life of Thankful Baptist Church. Throughout the less, group discussion was encouraged and led to deeper reflection on TBC's congregational mission to make disciples and our recent failure to maintain our evangelism to emerging adults in our local community and specifically the local college students. The first lesson ended with prayer and planning for the next training session.

The second training session with church volunteers focused on witnessing specifically to college students. The outline of the training session is listed below.

Outreach Training-Lesson 2

Topic: How to Witness to College Students

Focus Verse: Luke 24:44

Biblical Case Study: Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8

10:00am-12:00pm

1. Devotion
2. Prayer Concerns
3. Opening Prayer
4. Training Session Part I-Witnessing
 - a. What is a Witness?
 - i. One who shares the Good News about Jesus
 - ii. Believes the testimony of the Prophets and the Gospels
 - iii. One who reflects the life of Christ in their deeds, compassion, and commitment to righteousness.
 - b. Christ's Command to Witness.
 - i. Acts 1:7-8
 - ii. Matthew 24:14
 - iii. Matthew 28:19
 - c. Challenges to Witnessing
 - i. Fear of Rejection
 - ii. Poor Perception of the Christian Church
 - iii. Witnesses who Lack Experience
 - iv. Sharing our Faith before Showing our Concern and Care.
 - v. Age Gap and Cross-Cultural Communication problems
 - d. Becoming an Effective witness.
 - i. Relying on the Holy Spirit
 - ii. Listen and Observe-You were given two ears and one mouth. Always remember to listen twice as much as you speak.
 - iii. Remember your own story of redemption. This will remind you of how God rescued your soul and refresh your zeal for others to be saved.

- iv. Get to know people in your circle of connection. Talk to the cashier at your favorite coffee shop. Be a regular at the gym and get to know the people you see each time you go. Smile and acknowledge people.
 - a. The first encounter simply say "hello."
 - b. The second encounter stop and introduce yourself and learn their name.
 - c. Overtime, get to know people, and take an interest in their life. Get them used to sharing with you and become a trusted listener. As you build trust, look for opportunities to share your faith. From this point every encounter may provide an opportunity for sharing of the Gospel.
- 5. Mock Witnessing Activity-(Participants will be paired up and given 10 minutes to witness to fellow participant.)
- 6. Group Review and Discussion of Witnessing Activity and Sharing how each participant could improve being a witness.
- 7. Prayer and Dismissal

This second lesson for church volunteers addressed the often-made mistakes of witnessing cross generationally. The first objective was to discuss what it means to be a Christian witness. The scripture in Luke 24:44 was used as a focus verse as it is the ending of Christ's appearance to his disciples after his resurrection. The calling, role, and commitment of a Christian witness was defined by the researcher and discussed by church volunteers. The researcher emphasized that as witnesses, the volunteers would have the same assignment as the original disciples which is to share their knowledge and faith in Christ with the students at Paine College.

Next challenges to witnessing were identified by the researcher and discussed by volunteers. The researcher provided step by step procedure for witnessing based on the practice of Jesus calling his disciples.

Lastly, the researcher paired TBC volunteers with each other and engaged in a mock witnessing exercise. One volunteer played the role of the witness, and the other volunteer played the role of a Paine College student. The researcher demonstrated how to approach a college student as a witness, and then engaged in mock witnessing with one of the church volunteers. Each participant took turns playing both the witness and the college student. The session concluded with group discussion over the activity and the researcher gave feedback to each participant on how they could have been a more effective witness to college students.

The third training session focused on mentoring. The researcher gave a definition of a Christian mentor, the role of mentoring as a part of discipleship, and how to be an effective mentor to others. In the third training session the researcher provided each church participant with the lesson outline below.

Outreach Training-Lesson 3

Topic: Becoming a Mentor

Focus Verse: Luke 24:44

Biblical Case Study: Luke 21:5-17

10:00am-12:00pm

1. Devotion
2. Prayer Concerns
3. Opening Prayer
4. Training Session Part I-Mentoring 101
 - a. What is a Mentor?
 - i. A mentor is a trusted counselor or guide. One who can hold up a mirror to us.
 - ii. A mentor is a person who raises others to a higher level. And mentors can do this in every area of their lives-at work, home, in Church, social clubs, sororities or fraternities.
 - b. Becoming a Mentor to Others

- i. Know Thy Self First-When you have reached the place where you feel secure, important, and appreciated, you will no longer have the need to whittle down others to make oneself seem bigger in comparison.¹
 - ii. Check Your Ego- "A person consumed with himself never considers spending time raising others up."
 - iii. Develop a Discerning Spirit
 - iv. Sow Seeds to Benefit Others
 - c. Mentoring as Motivator
 - i. Making Others Feel Valued
 - ii. Using Encouragement
 - iii. Supporting Others to Find their Internal Motivation
- 5. Steps Used in Ancient Hebrew Culture to Mentor
 - i. Mentor does it. As a mentor you must have the skills you are trying to teach others.
 - ii. Mentor does it, and mentee watches. As mentor performs task, he/she explains what is being done and why.
 - iii. Mentee does it and mentor watches. The mentor must exchange roles with the mentee to determine if the lesson has been learned. As the mentee works, the mentor remains present to offer support, advice and ensure the job is done safely and correctly.
 - iv. Mentee does job alone. Once a skill is learned, the mentor demonstrates trust by allow the mentee to work alone. The mentee has been raised to the knowledge and skill level of the mentor and now the mentor is free to move to a new task.
- 6. Groups Discussion: How do I implement this lesson into my relationships with college students?
- 7. Scriptures that Show how Mentoring is essential for Christian living.
 - a. John 13:1-6 (Humility Like Jesus)
 - b. John 13:7 (Understanding Like Jesus)
 - c. John 13:34 (Love Like Jesus)
- 8. Reflection
 - a. Merits of Mentoring
 - b. Challenges of Mentoring
 - c. Defining Mentorship
- 9. Dismissal

The focal verse used for this lesson was Luke 21:5-17. The researcher shared how Jesus prepared his disciples for life without him being present. The lesson covered the steps ancient

Jews used to mentor others. The researcher shared that it is vital that mentors have the skills they want to teach others. The lesson was based on the book, *Mentoring 101* by John C. Maxwell. The training session ended with group discussion and strategies to implement the steps of mentoring into the outreach ministry.

The fourth lesson was more specific in its focus on how to mentor college students. The focus scripture used in this session was John 13:2-16, in which Jesus teaches his disciples about servanthood by literally becoming their servant and washing their feet. As this fourth lesson began each participant was given this handout listed below.

Outreach Training-Lesson 4

Topic: Mentoring College Students

Focus Verse:

Biblical Case Study:

10:00am-12:00pm

1. Devotion
2. Prayer Concerns
3. Opening Prayer
4. Training Session Part II-Mentoring 101
 - a. Finding College Students to Mentor
 - i. Invest Your Time in Students who will Give the Greatest Returns
 - ii. Mining for Potential-The most precious metals, gems and stones on earth started out covered in dirt. When Jesus chooses his disciples, he didn't look for perfection, he looked for potential.
 - iii. Be a Friend first. Mentors understand the importance of relationships when it comes to helping others be successful.
 - b. Mentoring Like Jesus
 - i. Narrows Your Focus: Giving More time to fewer people equals greater kingdom impact.²
 - ii. Servant-Mentorship: It's not about me.
 - iii. Be Guided by God's Word

² Regi Campbell, *Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church*, (Atlanta, Ga: RM Press, 2016), 3.

1. I Corinthians 11:1
2. Proverbs 27:11
3. Hebrews 10:24-25
- iv. Being Transparent: share your faith story.
- v. Be Practical: Mentees do not need to learn more theory; they want to learn how to address real life problems with real life solutions.
- vi. It takes Mutual commitment to be a successful mentor.

c. Leading them Higher

- i. Stay committed to the Mission. The goal of a Christian mentor is to fulfill the command Christ gave his followers in Matthew 28:19-21.
- ii. The goal is building Christ's Church. It started with two or three gathered in his name and become Christ's Holy Church.
- iii. Developing Their Fruit: Love, Joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- iv. Finding Purpose through Serving

5. Mentor's Spiritual Health

a. Prayer

- i. Be Intentional. Mentor should set aside a specific time each day for prayer, meditation, and communing with God.
- ii. Mentor as Intercessor. Just as Christ intercedes for mankind with God, so Mentors should intercede for mentees.
- iii. Mentors should pray with mentees and give mentees the opportunity to pray for the mentor.
- iv. Ask your mentee how you may pray for them. Then pray for them in person and during your prayer time each day.
- v. Use a prayer journal to record meaningful moments, scriptures, and prayer needs.

b. Worship

- i. Mentors need spiritual guidance also. Regularly attend worship service.
- ii. Invite your mentee to worship with you.
- iii. Read Christian literature in addition to the bible.
- iv. Listen to music which honors God: Gospel, Christian, Hymns/Anthems, and Inspirational music inspires us and informs us. Whatever you are listening to is ministering to you. So, choose your music wisely.

c. Study

- i. Read your Bible daily during your personal devotional time.
- ii. Join a bible study group or class offered by your Church.
- iii. Set a specific time to meet with your mentee to study the bible together or invite your mentee to your bible study group.

6. Devotional Reading Assignment:

A copy of the Circle Maker by Mark Batterson's will be given to each church participant. Mentors will be encouraged to study this book on intercessory prayer and how to circle people with prayer.

Materials

1. Writing Journals
2. Pens
3. *The Circle Maker* book by Mark Batterson

Information for training session four was taken from the book, “*Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church*,” by Regi Campbell. The researcher shared with participants the impact of mentoring in small groups, the use of a servant-mentor approach to mentoring Paine College students, and the need to be guided by scripture in the mentoring of students.

A Step-by-step procedure in mentoring college students was reviewed with all church participants. The training session concluded by reviewing the mentor’s self-care, spiritual growth, and practices of Christian disciplines to ensure the wellbeing of church participants’ spiritual health.

Phase Four: The researcher paired TBC participants with a Paine College student participant for mentoring and discipleship. The TBC participants were asked to exchange numbers and email addresses with the students. The TBC participants were required to call their Paine College mentees at least once a week to pray for them, check on them, remind them of the weekly Bible study group meetings in the Paine College Chapel classroom and extend an invitation to attend worship services at TBC.

The ten pairs of church participants and Paine College participants met once a week for a one-hour Bible study and group discussion. The book entitled *The Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple* by Greg Ogden was used to develop the six Bible studies used during mentor/mentee

meetings (see Appendix G). The researcher acted as the facilitator for the bible studies. Mentors and mentees discussed how the Bible studies were impacting their lives each week. At the close of each Bible study, the project participants were encouraged to outline three ways they could implement the Bible study lesson into their lives. Mentors were encouraged to invite their mentee to a worship service at TBC each week of the outreach initiative. The Bible studies were held on consecutive Wednesdays at 12:00 p.m. for six weeks.

Phase Five: The researcher conducted an analysis review of the outreach initiative, summarized results from the questionnaire, and participant's personal interviews (See Appendix C, Appendix F, Appendix H).

Approvals

The researcher is the lead pastor of TBC, but he sought approval from the church's board of deacons to conduct this project. The researcher received approval on January 29, 2023, which aided in recruiting church volunteers for the study and increased support among the church congregation. The researcher also requested approval to recruit Paine College students to participate in the research project from the Dean of the Paine College Chapel (see Appendix C). The researcher received approval from the Dean of the Paine College Chapel on February 1, 2023. Approval was requested from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After receiving approval from the IRB, the researcher provided research project participants with consent forms (see Appendix H).

Participant Recruitment Selection

After gaining approval from the Board of Deacons, Dean of Paine College Chapel, and Liberty University IRB, the researcher recruited ten participants from Thankful Baptist Church to participate in a training program to prepare participants to disciple and mentor Paine College

students. First the researcher made a public appeal in the mid-week prayer meeting and the mid-week Bible study adult class. The researcher informed the members in the prayer meeting and Bible study class about the focus of his research project and asked for volunteers to participate with the project (see Appendix C).

Many members expressed concern about the decline of young adults attending TBC. They acknowledged that there is a growing generational gap among the congregation with fewer eighteen to thirty-year-olds attending. This is not an uncommon phenomenon in most churches across the United States. The researcher explained that this research project was not simply creating a great outreach ministry, but rather was about meeting the needs of Paine College students in a meaningful way. To attract and retain college students, we needed to do more than provide a great experience for the students coming to our services, we also needed spiritually mature church participants who would take the time to really understand and address the students' needs in their everyday lives.³

After making public appeals for two consecutive weeks, the researcher personally approached ten members from TBC to participate in the study. Nine out of the ten participants recruited to be a part of this study were retired senior adults who are parishioners of Thankful Baptist Church. One participant is a thirty-eight-year-old small business owner with a flexible schedule. The members' availability and willingness to commit to the research project for the duration of this project was key to their being targeted. The ten church participants were willing to commit to participate in the project and signed their consent and confidentiality agreements.

³ Chuck Bomar, *College Ministry From Scratch: A Practical Guide to Start and Sustain a Successful College Ministry*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 24.

The researcher carefully reviewed the confidentiality agreement with the volunteer participants (see Appendix A). The researcher noted that data would be collected by interviews, questionnaires, and a reflective journal. The participants were informed that the data would be saved on the researcher's personal laptop in a password protected file in his Dropbox account and in a personal file cabinet which will only be accessible to the researcher.

The ten church participants were ideal for this outreach initiative because of their commitment to growing the church, longevity as members of Thankful Baptist Church, and experience volunteering with the church's Read to Succeed outreach partnership with a local elementary school TBC adopted. They are a part of at least one ministry or auxiliary in the church. There were eight women and two men. They are all African American. They were all provided with four sessions of training. After completing four sessions which lasted two weeks, they were paired with a Paine College student to mentor for six weeks on Paine College's campus in a designated classroom inside the chapel's learning wing.

Paine College students were personally invited to participate by the researcher. The researcher has a relationship with the Paine College Choir. Ten students were recruited from the chapel choir. Participants from Thankful Baptist Church and participating students from Paine College were willing to sign the general consent form (see Appendix A) and the confidentiality form the researcher provided (see Appendix B). The primary form of recruitment was one-on-one, in-person through verbal recruiting (see Appendix B).

A flyer was posted on the bulletin board in the chapel of Paine College with the researcher's contact information provided for interested students who would commit to participating in the project (see Appendix D). As an incentive to participate with the research

project, students were given \$10 Visa gift cards, and dinner was provided each week for each bible study meeting with the Paine College students.

The researcher recorded the names and contact information for each student participant. The initial questionnaire was given to each student a week before the mentoring began on Paine College campus (see Appendix C). The researcher asked the Paine College students to be honest and explain in detail their responses to the questionnaire. The participants were informed that their answers would help in TBC outreach initiative and future outreach to better meet the spiritual needs of Paine College students.

The students were reminded that participation in this research project is voluntary. Students were informed that their participation could be withdrawn at any time for any reason, and there would be no penalty from Paine College, the researcher nor Thankful Baptist Church if they choose to stop participating. The researcher stated that Jesus did not force anyone to follow him, but simply gave people opportunity to follow, learn, and be involved in growing the Kingdom of God. In the same way, the researcher was looking for participants to freely participate in the research project.

Lastly, the researcher met with all college student participants to further explain the process of the six-week mentoring and to answer any possible questions. The researcher used text message, email, and Facebook Messenger as the means to communicate with all participants from TBC and Paine College. The researcher reiterated that any information shared by participants should be kept confidential, and if anyone was uncomfortable sharing, they were free to not answer any question and withdraw at any time. The meeting concluded with the researcher praying with the ten Paine College students for their spiritual growth, and academic success for the remainder of the semester.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The researcher's focus on discipleship and mentoring to encourage success of the outreach initiative diverged with previous outreach initiatives from TBC to Paine College students. Previous outreach initiatives focused on increasing attendance for the annual Paine College Day which TBC used to raise funds for scholarships for Paine College students. Previously, there was no organized ministry to reach students. Students were invited by members of the church who worked on staff at Paine College or attended as students. This research project was an organized initiative which provided training for ten TBC volunteers in discipleship and mentoring before pairing them with a Paine College student. The researcher served as coordinator of the outreach initiative and instructor for the church participants' training sessions.

Each church participant and college student were provided with a survey to measure the spiritual growth of participants in the research project. The surveys also served to encourage participants to think about their role in sharing the gospel, becoming disciple-makers, and their own spiritual formation. The researcher hoped these survey questions would inspire further discussion between church participants and the college students regarding kingdom building. The idea was to ignite deeper theological discussion such as Christ had with His disciples to help them personally understand the wisdom of the teachings Christ shared in public. The researcher provided spiritual growth surveys for the church participants to measure their spiritual growth after participating in the research project in the areas of evangelism and engaging the community, and to measure changes in zeal for doing outreach. Those observations are listed in this research.

In the four sessions of the church participant training, the researcher personally taught two sessions on discipleship and two sessions on mentoring college students. The lesson outlines

are listed in the Appendices (see Appendix E). Additionally, the church participants were assigned books on discipleship and mentoring of young adults. The following books were presented for church participants to read and used in the TBC participants training.

- Regi Campbell, *Mentor Like Jesus*⁴
- Chuck Bomar, *College Ministry from Scratch: A Practical Guide to Start and Sustain a Successful College Ministry*⁵

The researcher also provided hardcopy handouts for each training session to each church participant. The researcher intended to focus the church participants' hearts on fulfilling the commands of Christ in Matthew 28:19a, to "go and make disciples." Thankful Baptist Church needs a revival, and the researcher is committed to begin that revival through igniting the passion of TBC ministers and laypersons who volunteered to participate with this research project.

The researcher as pastor of TBC has experienced some success personally mentoring and discipling Paine College students over the last fourteen years of his pastorate. However, the model Jesus used to establish his church was pouring His heart, teachings and anointing into twelve faithful followers, then sending them out to replicate the mentoring and discipling He provided for them. The researcher intended through this research project to make "fishers of men," of the TBC participants like Jesus in Matthew 4:19.

The following six weeks of the mentoring Paine College students' initiative concluded on April 19th of 2023. After completion of the six-week instruction period, a post-survey was

⁴ Regi Campbell, *Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church* (Atlanta: RM Press, 2016).

⁵ Chuck Bomar, *College Ministry from Scratch: A Practical Guide to Start and Sustain a Successful College Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

completed by student participants to measure the growth of their spiritual maturity and record the number of times they attended a worship service at TBC.

Triangulation was utilized for this research project. Research participants completed surveys, and the researcher kept a journal and conducted one-on-one interviews. The surveys to Paine College student participants were provided in-person. The one-on-one interviews were in-person for the researcher to analyze participants' body language as well as oral responses. The researcher kept a reflective journal during the entire project to bracket out biases, for self-reflection, and to chart lessons learned through this research project.

The table below demonstrates the annual church profile of Thankful Baptist Church which is reported to the congregation in its annual business meetings.

Table 1: Annual Church Profile of Thankful Baptist Church
○ Attendance ratio from 2017 to 2022- 210 (2017) to 130 (2022)
○ Total Baptisms in Five Years- 64
○ Total Missional Giving in Five Years- \$52,500.00
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Five Years - \$287,532.00

The college ministry project was implemented in the following steps.

Step One: The researcher asked the Paine College Dean of Chapel for permission to appeal to the Paine College Choir members for possible participants with the research project. The researcher met with the Paine College Choir during their Monday evening rehearsal and made an

appeal for participants. A sign-up sheet was left with the choir director for interested students to sign up for the thesis project after choir rehearsal. The choir director met with the researcher an hour after choir rehearsal to return the sign-up sheet. Ten students signed up to participate. All ten collegiate participants are full-time students enrolled at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. All ten participants are away from their home cities and live on campus in the Paine College dorms.

Step Two: The researcher met with the ten collegiate volunteers the following Wednesday in the chapel of Paine College. During this meeting, the Informed Consent Form was provided and explained to each collegiate participant, along with an explanation that their participation is voluntary and their decision to withdraw from participation at any time for any reason would not result in any repercussions (see Appendix A). The researcher provided time for each participant to read the consent form and reemphasized that no one should feel obligated to participate in this study. All participants were asked to complete the consent form and acknowledge that they understand the form. All ten participants completed the form and acknowledged that they understood the consent form.

Step Three: Paine College participants were asked to complete an initial questionnaire (see Appendix C) about their current participation with a local church and campus ministries. The questionnaire was provided in person, and students were allowed to take the questionnaire with them to complete. College participants completed the questionnaire and returned them in person to the researcher prior to the Wednesday Paine College Chapel service. The estimated time commitment to complete the questionnaire was thirty minutes. The questionnaires were anonymous. The completed forms are kept in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's residence.

The researcher is the only one with access to this file cabinet. These questionnaires will be shredded after the researcher completes his oral defense of the research project.

Step Four: An initial meeting was held in the Paine College Chapel classroom building. Each college student was paired with a TBC participant. The eight female college students were paired with eight female mentors from Thankful Baptist Church and the two male students were paired with male mentors. The mentors and mentees were asked to exchange their contact information, and they, with the researcher, participated in an ice breaker exercise which allowed everyone to introduce themselves and share one goal they hoped to achieve by participating with this research project.

The students and mentors were provided with a calendar of the six sessions along with the topics and scripture lessons for each session. For the next five sessions, college student participants met with their mentor for one hour session each week in our small group. The one-hour session was broken down into thirty-five minutes of Bible study and twenty-five minutes discussing how the lesson applied to students' lives. During the six weeks, TBC participants invited their mentee to attend worship with them at least once at Thankful Baptist Church. The students were provided transportation using TBC church van.

Step Five: Finally, a post-study interview was conducted with students to measure their spiritual growth during the research project and to record the number of times each student attended worship services at Thankful Baptist Church (see Appendix H). The results were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the outreach initiative to improve Paine College student participants' attendance at TBC and the college participants' personal spiritual growth. A similar post-research interview was conducted with TBC church participants to measure their

enthusiasm for outreach, and spiritual growth in the areas of mentoring, discipleship, and evangelism (see Appendix H).

Chapter 4: Results

This research was compiled using questionnaires, participant interviews and a research journal. This research project sought to prepare participants from TBC to fulfill the great commission of Jesus Christ as they engaged local college students, built relationships, mentored, and disciplined students, to increase their attendance and participation in TBC ministries. The intervention connected TBC members with Paine College students and resulted in eight out of the ten student participants attending TBC worship services at least once out of the six weeks this project was conducted.

The intervention provided TBC participants with specialized training in discipling Paine College students using the New Testament model of person-to-person discipleship and small group mentoring as was employed by Jesus in the gospels. Regi Campbell writes that, "mentoring is a relationship."⁶ Campbell asserts that to mentor like Jesus, we must form relationships which are built on love, serving, and challenge.⁷

Establishing a collegiate outreach ministry provided an avenue for members of the church to share the love of Christ outside the church, to serve the church, the Lord, and their assigned Paine College student mentees. Pairing mentors with one student allowed church participants to focus their energy, time, and gifts for optimum effectiveness. Just as Jesus chose twelve disciples

⁶ Regi Campbell, *Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church* (Atlanta: RM Press, 2016), 31.

⁷ Ibid., 46.

to train, teach, coach, share, minister and live with for his ministry's duration, this project sought to focus on quality over quantity.

The mentoring was intentionally conducted in groups. Campbell writes, "Jesus, the world's greatest mentor, worked with a group."⁸ As Christians we are called to live in community. The goal for this research project is to help grow the TBC church family. It was the intention of the researcher to increase the number of Paine College students connected with the TBC congregation. Campbell argues that "the group context is the 'secret sauce' of intentional mentoring. It can set the individual relationships in motion and speed up the process of developing trust."⁹

In the six weeks of church participants meeting with their collegiate mentee, it was obvious the Holy Spirit was building relationships and trust. An unexpected benefit developed from the first meeting. Many of the students commented that the older members of Thankful Baptist Church reminded them of their grandparents. The researcher had not considered how grandparents often have a much closer relationship with their grandchildren than their own children. A 2021 research study indicated that grandparents feel more connected with their grandchildren than they do with their own kids.¹⁰ The level of trust seemed very natural. The age gap was a benefit to building relationships quicker. The students were honored that these senior saints wanted to give their time mentoring and sharing God's love with them.

The students went out of their way to show respect to the church participants. The students arranged the chairs for the classroom and moved the tables, so all participants were

⁸ Ibid. Campbell, 45.

⁹ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰ James K. Rilling, Amber Gonzalez and Lee Minwoo, "The Neural Correlates of Grandmaternal Caregiving," *Proc. R. Soc. B.* 2882021199720211997 <http://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2021.1997>

seated in a circle. The college students took the handouts to their mentors and offered to help them be seated and assisted as they stood up from their chairs. The TBC church participants showed gratitude and complimented the college students for their assistance. This interchange initiated a positive start to the weekly group meetings. Each week the participants fulfilled the scriptures from Proverbs 20:29 which says, "The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair." The mentors shared wisdom, personal experiences, and their faith with the students; in turn the students shared their strength in service, concern, and mutual respect for their mentors.

The researcher's hope for this project was for at least half of the students to bond with the church participants and attend at least one service during the six weeks of group meetings. Additionally, the researcher's prayer before and during was to see growing evidence of the spiritual maturation of the students and church participants. Finally, the researcher hoped the Holy Spirit would inspire a godly zeal for outreach to college students from TBC participants, that would last beyond this research project.

Based on the initial goals, the research project yielded positive results. The success of the intervention has motivated the church membership to take a greater interest in the spiritual needs of Paine College students and ignited their passion to establish a permanent outreach ministry with the students at Paine College. Through this research project, the researcher gained a wealth of information regarding the disconnection of students at Paine College from local church attendance, the impact of outreach to reverse congregational decline and effectiveness of mentoring to recruit, retain and mature disciples for Christ.

A questionnaire and in-person interview were given to the ten Thankful Baptist Church participants, and a separate questionnaire was given to the ten Paine College student participants

along with in-person interviews with each Paine College student. The questionnaires were given to determine possible reasons that Paine College students were not attending Thankful Baptist Church and possible solutions to improve their attendance at TBC. After analyzing and synthesizing the questionnaire responses from church participants and college participants, the researcher looked for recurring themes. Three themes were most prevalent from participants responses: church outreach, conflicting demands, and spiritual health.

Theme One: Church Participants' Perspectives on Church Outreach

Church participant one is a Sunday School teacher and associate minister of TBC and has been a member of the church for twenty-eight years. The participant stated that her brother is a graduate of Paine College and she often attended campus events while he was a student. However, in the last few years she has not interacted with Paine College students beyond attending the musical concerts by the Paine College Choir. She believes that by inviting the Paine College Choir to sing at Thankful Baptist Church worship services and special days, more students would attend church services. She believes the church needs to increase its outreach to the Paine Students.

Also, she noted that the church's Covid-19 protocols requiring attendees to wear masks and social distance in the sanctuary may discourage students from attending. She continued that it's hard to understand what people are saying when they wear a mask and believes it discourages people from having conversations. Participant one believes the decline in the number of Paine College students attending TBC was exasperated by the pandemic shut down of the city, TBC, and Paine College Campus. Participant one also noted that she believed the difference in generational preferences in worship styles is contributing to Paine College students' declining attendance at TBC. She stated that younger people like contemporary gospel music and

TBC mostly sings hymns and traditional gospel music. She believes the church needs to dedicate a Sunday to attracting Paine College students every two months. She suggested two possible ways to attract and retain Paine College students to TBC. The first method suggested was more advertising of the church on Paine College campus, and the second was recruiting students to be mentors for TBC youth.

Church participant two is a deacon, the Sunday School Assistant Superintendent, and Youth Advisor at TBC. He has been a member of the church for twenty-six years and has mentored youth at TBC and through the 100 Black Men of Augusta for twenty years. He served as director for the mentoring program for the 100 Black Men of Augusta in partnership with Paine College. His experience with working with students on Paine College campus was invaluable during the four training sessions. In addition to his working as a mentor with students through the 100 Black Men of Augusta, he stated that several family members and personal friends are graduates of Paine College. He also financially contributes to Paine College on an annual basis.

However, church participant two acknowledged that since the pandemic of 2020, he has not had any contact with students from Paine College. He believes the church can attract the students with the current Christian Education ministries at TBC and if TBC provided transportation for the students to the church services. His last suggestion to draw Paine College students was to bring in youth ministry speakers and young gospel singers who are popular with the students. He stated that he believes these are vital because he has noticed a significant decline in Paine College students attending TBC worship services over the last five years. He attributed this decline to the church not providing transportation for Paine College students and not having an active outreach ministry to Paine College students. He suggested that the church needs to set

aside more financial resources to offer financial assistance to Paine College students and study what other ministries' activities are active on the campus.

Church participant three is an associate minister of TBC. She has been an active member of the church for four years. She reported having no connections to Paine College students and has not had any interactions with Paine College students in the last twelve months due to the pandemic restrictions and her own personal fear of being infected with the Covid virus. She does believe that the church needs to engage in more outreach to Paine College students because TBC membership is getting older and needs college age students to carry on the ministry. She wrote that the church needs to be more friendly to guests and should add a praise and worship team to attract the college students. She stated that she did notice that students were not attending regularly and believes it's because they are not being asked to participate in worship and other ministries in the church. She also wrote that church members need to attend more events and activities on Paine College's campus. In addition to attending the college events, members need training to share the love of Christ with college students. Her final suggestion was to meet the students where they are. As said, the church needs to be intentional about making connections on the local college campus and be more involved with students there.¹¹

Church participant four is superintendent of the TBC Sunday School. She has been a member of TBC for twelve years. She is a retired college communication professor. She reported having a limited connection with Paine College. She only interacts with Paine College students when they attend and participate with TBC worship services. She believes the church's friendly membership and welcoming attitude towards guests and young adults is one attribute to attract

¹¹ Chuck Bomar, *College Ministry from Scratch: A Practical Guide to Start and Sustain a Successful College Ministry*, 108

Paine College students to attend worship services. She also wrote that "Thankful has an anointed pastor who preaches the Word every Sunday. The church is willing to involve college students in current ministries as well as start ministries that would be more relevant to Paine College students."¹²

She noted weaknesses of the church to attract Paine College students are TBC lacks a choir that students would be interested in joining. TBC does not have specific ministries for college students in place. She has noticed the decrease in students attending TBC in the last four years. She wrote, "I think the primary reason for the decline of students attending was the Pandemic. It disrupted the flow of many churches."¹³ She suggested that in order to attract more Paine College students then the church needs to communicate with students more. The church needs to talk to them and listen to students. TBC needs to start new ministries that encourage them to get involved.¹⁴ Church participant four concluded that the church needs to market more to Paine College students using social media platforms, and old-fashioned word of mouth from members personally inviting students to attend TBC.

Church participant five volunteers with the children's church. She has been a member for thirteen years. She reported having no connection to Paine College. She stated that she only interacts with Paine College students when they visit TBC. She responded that she thinks TBC's Paine College Day is a great way to attract students to TBC. However, she stated that our traditional church services discourage college students from attending TBC worship services.

¹² Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 1, 2023, from Church Participant four about question six.

¹³ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 1, 2023, from Church Participant four about question seven and eight.

¹⁴ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 1, 2023, from Church Participant four about question nine.

She did notice a decline in Paine College students attending and participating at TBC.

The possible reasons she gave for the decline were the Covid pandemic and worship services geared towards baby boomers. She suggested the church needs to implement more services for youth and young adults and provide free food for the college students when they attend. She stated the church needs a hospitality ministry and should include funds from the budget to provide food and refreshments for college students.¹⁵

Church participant six is a male volunteer with the children's church. He has been a member of TBC for fourteen years. He stated that he has no connection to Paine College and in the last twelve months he has had no contact with Paine College students. He wrote that a strength of TBC is its friendly members. College students want a home away from home and TBC can give them that. He suggested that we could recruit students by approaching them on Paine College campus and showing them kindness. He concluded by saying we can invite them to follow Christ and share with them the benefits of worshipping God each Sunday.¹⁶

Church participant seven is Director of the Intercessory Prayer Ministry. She has been a member of TBC for twenty-five years. She stated that she is a Paine College Alumna, and regularly attends their concerts, forums, and workshops. She often interacts with Paine College students who are the grandchildren of two close friends. She wrote that the strengths of TBC that would attract Paine College students are the church's pastor is young, the church has a long history of supporting Paine College, and the TBC is located near the Paine College campus.

She identified weaknesses of TBC to attract Paine College students as not being

¹⁵ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 1, 2023, from Church Participant five about question ten.

¹⁶ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 1, 2023, from Church Participant six about question ten.

welcoming to college students, the church does not regularly invite students to participate, and not enough ministries are geared towards college students. She has noticed a decline in Paine College students' attendance at TBC and blames this decline on the pandemic and the lack of outreach from TBC to Paine College.

Methods she would use to attract and retain more college students are "at the beginning of the semester in the fall and spring, go on the campus and give tracts with the church information on it, welcome them, and give programs that serve food."¹⁷ To recruit freshmen students, Church participant seven suggested TBC hold a "college day at the church, train a group to serve as a welcome wheel and start a college student ministry."¹⁸ In summary, church participant seven suggested using the internet to build relationships with Paine College students and send those who sign up on our website religious pamphlets, newsletters about the church, and Christian books.¹⁹

Church participant eight is a member of the Intercessory Prayer Ministry and a children's church teacher. She has been a member of TBC for sixty-three years. She is a retired nurse. Her connection to Paine College is she is an alumna. In the last twelve months, she has had no contact with students at Paine College. She stated that she had limited her visits to public places due to the pandemic. She believes that the main thing that would attract Paine College students to attend worship is the availability of church transportation for students to and from campus. She sees the church not utilizing its church bus to transport students as a weakness that

¹⁷ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 3, 2023, from Church Participant seven about question eight.

¹⁸ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 3, 2023, from Church Participant seven about question nine.

¹⁹ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 3, 2023, from Church Participant seven about question ten.

discourages college students from attending worship. She also suggested that the church offer students free dinner each week after Sunday worship services.

The methods she would implement to attract and retain Paine College students to TBC include on-campus evangelism and sponsoring religious events on Paine College's campus. She also suggested that members from TBC could be matched with a student to disciple them and encourage the students to become active participants in TBC ministries.²⁰ In conclusion, church participant ten stated that TBC needs to secure a dedicated bus driver to pick students up each Sunday to attend worship.

Church participant nine is a deacon at TBC. He has been a member of the church for ten years. He stated that his connection to Paine College is through interacting with students who attend TBC. In the last twelve months he has not had any contact with students from Paine College and has not visited Paine College's campus. Church participant nine believes the strengths of TBC that would attract college students are the pastor's preaching and teaching of the Word.²¹ He identified weaknesses of TBC that discourage Paine College students from attending worship services: lack of a choir for college students and no active college ministry. He has noticed a decline in Paine College students attending TBC worship services and believes this decline is a result of the pandemic shut down of the church and college campus.

The method he would implement to attract, engage, and retain college students is asking the Paine College students to describe their wants and needs in the church's various ministries.²²

²⁰ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 3, 2023, from Church Participant eight about question nine.

²¹ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 1, 2023, from Church Participant nine about question five.

²² Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 1, 2023, from Church Participant nine about question nine.

He suggested using social media platforms and upper-class students whom we recruit to win first-year students to attend TBC.

Church participant ten serves as president of the adult choir. She has been a member of the church for forty years. In addition, she is a retired administrative assistant from a local technical college. She was enrolled as a student in Paine College for one year. She reports no interactions with students from Paine College in the last twelve months. She stated the church doesn't have any strengths that would attract college students to attend worship services. She believes one weakness of TBC is not having ministries specifically for college students. She has noticed a decline in students attending TBC and thinks this decline is due to a lack of ministries

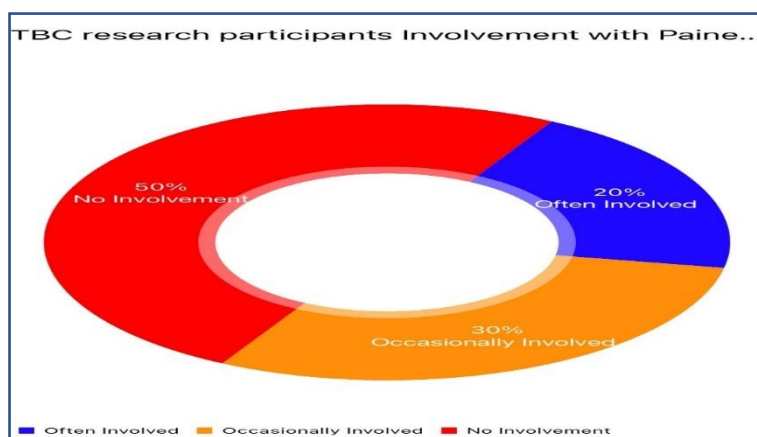


Figure 1. TBC Research Participants Involvement with Paine College Students in Last Twelve Months

and services to motivate a college student's interest.²³ The methods she suggested could be implemented to attract students are "be strategic about welcoming them to church, reach out to students who live near the church, recognize what they are looking for in a local church, allow students to help teach Bible study, and spending time getting to know them."²⁴

In conclusion, church participant ten suggested the church needs to identify the specific needs of Paine College students that the church can meet and help them more. The responses to church participants' questionnaires allowed the researcher to tailor the training sessions to specific weaknesses identified and anticipated needs revealed. For example, one of the needs is specified below in the graph, which shows that out of the ten church participants, only two were often involved with Paine College students in the last twelve months.

However, fifty percent reported no involvement with students. It was clear training was needed in relationship building with college students. To overcome generational barriers and communication hurdles from older to younger generation, the church participant training was able to address cross-generational communication, miscommunication, and non-verbal communication. As the scripture says in I Thessalonians 5:12, it is important that, "brethren...know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." This scripture highlights the need to show respect and build relationships with leaders in the church. This same respect and effort in building relationships is needed to successfully mentor and disciple college students. They are young adults with unique personalities, personal passions, and their own spiritual needs to be a

²³ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 1, 2023, from Church Participant ten about question seven.

²⁴ Quotes are taken from Church Participant Research Questionnaire on March 3, 2023, from Church Participant ten about question eight.

part of a healthy Christian community.

Collegiate Participants' Responses to Church Outreach

College participant one is twenty-one years old, a junior who sings in the Paine College Choir. When asked about attending a local church, she stated that she does not attend worship service at a local church because she has not found a church to attend. She continued that during her three years at Paine College she has not seen a local church sponsor any events on Paine College's campus. She stated that she would probably attend if she was invited, and the church was near Paine College campus. However, she emphasized that her first two years were during the Covid-19 pandemic and most African American churches in Augusta, Georgia, were closed for in-person worship. During this time, she developed the habit of worshipping online.

College participant two is twenty-one years old, a sophomore who sings in the Paine College Choir. She has not attended a local church while enrolled at Paine College. She stated that she no longer believes she needs to attend church to have a relationship with God. It was not clear when participant two embraced this new belief, but it occurred during her freshman year at Paine College. She has never been invited to a local church while at Paine College and stated that she never saw any local churches sponsor an outreach ministry or event at Paine College until the researcher's project.

College Participant three is twenty-one years old, a junior who sings in the Paine College Choir and participates with the Wesley Fellowship campus ministry. Participant three has attended a local church, but only once. She reported that she did enjoy the church service, but at the time she was not looking for a church to attend in the local area. She has not seen any outreach ministry or event sponsored by a local church on Paine College's campus. If a church invited her and provided transportation, she would consider attending a local church.

College Participant four is nineteen years old, a freshman who sings in the Paine College Choir. She does not attend a local church and has never been invited to attend. She stated that she has not looked for a church because she does not have transportation, and no one is available to take her to a local church. She stated that she has not seen any local churches sponsor a ministry or event on Paine College campus.

College participant five is twenty-one years old, a junior who sings in the Paine College Choir and is a member of the Student Government Association. She does not attend worship services at a local church. She says that she has been invited by classmates on a few occasions but did not accept their invitation. She has not seen any local churches sponsoring ministries or events on Paine College Campus. She stated the only ministry that sponsors events is the on-campus Wesley Fellowship.

College participant six is twenty-one years old, a sophomore who sings in the Paine College Choir. He stated that he started school during the pandemic and most churches near campus were closed for in-person worship services. For his first year he watched the online service of his home church in Atlanta, Georgia. This year he has joined a local church and attends Sunday worship service. He acknowledged that he has not seen any local churches sponsor events or ministries on campus. He has not seen any local church advertisements inviting students to attend their worship services on the campus. He noted that he does have transportation which makes it easier for him to attend a local church each week. When asked how he found the local church he attends, he said, he heard about them through their online service on Facebook.

College participant seven is twenty years old, a senior who sings in the Paine College Choir. She stated there are not many religious activities held on their campus. She does not

attend a local church, but some weekends she goes home to attend her home church. She has not seen any local church sponsored ministries or events on campus. She stated that she works part-time and so she is not very active on campus other than going to class and singing in the Paine College Choir.

College Participant eight is twenty-one years old, a junior who sings in the Paine College Choir. She lives off campus in an apartment and stated she does not participate in many activities on campus. She has not attended a local church while enrolled in Paine College. She has not seen any local churches sponsor events or ministries on Paine College campus. She has never been invited to attend a local church and did not actively search for one to attend.

Collegiate Participant nine is a nineteen-year-old freshman student enrolled in Paine College. He sings in the Paine College Choir, lives in the dorms on campus, and plays on the Paine College baseball team. He has not attended a local church. He stated that he prefers attending a Baptist church but has not found one close to campus. He is looking for a church within walking distance since he does not have transportation. He has been invited to one church by a professor, but it was a Methodist church, and he was born and raised in a Baptist church, so he declined the invitation.

Collegiate participant ten is a nineteen-year-old freshman student who sings in the Paine College choir. She has been invited to a local church by her roommate and attends occasionally if she is not busy on Sundays. She has not seen any local churches sponsor on-campus events or ministries. She reported that she does not attend church as often while in college as she did at home because the church, she attends locally mostly has older adults and not many kids or young adults attending.

Theme Two: Conflicting Demands

The responses from the participants gathered from the questionnaires helped the researcher determine another theme that affects Paine College students attending a local church. There are numerous on-campus activities and other personal factors that conflict with their commitment to attend a local church. Ben Trueblood, the author of the article, “Most Teenagers Drop Out of Church When They Become Young Adults,” writes, “most of the reasons young adults leave the church reflect shifting personal priorities and changes in their own habits.”²⁵ Youngblood emphasized that college students away from home for the first time often want to establish their independence and withdrawal from church is one way they express their independence. He continued that they may also simply replace going to church with some new activity that has meaning for them.

Church participant one believes that college students have a lot of campus activities that keep them too busy. She noted that at Paine College weekly chapel attendance on Wednesdays is mandatory for all students. Church participant one stated that students may feel like they have already been to church since they are required to attend the weekly chapel service. She also stated that her granddaughter attends school away from home and prefers going to online church rather than going in person. She said her granddaughter doesn’t like having to dress up for church and can watch the service in her dorm room in her pajamas.

Church participant two believes college kids are overwhelmed by the newfound freedom. She said that her parents made her get up early every Sunday and go to church growing up. So, when she went to college, she decided that she was “done going to church.” She said she started

²⁵ Ben Trueblood, "Most Teenagers Drop Out of Church When They Become Young Adults," Culture, Lifeway Research, January 15, 2019, accessed May 13, 2023, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/01/15/most-teenagers-drop-out-of-church-when-they-become-young-adults/>.

going to fraternity parties on the weekend and would stay out all night drinking and dancing.

Every Sunday morning, she would sleep in and try to recuperate from partying all night.

Unfortunately, in her sophomore year her partying started interfering with her grades. She stated that she was skipping class and not turning in assignments. When her parents got her first semester grades in the mail they drove to her school and threatened to withdraw her if she didn't get serious about school. She said it was in her second semester of her sophomore year that she stopped partying and suddenly had more time on Sunday mornings. She started going to the chapel service on the school's campus until her junior year when she got a car and could drive to a church off-campus. She said college students have more pressure today "to party, drink and do all kinds of drugs." She said it was the push from her parents and renewed attendance to church that reignited her faith in Jesus.

Church participant three stated that she believes college students spend all their time on social media, they rarely have interest in anything else. She pointed out how the young adults in church are glued to their phones. She said she sees them in the stores and out in public and they are all walking around staring at their phones. She believes they are addicted to technology. She said her grandkids come to her house and don't want to do anything but stay on TikTok and Snapchat. She said they are either on their phones or on their video games. She says she has tried everything to get them to do something else, like go to the park, or go to concerts, "but all they wanna do is stay on those phones and play those games." She continued that when she was young, she went to the movies and she admitted that she did a lot of talking on the phone, but stated today's young people are missing life because of their tablets and phones. She expressed how worried she was about the church, because if young people don't want to leave the house to play or go to the mall, they certainly aren't going to want to leave for church once they get

grown. She said the only hope to reach most young adults is if the church offers online church and starts ministering more using social media.

Church participant four stated that college students have a lot of demands on them. She said, when she was in college her parents sacrificed to pay for her tuition and her aunts would send her money every month. She said a lot of her roommates didn't have that family support, so they had to work. Sometimes they would work as much as forty hours in a week and have very little time left over to study, let alone go to church. She talked about the rising costs of college today, and how students either must take out huge student loans or get a job to help pay their way through. She believes their work responsibilities and trying to go to school don't leave much time to be committed to participating in church. She said she knows how important church was for her during college and feels bad for the kids without proper financial support. "But they gotta do what they have to do to get an education." She continued that this is one reason our church needs to do more outreach because college students can't always come to church at our scheduled times. She continued that "if we are to follow Jesus' command to go make disciples, we may have to switch our schedules to match the students' schedules."

Church participant five agreed with church participant three, that college kids are overexposed to social media and online entertainment. She believes they are getting mixed messages about their faith and having a lot of new age religions portrayed as better alternatives to Christianity. She pointed to how so many famous actors and music artists practice religious syncretism. She said, "they take a little bit of Islam, a little bit of Buddhism, a little bit of Hinduism, and mix it with a little Christianity and then say they are spiritual people but not religious." She said that she is so afraid that young people are going to go to hell following celebrities. She said, young people need to know that "Jesus is not a way, but He is the only way

to get to heaven.” She continues that messages pushed by famous people online often have as much influence or more influence than what a student’s parents or local church has taught them. She concluded that if they haven’t been rooted and grounded in their faith before leaving for college, they can be easily led astray by false teachings they are inundated with online.

Church participant six pointed to hypocrisy as a major reason many college students leave the church after high school. He said most kids have grown up watching adults closely. They know when we are honest, and they know when we are “full of crap.” Too often they don’t see the religious commitment lived out by their parents or church members that is taught to them in Sunday School and youth church. Also, he stated that a lot of times we are very critical of youth who make mistakes or get caught with a misdeed but overlook the bad behavior of adults in the church. Over time the young people start to question if church is vital to their lives when so many church members don’t live committed Christian lives.

Church participant two agreed with church participant six and said her own adult child stopped coming to church because he saw all the fighting and division in the church. She said, her son asked her, why should I go to church when they act just like the people in the streets? Church members not practicing Christian disciplines and living a life of faithfulness to Christ can have a significant negative impact on eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds departing the local church.

Church participant seven said she thinks sometimes college students withdraw from church because they know their lifestyles are not supported by the church’s teachings. She said when she was a college student she engaged in pre-marital sex. She didn’t want to hear anyone tell her it was wrong because she loved her boyfriend and didn’t want to be condemned about being sexually active. She said she knew she was wrong because she felt guilty every time after

doing it. She finally decided that if she was going to be sexually active then she needed to be married. She told her boyfriend that she couldn't have sex anymore, and that she was going to wait until she got married. When her boyfriend realized she was serious, he broke up with her and started dating someone else. She knew then that she had made the right choice because it was obvious that the boy only wanted one thing from her. But until she went through that heartache, she refused to go to church or listen to anyone who would tell her she was wrong. She concluded that her selfish wants were competing with her commitment to follow Christ. She believes that many college students today wrestle with the same conflict, follow the life of Christ or follow what their flesh wants.

Church participant eight believes Paine College students are not attending church because of peer influence. She said, college students' friends are the most influential force in their lives. "They think their parents, older family members and even their pastor are lame, and only their friends understand what they go through." She continued that their friends determine their fashion choices, what music they like, what foods they eat, and their participation in activities. If their friends don't go to church, they most likely will not attend church. This is why it's so important that we disciple and mentor kids from the college campus because they will become the influencers that bring other college students to Thankful Baptist Church.

Church participant nine believes kids are under a lot of pressure to make perfect grades and be in a ton of campus activities. He said their competition is international now. He said when he was in school, if you were a black man with a college degree in the 1970s there were a lot of opportunities for you. But now, "Everyone is going to school, and they must compete with students from all over the world." He continued that it's "a dog-eat-dog world" in corporate America. He understands why so many are putting academics ahead of church. He said "If I were

a student today, I might be tempted to skip church too to put in more study time.” He concluded that he doesn’t think this is beneficial for the students because they need God to be first. He said many college students do not realize how important their relationship with God is until they are in a crisis. He concluded his interview by quoting Matthew 6:33 and saying, “We all have to remember that Jesus says, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all other things will be added to you.’”

Church participant ten agreed with church participant nine and said, young people need to understand that there is more to life than success and chasing a high paying job. Church participant ten said she used to put her job before everything else. She put her job before her family, her marriage and church. She would agree to work extra hours and often miss church on Sundays and family time on Sunday afternoon. She said she regretted that she spent so much time focused on her job, because in 2008 when the financial crisis occurred her job laid her off and didn’t rehire her once they reopened. Initially she believed that she would get another job quickly with her education and work experience. However, she continued, tens of thousands of other folks had degrees and experience too who were out of work and applying for the same jobs as her. She said it was prayer, and trust in God that got her through that period of unemployment. It was also during this time that she realized that she had her priorities out of order. Church participant ten stressed that college kids need to commit early to God being first in their lives, “Cause when hard times hit, they will need more than their education, and jobs to endure unforeseen crisis like I experienced in 2008.”

Conflicting Demands: College Participants’ Perspectives

College participant two said that she does not attend a local church because most churches have different expectations than what she believes is necessary for her relationship with

God. She said that the churches she attended growing up were very judgmental. “They would look at you funny if you didn’t dress in nice clothes or if your family were not big tithers.” She described how she felt unwelcome when she wore jeans and a sweatshirt to church one Sunday while in high school. She said when she stopped going, no one from the church reached out to find out why she stopped coming.

College participant seven said she does not attend church because she works on Sundays. She stated that she is putting herself through school, and she is a full-time student. She continued by saying that she doesn’t have much free time. She wishes she had more time to go to church because “sometimes life is so hard, I feel like packing up all my belongings and going home.”

College participant eight agreed with college participant seven regarding being too busy to attend a local church regularly. She says school is hard now that she is taking her major classes. She doesn’t want to get behind or lose her scholarship by her grades dropping, so she spends most of her time going to class, studying, and writing papers. She added that the Paine College Choir gives her a scholarship also to cover part of her tuition, but the choir is very demanding, and most of her free time is taken up by rehearsing and performing with the Paine College Choir.

College participant nine said this is his first year living on campus. He said that he doesn’t have a car and is very shy, so he doesn’t feel comfortable going to church by himself. He said, if his roommate or friends are going, then he will catch a ride with them, but if no one he knows is going to church, then he doesn’t attend.

Theme Three: Spiritual Health

The church participants agreed that providing church ministries that focus on the spiritual needs of college students is critical to attract and retain Paine College students’ attendance at

Thankful Baptist Church. Church participant one said that TBC must be intentional in its efforts to reach Paine College students. She stated that the college outreach training opened her eyes to her own responsibility to minister to the students at Paine College. She remarked that she realizes now that she has “not been fulfilling the Great Commission of the church,” but now has a greater sense of divine mission to share the gospel with the college students.

Church participant three said that she is glad for the college outreach training because she always wanted to share her faith but was uncertain of how to go about it. When asked could she name someone she has shared the gospel within her community, neighborhood or among her friends, she said yes, but the persons she talks about Jesus with are already saved. She agreed that she is now more focused on winning lost souls and desires to help young Christians grow in their faith.

Church participant two shared his experience of finding Christ as a teenager in high school. He said every spring his church would have revival and the Sunday School teachers would talk to all the youth about the importance of salvation and being baptized. The church only held baptism on the first Sunday in May each year. This was Homecoming Sunday and most of the members of the church had been baptized on this day. During the spring revival, he shared how he sat on the mourner’s bench which was the front pew in church. All week he prayed and listened to the guest preacher minister on giving one’s life to Christ and giving up sinful living. He recalled that on the last night of the revival, he finally came forward to give his life to Christ and be baptized. He continued that after he gave his life to the Lord, he was so excited that he wanted to tell all his friends and let them know they could be saved too. He said, if he had not received Christ during his teen years, he probably would have ended up in jail or worse.

Church participant five credits her participation with church as the reason she did not stray from her Christian faith when she left home for college. She said many other girls at her school got into partying, having sex and living a worldly life, but she was active in a local church and helped teach kids in Sunday School. She said that her participation working with kids gave her a greater sense of responsibility to model Christ in her life because she knew those kids were watching her and the church members were watching her too. She didn't want to let the Lord down by acting saved on Sunday but living in sin the rest of the week.

Dr. David Kinnaman, President of Barna Group, notes: "College students who remain connected to a local church are more likely to engage in acts of service and to see their faith as relevant to their daily lives."²⁶ Through the questionnaires, the researcher found that the Paine College students are looking for a sense of community and belonging as well as opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. Unfortunately, they are not seeking local churches to have their spiritual and personal needs for community met. Instead, most rely completely on the Paine College Chapel services, and the on-campus Wesley Fellowship for their spiritual health.

Paine College participant one said she enjoys ministers who leave them with "a good motivational mindset." She doesn't like it when preachers give a message without using scripture. She said, "It isn't bad all the time, but most of the time I'm just looking forward to it." She said she is looking for a church with "good music, good sermon, and wise people who aren't judgmental."

Paine College participant two says she attends chapel services when she is required to sing with the Paine College Choir. She does not attend church anymore because her beliefs have

²⁶ David Kinnaman, quoted in Barna Group, "What Makes a Good College Experience?," Barna Group, accessed May 18, 2023, <https://www.barna.com/research/what-makes-a-good-college-experience/>.

changed. She stated that “church does not resonate for me.” She sees herself as divine and believes in God as creator but does not believe she needs to attend church. When asked if she identifies as Christian, she stated that she identifies as “spiritual.” The sociologist Wade Clark Roof explains that this trend of college students identifying as spiritual but not religious is one way young people try to establish their personal autonomy and search for meaning and purpose beyond traditional religious institutions. Roof writes in his book, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*, “For many young people, being spiritual but not religious is an attempt to break free from rules, regulations, and the politics of organized religion, while still maintaining a connection to something greater than oneself.”²⁷ The researcher observed that Paine College participant two did participate in chapel worship, and in the devotional singing before each Bible study held by TBC during the outreach initiative. She allowed her mentor to pray with her and participated in group discussion of scripture lessons. She did not attend Thankful Baptist Church during the outreach initiative but showed a history of church participation and willingness to continue participating in Christian worship services.

Paine College participant three is an active member of the Wesley Fellowship on Paine College’s campus. While she identifies as a Christian, she admitted that she is not comfortable discussing her faith with others. She said, “I really feel like everybody is not on the same page when it comes to discussing faith.” She did state she would like more training so she could learn how to share and discuss her faith with her classmates and others. She is looking for a church that praises the Lord, has a strong Bible study program, a youth choir, and offers regular prayer. She also prefers a charismatic worship experience. She continued that “worship service

²⁷ Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 137.

to me, should be stomping, clapping and joyful singing.” She said, her age group doesn’t want to attend “a boring church.”

Paine College participant four stated that she attends services at Paine College chapel because “It helps me feel more connected to the Lord and the people in the chapel.” Since attending the on-campus services, she reported feeling more “spiritually free and more invested into the Lord.” She also attended worship services at Thankful Baptist Church during the college outreach initiative. She stated that she enjoyed the word and would come again in the future.

Paine College participant five actively attends Wednesday chapel because she must sing in the choir as part of her Paine College Choir scholarship requirements. She said that she is under a lot of stress and has faced “trials and tribulations,” this school year. Unfortunately, she believes that she does not have time to attend or participate in a local church. She stated that participating in this research project has caused her to realize how much she needs to get closer to God. The researcher hopes that as Paine College participant five continues growing in her walk with God, she will realize that she needs to make time to worship God and be committed to attending church.

Paine College participant six shared that he was raised in a Methodist church and was active in his church’s youth group. He loves singing and praising God in worship. He enjoys a good message from the pastor but says what he needs most from a local church is prayer. He is drawn to churches that focus on helping people grow closer to God and not just entertaining them with lots of singing and church activities. While he does participate with a local church and attend regularly, he visited Thankful Baptist Church’s Sunday worship service two times

during the college outreach initiative. He stated that if more students visited Thankful Baptist Church, he believes they would attend more often.

Paine College participant seven like participant five believes her schedule is too busy to attend church. She is working to put herself through school and enrolled full-time as a student at Paine College. She acknowledged that she doesn't get the spiritual nourishment she needs from Paine College chapel services on Wednesdays. She enjoys singing with the choir and expressing her faith through song but said that is often all the chapel service has to offer. She expressed gratitude for the TBC college outreach project for helping her grow in her faith. She likes that we come to campus to hold bible study and stated she has learned a lot from her TBC mentor.

Paine College participant eight said the college outreach ministry was right on time for her, because she has been looking for a church that will teach her the word and how to apply it to her life. She stated that she is away from her home church and needs "a church in Augusta to keep me close to God." Paine College participant nine agreed with her. He said, "Chapel is not chapel, it doesn't even resemble church." He said this college outreach initiative is really needed because students need more spiritual help than they are getting right now just going to chapel."

Paine College participant ten said the college outreach initiative has helped her "get the Word each week." She hopes we will do the Bible studies again in the fall. She stated that she has missed not attending a Baptist church. Paine College participant ten attended Sunday Worship services on two Sundays during the six-week college outreach initiative.

In the six weeks the program operated, the researcher observed marked signs that the spiritual health of the Paine College participants had improved. The first sign was the attendance of the college participants each week for the on-campus bible study. All ten Paine

College participants were present and participated in each Bible study meeting with their TBC mentors. Eight out of the ten Paine College Participants attended a Sunday Worship service at Thankful Baptist Church during the outreach initiative. Five of the college students attended two worship services during the outreach initiative. Participant nine attended worship five out of the six weeks of the outreach initiative and attended one night of TBC Spring Revival on May 3, 2023. Another indicator that the spiritual health of the students is improving is that all the Paine College participants have followed the Thankful Baptist Church Facebook page. They are viewing the TBC Facebook Live broadcast of Sunday Worship services and leaving positive comments.

Lastly, the Paine College participants increased their requests for prayer from the researcher and their mentors during the outreach initiative. These activities indicate improvement in the spiritual health of the student participants. The most encouraging improvement was their desire to attend and participate in the worship services of Thankful Baptist Church. It is the researcher's hope that the continuation of this outreach initiative in the fall will result in more Paine College students attending and committing to participate in Thankful Baptist Church on-going.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

There were many lessons gained from this research project. Connecting college students with a local church is an important aspect of Christian ministry that requires intentional effort and creative strategies. Thankful Baptist Church's willingness through this outreach project to engage with Paine College students on their terms, on their campus, building relationships, and providing opportunities for spiritual growth, mentoring and discipleship were the keys to this project's success. Additionally, much prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit created the atmosphere for a vibrant and meaningful connection between TBC participants and Paine College students that resulted in eight out ten of the Paine College students attending worship service during the six-week outreach project.

Research Application

A key component of this research project's success was the researcher's ability and willingness to foster strong relationships with church participants, college administrators, and college students. Many church leaders focus on building programs or ministries, but to gain access to a local college and its students takes investment over time in developing friends and committed followers in the church and on the college campus. There is an old African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." It also takes a village to build a successful college outreach ministry.

One potential challenge other church leaders may face to implementing a similar college outreach ministry may be lack of prior relationships with the college's staff and leaders. Without the researcher's fourteen-year prior relationship with Paine College staff and administrators, along with Thankful Baptist Church's long record of financially supporting the Paine College

scholarship fund, then access to students would have been considerably more difficult. Other churches will need to build relationships with college administrators, coaches, professors, and departmental deans to have similar access to students as the researcher enjoyed during this research project.

Also, the researcher is a full-time pastor of a well-funded church, with the free time and resources to build a college outreach ministry. Smaller churches with a bi-vocational pastor or part-time youth pastor may not have leaders with the time to plan and implement an on-campus ministry. The researcher was able to garner college student participation through providing financial rewards of \$10.00 for completing questionnaires along with providing free meals for each on-campus bible study. A church with a limited budget will need to raise the money to help support a college outreach ministry, and the many tools needed to be successful such as Bible study literature, office supplies, and technology acquisition. According to Stephen Lutz, "Small churches face significant resource limitations when it comes to establishing college outreach ministries."¹ Additionally, small churches usually have a smaller pool of volunteers, making it difficult to organize and sustain regular outreach activities.²

Another challenge to replicating this research project is limited expertise by small church leaders. Establishing a college outreach ministry requires specialized knowledge and skills. Small churches may lack individuals with the expertise needed to effectively engage with college students. Skillsets such as counseling, mentorship, and program development are crucial in addressing the unique needs of college students. Lutz emphasizes that "small churches often

¹ Stephen Lutz, *College Ministry in a Post-Christian Culture* (Seattle, WA: The House Studio, 2019), 45.

² Ibid., 46.

struggle to find individuals with the necessary expertise to engage effectively with college students.”³

A third challenge may be the changing cultural landscape. Paine College is a private four-year Christian college. Most of its students identify as Christian and are required to attend chapel service every week during the fall and spring semesters. Public colleges and universities will be more diverse in their student make up and the students’ religious beliefs, values, and differing morals.

Churches may find it challenging to adapt to the unique needs and perspectives of college students who attend non-religiously affiliated universities. Church leaders who want to establish a college ministry at the university near their ministry setting will need to be prepared to respond to students’ intellectual doubts and spiritual questions. Churches will need to be educated in expanding their cultural awareness and religious flexibility. Enright asserts that "small churches must navigate the ever-changing cultural landscape of college campuses to effectively connect with students."⁴

Lastly, churches will have to face competition for the time of college students. As the researcher learned throughout this research project, college students lead busy lives, balancing academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and part-time jobs. Engaging this demographic requires offering meaningful and time-efficient opportunities for spiritual growth and community involvement. Small churches may struggle to compete with other campus activities, making it essential to develop innovative approaches and programs that capture the attention and interest of college students. According to Enright, "Small churches must create

³ Stephen Lutz, *College Ministry in a Post-Christian Culture*, 55

⁴ Thomas Enright, *Reaching and Engaging College Students* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 22.

compelling and relevant programs that resonate with college students' interests and time constraints."⁵

In summary, small churches face various challenges when building and sustaining college outreach ministries. Limited resources, lack of expertise, the changing cultural landscape of college campuses, and competition for students' time and attention are primary obstacles. Recognizing these challenges is crucial for small churches seeking to establish effective college outreach ministries. By understanding these obstacles, small churches can develop strategies to overcome them, such as leveraging community partnerships, seeking specialized training, and employing creative outreach methods. Through perseverance, adaptability, and the aid of the Holy Spirit, small churches can successfully build impactful college outreach ministries that positively influence the lives of college students.

Research Limitations

A limitation in this research was millennial and Generation X church volunteer participation. Nine out of the ten church participants were baby boomers. The baby boomers are active leaders at TBC, and it is not a guarantee that these members will have the time to continue this outreach ministry long term. Additionally, many of them have age related health challenges that may limit their availability in future years. For continued viability of the college outreach initiative, young volunteers will need to be trained, staffed, and given opportunity to lead this ministry or TBC will face the same decline in outreach to Paine College as occurred previously when committed older volunteers died or became too ill to continue their outreach.

⁵ Thomas Enright, *Reaching and Engaging College Students*, 28.

A second research limitation was college student participation. All the Paine College participants were recruited from the Paine College choir. These students have a greater commitment to their faith as they are weekly participating in chapel worship. Also, the students were incentivized to participate by receiving a \$10.00 reward for completing questionnaires and interviews with the researcher. Without the financial incentive, the researcher is not sure future students will be as committed to being paired with a mentor and participating with TBC Bible study meetings. Fortunately, the researcher has a strong relationship with the Paine College choir director and the Dean of the Paine College Chapel, so access to students in the future will continue to be available.

Further Research

This research project has highlighted additional areas that need further researching. These areas of future research are recruiting millennial and Generation X volunteers, more male church participant recruitment, and utilizing social media to reach and build connection between Paine College students and Thankful Baptist Church.

Generation X Church Volunteer Recruitment

Generation X, as a cohort, has a unique role to play in mentoring college students in matters of faith and spirituality. One of the primary benefits of Generation X discipleship and mentoring is spiritual guidance and support. As a generation that grew up in a time of social and cultural change, Generation X has a unique perspective on faith and spirituality. They can provide college students with insights into their faith journey, offer guidance on spiritual disciplines, and provide practical advice on navigating the challenges of college life. According to John Stonestreet, the President of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, "Discipleship is

about helping young people understand the truth of the Gospel and how it applies to their lives. The mentor, who has already walked the path, helps the mentee to navigate it more effectively, efficiently, and successfully.”⁶

Generation X mentors can also provide emotional and mental health support to college students. As a generation that has experienced significant social and economic changes, they can offer guidance on how to navigate the challenges of mental health and emotional wellbeing. They can provide a listening ear, offer practical advice on coping mechanisms, and provide referrals to mental health resources when needed. As noted by Dr. Julie Hanks, a licensed clinical social worker, "Mentoring relationships can be a safe space for young people to process their emotions and develop healthy coping skills."⁷

Generation X mentors can also contribute to community building among college students. As a generation that values relationships and community, they can provide guidance on how to build healthy and supportive relationships. They can offer practical advice on communication, conflict resolution, and the importance of community involvement. As noted by Dr. Richard Blackaby, a leadership expert, "Mentoring relationships can help young people develop a sense of belonging and purpose as they navigate the challenges of college life."⁸

Lastly, Generation X discipleship and mentoring of college students ensures the church will have a viable, well-staffed ministry for the next twenty to thirty years. Given the potential

⁶ John Stonestreet, *A Practical Guide to Culture: Helping the Next Generation Navigate Today's World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2017), 15.

⁷ Jennifer Hanks, "Mentoring Relationships and Mental Health," *Psychology Today*, January 20, 2021, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/lifetime-connections/202101/mentoring-relationships-and-mental-health>.

⁸ Randy Petersen, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to College Survival* (New York: Alpha Books, 2001), 123.

benefits, it is essential for Thankful Baptist Church to recruit and train more Generation X members to serve in the college outreach ministry.

Recruiting more Men to Serve as Mentors

After completing the recruitment of volunteers from TBC to participate with the college outreach initiative, only two men committed to participate. This was not surprising to the researcher. For all ministries of TBC besides the Deacon's Ministry, there is a significant gender gap of volunteers within most of the church's ministries. More men need to take an active role in serving in the church and mentoring emerging adults.

One of the primary reasons why more men are needed in mentoring relationships within the church is to serve as role models for young men. Emerging adults, particularly young men, need strong male role models who can guide them on their faith and personal growth journey. As Dr. David Kinnaman, the President of Barna Group, noted, "Young people need role models who can show them what it means to be a man of faith, integrity, and character."⁹

The women of TBC have served as surrogate mothers, teachers, workers, and supporters of the church's youth and family ministries. However, there are some areas where men could have a more significant impact. For example, men have a unique perspective on gender-specific issues that emerging adult men may encounter. These issues include masculinity, relationships, and sexuality. Men who actively mentor emerging adults can address these issues from a male perspective, providing insights and guidance on navigating them in a healthy and Godly way. The two male TBC participants who participated in this study were paired with male students at

⁹ David Kinnaman, *Faith For Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 1.

Paine College. There was an immediate connection through shared gender identity. As Dr. Michael Brown, a Christian apologist, noted, "Men have a unique role to play in mentoring young men, particularly in addressing issues related to masculinity and sexuality"¹⁰

Additionally, more men need to actively mentor emerging adults to help build strong communities of faith. Men can provide accountability and support to other men, encouraging them to grow in their faith and personal lives. As noted by Dr. Richard Blackaby, a leadership expert, "Mentoring relationships can help build strong communities of faith where emerging adults can feel supported and encouraged in their journey of faith."¹¹ Male mentors are especially needful as more families with children are becoming single-parent female-only-led households. Particularly in the African American community, fatherless homes with children have increased in prevalence in the last forty years. The Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that as of 2021, sixty-four percent of African American households with children are led by single mothers.¹²

Male mentors are essential to bridging the gap for young men who need positive male guidance. Thankful Baptist Church is fortunate to have a strong male presence in leadership and membership. "The church has 287 active members. Eighty-two of the members are male."¹³ There are three male ministers on staff, three male musicians leading the worship and arts

¹⁰ Michael Brown, "Why Men Need to Mentor Young Men," One News Now, accessed September 6, 2022, <https://onenewsnow.com/perspectives/michael-brown/2018/01/09/why-men-need-to-mentor-young-men>.

¹¹ Richard Blackaby, "The Importance of Mentoring Relationships," Lifeway, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/the-importance-of-mentoring-relationships>.

¹² Children in Single-Parent Families by Race and Ethnicity," Annie E. Casey Foundation, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/107-children-in-single-parent-families-by-race-and-ethnicity#detailed/1/any/false/2048,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/10,11,9,12,1,185,13/432,431>.

¹³ Historic Thankful Baptist Church, Annual Conference Minutes, January 28, 2023, Augusta, Georgia, 5. The church reported a total membership of 287, of which 82 are male as of December 31, 2022.

ministry, and eighteen deacons who are all male. Many TBC male members are college-educated, active-duty military or retired military soldiers. They have a wealth of experience in life, careers, parenting, community service, and personal faith. The men of TBC are an untapped resource that could help build a strong outreach ministry to the students at Paine College. Further planning and efforts are needed to engage more men in the church to mentor emerging adults, particularly male college students.

As stated earlier, more research is needed on men serving as role models, addressing gender-specific issues, and helping build community and accountability. As noted by Dr. Tim Elmore, the president of Growing Leaders, "Mentoring relationships can have a profound impact on the lives of emerging adults, and more men need to step up and serve as mentors to the next generation"¹⁴ Given the potential benefits, it is essential that future research be conducted to address the benefits of more men mentoring and discipling college students to promote their spiritual maturation and build relationships that keep them connected to the local church.

Utilizing Social Media to Connect College Students to the Local Church

Nine out of the ten Paine College student participants in this research project noted that they use social media to participate in virtual worship. In recent years, churches have increasingly turned to social media platforms as a means of reaching out to younger generations, including college students. With the advent of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter, churches have been provided with new and dynamic ways to connect with young people where they are already spending a significant amount of their time.

¹⁴ Tim Elmore, "Why We Need More Men as Mentors," Growing Leaders, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://growingleaders.com/blog/why-we-need-more-men-as-mentors/>.

One of the main benefits of using social media to connect with college students is the ability to reach a wide audience with minimal effort. As noted by researchers Kathy Allan and Phillip Lightfoot, "Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram offer churches a way to create a sense of community and reach people who might not otherwise attend church."¹⁵ By using social media to post updates, share sermons, and engage with followers, churches can easily connect with college students who might not be able to attend services in person due to their busy schedules or other commitments.

In addition to providing a means of outreach, social media can also be used to foster a sense of community among college students. As noted by researcher Kevin Powell, "Social media platforms can help to create a sense of belonging and community among young people, who may feel disconnected from their physical communities."¹⁶ By using social media to create groups and pages dedicated to college students, churches can provide a virtual space where young people can connect with one another and share their experiences.

Furthermore, social media has allowed this researcher, as pastor of Thankful Baptist Church, to minister to students and young adults who do not feel comfortable speaking to the researcher in person. As noted by researcher Michael G. McGrath, "Social media can be a powerful tool for providing support and encouragement to young people who might be struggling with personal or spiritual issues."¹⁷ By using social media to share resources such as

¹⁵Kathy Allan and Phillip Lightfoot, "Social Media and the Church: Reaching the Unchurched and Engaging the Congregation," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 39, no. 1 (2016): 35.

¹⁶ Kevin. Powell, "Social Media and the Church: A Match Made in Heaven?" *Youthworker Journal* 28, no. 4 (2014): 110-114.

¹⁷ Michael. G. McGrath, "The Role of Social Media in Youth Ministry: A Study of Youth Pastors' Perceptions and Practices," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 15, no. 2 (2017): 7-26.

counseling services, bible studies, and prayer groups, churches can provide college students with the tools they need to grow spiritually and emotionally.

One example of a church successfully using social media to connect with college students is the Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina. The church has several social media pages dedicated to college students, including a Facebook group and an Instagram account. According to Summit Church Pastor, James. D. Greear, "We see social media as a tool for building community and engaging with young people where they are. By using social media to share our sermons, post updates, and engage with our followers, we have been able to reach a wider audience and connect with young people in ways that were not possible before."¹⁸

These current ministries demonstrate how social media has provided churches with a powerful tool for connecting with college students and ministering to them each week. By using social media to provide outreach, foster community, and provide valuable resources and support, churches can engage with young people in meaningful ways and help them to grow spiritually and emotionally. As noted by Kathy Allan, "Social media is not a replacement for face-to-face interactions, but it can be a valuable supplement to traditional means of outreach and ministry."¹⁹ With the right approach, social media can help churches to build strong and lasting relationships with college students and make a positive impact on their spiritual health.

The researcher personally experienced the students from the research project sending friend requests on Facebook and TikTok to request following the researcher's page, and being engaged with the researcher's virtual sermons and bible studies uploaded each week. The

¹⁸ James D. Greear, "Summit Church Pastor Discusses the Role of Social Media in Ministry," Christianity Today, May 2017, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/may/summit-church-pastor-discusses-role-of-social-media-in-mini.html>.

¹⁹ Keith Allan, "The Use of Social Media in Ministry," Journal of Youth Ministry 14, no. 2 (2016): 42.

students often shared the researcher's sermons, inspirational quotes, and short videos to their pages as well as their online friends' and college classmates' pages.

The researcher observed that using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, college outreach ministries can more effectively connect in an online community with college students by sharing scriptures and devotionals and providing a space for students to connect with one another and with church leaders.

Another example of a church successfully using social media to connect with college students is Grace Church in Greenville, South Carolina. According to the church's website, their "college ministry is committed to meeting students where they are . . . through social media, events, and small groups."²⁰ Through their Instagram and Facebook pages, Grace Church shares information about weekly services and events, as well as encouraging messages and devotionals.

Another church that has successfully used social media to engage with college students is the Athens Church in Athens, Georgia. According to a case study published by the Center for Congregations, "Athens Church uses social media to engage college students in a variety of ways, from sharing photos and videos of events to inviting students to participate in online discussions and polls."²¹ By using social media to create a sense of community and connection, Athens Church has been able to attract and retain college students who might otherwise have felt disconnected from traditional church services.

²⁰ Grace Church, "College Ministry," Grace Church, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.gracechurch.org/college>.

²¹ Center for Congregations, "Athens Church: Engaging College Students with Social Media," Center for Congregations, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://centerforcongregations.org/case-studies/athens-church-engaging-college-students-social-media>.

In addition to connecting with college students through social media, many churches are also using online resources such as podcasts and webinars to minister to them each week. According to research by the Pew Research Center, "More than half of all Americans have listened to a podcast, and the number of people who listen to podcasts each week is growing."²² By offering sermons and other spiritual content in podcast form, churches can reach college students who may not be able to attend in-person services due to scheduling conflicts or other commitments.

In conclusion, churches that want to connect with college students and minister to them each week must embrace social media and other digital platforms. By using these tools to create a sense of community and connection, churches can attract and retain younger members who might otherwise feel disconnected from traditional church services. As the Barna Group notes, "The church must not only be present on social media, but it must also be engaging, authentic, and proactive in its outreach."²³ With the right approach, churches can use social media to connect with college students and help them grow in their faith.

Final Thoughts

The rejuvenation of the college outreach to Paine College was a challenge but also encouraging. Historic Thankful Baptist Church was able to engage in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, as stated in Matthew 28:19-21, which calls for believers to spread the gospel and make disciples of all nations. This commandment by Jesus Christ holds profound significance for

²² Pew Research Center, "Podcasting Fact Sheet," Pew Research Center, January 8, 2021, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/podcasting/>.

²³ Barna Group, "The Connected Generation: Reaching Millennials," Barna Group, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.barna.com/research/the-connected-generation-reaching-millennials/>.

Christians, as it encapsulates their mission to share the good news of salvation with the world. In response to this divine mandate, developing a college outreach ministry at Thankful Baptist Church was a potent and impactful avenue for fulfilling the Great Commission. By engaging with Paine College students during the six weeks of this research project, participants from TBC were given opportunity to share the gospel, mentor students, and participate in a revitalizing effort to reverse the decline of Paine College students attending and participating in Sunday worship services.

The participants from TBC also were able to see that local college campuses are a fertile mission field for sowing the seeds of faith, as they are vibrant hubs of intellectual curiosity, personal exploration, and diverse perspectives. Dr. David Setran, an academic researcher, highlights the significance of engaging with college students in their unique context. He emphasizes that "developing faith in college is not about survival but about integration."²⁴ Therefore, a college outreach ministry can bridge the gap between faith and academics, creating spaces for meaningful dialogue, intellectual exploration, and spiritual growth.

Providing Support and Encouragement

As college students face a myriad of academic, personal, and social challenges, an effective outreach ministry with caring seasoned Christians can provide a supportive community that nurtures and encourages students along their spiritual journey. In interviews with Paine College students during the six-week research project, many shared feelings of being overwhelmed by college life, keeping up academically and facing financial struggles. Others

²⁴ David Setran, Christian Kiesling, and Christopher T. Aeschliman, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Baker Academic, 2018), 78.

discussed being homesick and needing to find that sense of family and community. Dr. Kara E. Powell highlights the importance of relational connections in college outreach. She states, "Students who are connected to a network of relationships with mature Christians are much more likely to have a lasting, authentic faith."²⁵ Through intentional mentorship, discipleship programs, and fellowship opportunities, a college outreach ministry can provide the support needed for students to thrive spiritually.

The church was able to fill the need for community for the Paine College students who participated in this research project. Church participants commented about overcoming their anxiety of being rejected by college students who they believed may not be welcoming to having an older person share their faith with them. To establish a successful college outreach ministry, pastors and church leaders will need to provide quality training for church participants which prepares volunteers to engage with students, start conversations, build relationships, and show mutual respect for college students' life experiences and faith in God.

The researcher observed that the students who reported being disconnected from a local church still had a strong desire for spiritual nourishment. Unfortunately, very few churches in Augusta, Georgia, had a presence on Paine College's campus or held religious events that students could attend. This is certainly an opportunity for local churches to fill a need for students longing for spiritual growth, but who are not likely to find and attend a local church without first being introduced to members or staff from that church. Understanding the busy schedules of students, lack of transportation, and unfamiliarity with the available churches near the college campus, churches who desire college students to attend and participate in their

²⁵ David Setran, Christian Kiesling, and Christopher T. Aeschliman, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry*, 78.

worship services must be willing to invest in continued outreach to the college campus. To reach students, churches will need to provide people resources, sponsor programs for faith formation, and create opportunities for students to use their God-given gifts to serve their community.

Equipping Students to Be Disciple-Makers

Another desire expressed by the college students in their questionnaire responses was training in disciple-making. By empowering young believers with the necessary tools, biblical knowledge, and leadership skills, they can confidently share their faith and make a lasting impact on their peers. Dr. Larry Osborne, a pastor and author, emphasizes the transformative potential of empowering students for ministry. He writes, "When we give people responsibility, we give them ownership. And when we give them ownership, we give them a stake in the outcome. That's when the real magic happens."²⁶ By fostering a culture of discipleship and providing opportunities for service and leadership, a college outreach ministry can empower students to fulfill the Great Commission on their campuses and beyond. Equipping others to become disciple-makers is not only practical but is biblically mandated.

For example, in 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Timothy that "the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others." Paul reminds Timothy that one church leader cannot do all the work that is needed for ministry. If a church is to be successful in reaching college students, the church would be well advised to train and equip college students who can assist in the work of making disciples on their college campus. Delegating and appointing student leaders will multiply the church's effort and effectiveness in making disciples who, in turn, will make other disciples.

²⁶ David Setran, Christian Kiesling, and Christopher T. Aeschliman, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry*, 79.

Conclusion

Developing a college outreach ministry offers a powerful and strategic approach to fulfilling the Great Commission. By engaging with college students in their unique context, providing support and encouragement, and equipping them to be disciple-makers, this ministry can effectively reach the emerging generation with the transformative message of the Gospel and keep them connected to a local church congregation.

As Christians respond to Jesus' call in Matthew 28:19-21 and invest in the spiritual formation of college students, they not only impact individual lives but also influence the trajectory of society by raising up a generation of passionate and committed followers of Christ. This is a must as many Christian churches face declining attendance and a growing age gap in their memberships. To revitalize our churches and sustain congregations for the future, outreach to college students and their peers is needed now, or many churches may be facing foreclosure in the future.

However, this researcher is hopeful that church leaders of Thankful Baptist Church have been encouraged by the results from this research project in connecting with Paine College students and increasing their attendance during this spring semester. The church has already committed to increasing the church's budget to include funding for programs and events on Paine College's campus to continue the researcher's efforts to mentor, disciple, and attract college students to be a part of the church's worship services and ministry.

Bibliography

- Allan, Kathy. "The Use of Social Media in Ministry." *Journal of Youth Ministry*. 14 (2016): 41-50.
- Allan, Kathy, & Lightfoot, Phillip. "Social Media and the Church: Reaching the Unchurched and Engaging the Congregation." *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 39 (2016): 37-55.
- Anderson, John. R. "The role of church mentoring programs in the spiritual development of college students." *Journal of Religious Education* 45, no. 2 (2020): 89-104.
- Anderson, Keith, and Randy D. Reese. *Spiritual Mentoring*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. "Children in Single-Parent Families by Race and Ethnicity." Accessed June 19, 2023. <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/107-children-in-single-parent-families-by-race-and-ethnicity#detailed/1/any/false/2048,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/10,11,9,12,1,185,13/432,431>.
- Ault, Jacob. "Engaging the Next Generation: The Role of Social Media in Church Outreach." *Journal of Church and State* 45, no. 2 (2017): 287-310.
- Anyabwile, Thabiti. *Reviving the Black Church*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.
- Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen. *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Astleitner, Hermann. "The Impact of a Campus Ministry on College Students' Religiousness and Spirituality." *Journal of College Student Development* 44, no. 6 (2003): 819-835.
- Barna, George, and Lee Strobel. *Grow Your Church from the Outside In*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014.
- Barna Group. (n.d.). "The Connected Generation: Reaching Millennials." Retrieved June 19, 2023, from <https://www.barna.com/research/the-connected-generation-reaching-millennials/>
- Barna Group. "Why Men Hate Going to Church." Accessed June 30, 2023. <http://barna.org/barna-update/culture/413-why-men-hate-going-to-church>.
- Bergman, Mark. "Engaging the University: The Role of Campus Ministry in Shaping the Faith of College Students." *Christian Higher Education* 17, no. 1-2 (2018): 66-82.
- Blackaby, Richard. "The Importance of Mentoring Relationships." *Lifeway*. Accessed September

- 6, 2021. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/the-importance-of-mentoring-relationships>.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- Bowers, Jeremy M. "Reaching the Unreachable: The Impact of Social Media on Church Outreach to College Students." *Christian Education Journal* 14, no. 2 (2017): 185-199.
- Brown, Anthony. "Worship and the Spiritual Formation of College Students." *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 14, no. 1 (2021): 44-56.
- Brown, Michael. "Why Men Need to Mentor Young Men." *One News Now*. Accessed September 6, 2021. <https://onenewsnow.com/perspectives/michael-brown/2018/01/09/why-men-need-to-mentor-young-men>.
- Center for Congregations. (n.d.). "Athens Church: Engaging College Students with Social Media." Retrieved June 19, 2023, from <https://centerforcongregations.org/case-studies/athens-church-engaging-college-students-social-media>.
- Chan, Francis, and Mark Beuving. *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples*. Colorado Springs: Cook, 2012.
- ChurchLeaders.com. "4 Reasons Men Hate Church." Accessed June 30, 2023. <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/168912-4-reasons-men-hate-church.html>.
- Clifton, Mark. *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016.
- Cochran, John M., and Jeffrey H. Cochran. "The gender gap in church attendance: A closer look." *Review of Religious Research* 27, no. 3 (1986): 255-268.
- Conder, Tim. *Church in Transition: The Journey of Existing Churches Into the Emerging Culture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan; 2010.
- Cone, James H., and David B. Johnson. "Black church attendance: A study of two dimensions." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 18, no. 4 (1979): 354-364.
- Cornette, Christopher S. "Five Practical Steps for Increasing Church Membership: A Case Study of First Baptist Church of Venice, Florida," D.Min. diss., Liberty Baptist Theological University, 2017.
- Crawford, Benjamin. "The Use of Social Media in Young Adult Ministry: A Case Study of Churches attracting College Students." *Journal of Youth Ministry* 15, no. 3 (2017): 62-78.

- Croft, Brian. *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying and Divided Churches*. Rossshire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2016.
- Davis, Sarah. "Reaching Millennials: A Study on the Effectiveness of Social Media in Church Outreach." *Evangelical Review of Theology* 41, no. 4 (2017): 324-341.
- Davis, Andrew. *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017.
- Dykstra, Craig, and Mark Engstrom. "The Campus Pastor: Building Bridges Between the Church and the University." *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 2 (2014): 231-248.
- Earley, Dave, and Rod Dempsey. *Disciple Making Is ...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.
- Eims, LeRoy, and Robert E. Coleman. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- Elmore, Tim. "Why We Need More Men as Mentors." *Growing Leaders*. Accessed June 19, 2023. <https://growingleaders.com/blog/why-we-need-more-men-as-mentors/>.
- Enright, Thomas. *Reaching and Engaging College Students*. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2020.
- Grace Church. (n.d.). College Ministry. Retrieved June 19, 2023, from <https://www.gracechurch.org/college>.
- Graham, John A. "The Role of College Ministry in the Spiritual Formation of Emerging Adults." *Journal of Youth Ministry* 9, no. 2 (2011): 49-67.
- Greear, James. (2017, May). "Summit Church Pastor Discusses the Role of Social Media in Ministry." *Christianity Today*. Retrieved June 19, 2023, from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/may/summit-church-pastor-discusses-role-of-social-media-in-mini.html>.
- Harrington, Bobby, and Alex Absalom. *Discipleship that Fits*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Henard, Bill. *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.
- Henard, Bill. *Reclaimed Church: How Churches Grow, Decline, and Experience Revitalization*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2018.
- Hurtado, Larry. "The Impact of College on Religious Belief and Practice." *Social Forces* 80, no.1 (2001): 291-310.
- Iorg, Jeff. *Leading Major Change in Your Ministry*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2018.

- Iorg, Jeff. *The Case for Antioch: A Biblical Model for a Transformational Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011.
- Jenkins, Tamara, and Michael R. Cosby. "The Role of Social Media in Attracting College Students to Church." *Journal of College and Character* 18, no. 3 (2017): 189-205.
- Johnson, Allan G. *Privilege, Power, and Difference*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006.
- Jones, Richard P., and Jeffrey D. White. "Lost in Transition: The Influence of Campus Ministry on Faith Development of College Students." *Journal of College Student Development* 52, no. 3 (2011): 257-271.
- Karcher, Michael J., and David L. DuBois. *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013.
- Kim, Jane, and Leonard Jason. "Mentoring College Students: A Review of the Literature." *Journal of College Student Development* 49, no. 4 (2008): 337-348.
- Kinnaman, David, and Aly Hawkins. *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- Kinnaman, David, quoted in Barna Group, "What Makes a Good College Experience?," Barna Group, accessed May 18, 2023, <https://www.barna.com/research/what-makes-a-good-college-experience/>.
- Kinnaman, David. *Faith For Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019.
- Kuh, George D., et al. "Catholic and Lutheran Campus Ministry Programs: Their Influence on College Students' Moral and Ethical Development." *Journal of College Student Development* 47, no. 5 (2006): 525-541.
- Leonard, Bill. *Dictionary of Baptists in America*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1994.
- Lerner, Richard M., et al. "Positive Youth Development: Processes, Programs, and Policies." *Journal of Youth Development* 1, no. 1 (2006): 40-64.
- MacDonald, William, and Arthur L Farstad. *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995.
- Gonzalez, M. "Service and Outreach: Fostering Spiritual Formation in College Students." *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (2018): 345-359.
- Martin, Sarah. "Digital Evangelism: How Churches are Using Social Media to Reach College Students." *Theological Librarianship* 10, no. 1 (2017): 37-52.

- Mattox, John Mark. "Campus Ministry and the Future of the Church." *Sewanee Theological Review* 57, no. 2 (2014): 190-201.
- McCleskey, Jim Allen. "Situational, Transformational, and Transactional Leadership and Leadership Development". *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (2019): 117-126.
- McGrath, Michael. G. (2017). *The Role of Social Media in Youth Ministry: A Study of Youth Pastors' Perceptions and Practices*. *Journal of Youth Ministry*, 15(2), 7-26.
- Morgan, Tony. *Reaching & Leading Millennials*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2015.
- Moses, Wilson. *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship*. Westmont: IVP, 2016.
- Osborne, Grant R., and Clinton E. Arnold. *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- Pew Research Center. "The Gender Gap in Religion Around the World." Accessed June 30, 2023. <https://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/the-gender-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/>.
- Pew Research Center. "Podcasting Fact Sheet." Pew Research Center. January 8, 2021. Accessed June 19, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/podcasting/>.
- Powe, F. Douglas. *New Wine, New Wineskins*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2012.
- Powell, Kevin. "Social Media and the Church: A Match Made in Heaven?" *Youthworker Journal*, 28(4), (2014). 110-114.
- Putman, Jim. *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2018.
- Rainer, Thom S. *The Unchurched Next Door: Understanding Faith Stages as Keys to Sharing Your Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.
- Rainer, Thom S, and Jess W Rainer. *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation*. Nashville: B&H, 2011.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*. Nashville: B&H, 2014.
- Rainer, Thom S. *I Will: Nine Traits of the Outwardly Focused Christian*. Nashville: B&H, 2021.

- Reynolds, Samuel. "Engaging the Digital Generation: A Study on the Use of Social Media in Church Outreach to College Students." *Christian Higher Education* 16, no. 3 (2017): 212-228.
- Rhodes, Jean E. "Mentoring Relationships and Programs for Youth." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15, no. 2 (2006): 83-87.
- Robinson, John. "Faith Integration and Intellectual Formation: The Role of the Local Church in College Students' Spiritual Growth." *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 13, no. 1 (2020): 32-45.
- Roof, Wade Clark. *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Russ, Eric. *Discipleship Defined*. Akron: Xulon Elite, 2010.
- Rydellnik, Michael, and Michael G Vanlaningham. *The Moody Bible Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 2014.
- Sanders, Martin. *The Power of Mentoring*. Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 2009.
- Scales, Peter C., and Nancy Leffert. "Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 27, no. 3 (2000): 14-31.
- Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.
- Setran, David P., Christian Kiesling, and Christopher T. Aeschliman. *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry*. Baker Academic, 2018.
- Smith, Christian, and Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford University, 2009.
- Smith, Christian, and Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Smith, Emily. "Social Media Strategies for Church Outreach to College Students." *Journal of Digital Missions* 5, no. 2 (2017): 123-137.
- Smith, Rachel A. "The effects of church mentoring programs on academic performance and graduation rates of college students." *Journal of Higher Education and Spirituality* 12, no. 1 (2018).
- Spencer, Renée, and Ellen Skinner. "Emerging Adulthood: An Age of Diversity and Change." In

- Handbook of Youth Mentoring, edited by David L. DuBois and Michael J. Karcher, 3-21. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005.
- “Spiritual Assessment Tool; Discover Your God-Give Spiritual Gifts | Lifeway”. lifeway.com, Last modified 2021. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growthservice>.
- Stambulova, Natalia B., Tatiana V. Ryba, and Tatiana A. Moustaka. "A Narrative Approach to Mentoring in Sport." *Quest* 72, no. 2 (2020): 161-180.
- Stetzer, Ed, and Eric Geiger. *Transformational Groups*. Nashville: B&H, 2015.
- Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
- Swanson, Eric, and Rick Rusaw. *The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Incorporated, 2019.
- Thompson, Mark. "Reimagining Church Outreach: Exploring the Use of Social Media to Attract College Students." *Journal of Youth and Theology* 16, no. 4 (2017): 345-361.
- Towne, Phil. “Spirituality in an Age of Technology”. *Stone-Campbell* 17, no. 2 (2014): 195-205.
- Trueblood, Ben, "Most Teenagers Drop Out of Church When They Become Young Adults," Culture, Lifeway Research, January 15, 2019, accessed May 13, 2023, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/01/15/most-teenagers-drop-out-of-church-when-they-become-young-adults/>.
- Vukich, Lee, and Steve Vandergriff. *Timeless Youth Ministry: A Handbook for Successfully Reaching Today's Youth*. Chicago: Moody, 2006.
- Walker, Mel. *Inter-Generational Youth Ministry*. Chinchilla, PA: Vision for Youth, 2013.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
- Williams, Jessica. "The Impact of Social Media on Church Outreach to College Students: A Comparative Study." *Religious Education Journal* 112, no. 1 (2017): 78-94.
- Worthington Jr, Everett L., et al. "Perceived Effectiveness of College Campus Ministries: A Study of College Students' Perceptions." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 33, no. 3 (2005): 203-213.
- Zimmerman, Marc A., and Jacque Eccles. "Developmental Analysis of Adolescence from an Opportunity Perspective." In *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, edited by Richard M. Lerner and Laurence Steinberg, 2nd ed., 45-84. New York: Wiley, 2004.

Zook, J. Kevin, and George D. Kuh. "From Fragility to Resilience: The Role of College Campus Ministries." *Journal of College and Character* 14, no. 2 (2013): 89-100.

Appendix A

GENERAL CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Outreach Initiative to Connect College Students with a Local Church

Name of Principal Investigator: Christopher J. Waters, Student, Doctor of Ministry Program at Liberty University's Rawlings School of Divinity

Phone Number of Principal Investigator: [REDACTED]

A. INVITATION TO BE PART OF A RESEARCH STUDY

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be eighteen years old or older, and currently enrolled as a student at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

B. WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT AND WHY IS IT BEING DONE?

Christopher J. Waters is conducting research on increasing the attendance of Paine College students at Thankful Baptist Church while increasing zeal of Thankful Baptist Church congregation to reach out to students matriculating at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. The purpose of your participation in this research is to help develop a college ministry using the missiology strategy of Jesus in the New Testament to recruit, disciple, and mentor Paine College students and increase their attendance at Thankful Baptist Church.

C. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

1. Complete an audio-recorded interview between participant and researcher (30 minutes).
2. Participate in an initial meeting with all participants and the researcher. The researcher will provide information regarding expectations. This meeting will take approximately one hour.
3. Participate in 6 weekly small group sessions with college students being mentored and disciplined (60 minutes each meeting with dinner provided after each meeting in the Paine College Chapel Meeting Room.)
4. Participate in a questionnaire at the start of the research project.
5. Complete a post-study Spiritual Growth survey after the research project.

D. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

There will be a \$10 reward for students who complete pre-study questionnaires and post-study surveys. The \$10 reward will be provided in cash or via CashApp for students with a CashApp account. The anticipated benefit of your participation in this study is to receive specific training

in evangelism, discipleship, and mentoring that will help students battle disconnection from local church worship and spiritual decline during their college enrollment.

E. WHAT RISKS MIGHT YOU EXPERIENCE FROM BEING IN THIS STUDY?

This research project poses no risk to the participants beyond the normal risks one would encounter in life.

F. HOW WILL PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All questionnaires, audio recordings, transcripts, and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Research information will always be kept in locked files or saved on a secure server. Only the researcher will have access to the files. After the study is completed, the information will be kept until the researcher graduates from Liberty University.

G. WHAT ARE THE COSTS TO YOU TO BE PART OF THIS STUDY?

To participate in the research, there is no expected costs to participants.

H. IS STUDY PARTICIPATION VOLUNTARY?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with Thankful Baptist Church or Paine College. If you choose to participate in this study, you can withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

I. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU DECIDE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials. Your response will not be recorded or included in the study.

J. WHOM DO YOU CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT THE STUDY?

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the researcher by calling [REDACTED]
You may also contact the research's faculty sponsor, Dr. Kevin E. Gift, at [REDACTED]

K. WHOM DO YOU CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, Va 24515 or email at [REDACTED]

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

Appendix B

Letters

Dear [Recipient]:

You are receiving this invitation to be a part of a research project to satisfy the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. As a graduate student at the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am researching the field of Church Revitalization. The purpose of my research is to develop and implement a college ministry that increases the attendance of Paine College students at Thankful Baptist Church, using a missiology strategy to saturate Paine College Students with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, through mentorship, discipleship, and fellowship.

I am writing to personally invite you to join my study as a participant from Thankful Baptist Church.

The participant will be asked to:

1. Complete a questionnaire at the start of the research project training.
2. Participate in person with an initial meeting with all participants and the researcher; information regarding expectations will be provided.
3. Participate in a college ministry training for church participants with the researcher as instructor. These meetings will meet in person at Thankful Baptist Church Outreach Center Board room.
4. Participate in six weekly small group sessions with Paine College students being mentored and discipled (60 minutes each meeting in Paine College Campus Chapel Meeting Room.)
5. Complete an interview at the completion of the research project.

A letter of consent is enclosed in this letter. If you agree to participate, please sign and return it to the researcher before the initial training meeting. You may mail the letter of consent to the address below or leave it at the researcher's office at Thankful Baptist Church, 302 Walker Street, Augusta, Georgia 30901. Please note that all information obtained will be kept confidential. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in the study.

Respectfully,

Christopher J. Waters
Lead Pastor
Thankful Baptist Church

LETTER OF YOUR CONSENT

Greetings Research Participant,

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Please read this letter with any other documents given to you so that you understand what this study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

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

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

Research Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Recruitment Appeal: Verbal Script for In-Person recruitment

Greetings Potential Participants,

I am a doctoral student in the Doctor of Ministry program at Liberty University's, Rawlings School of Theology. I am conducting research to satisfy the requirements of my degree program in Church Revitalization. For the next three months I will be completing a research project focused on increasing the participation and attendance of Paine College students at Thankful Baptist Church. We all are aware of the decline of Paine College students attending our worship services. Historically our congregation was very active in mentoring and discipling Paine Students during their matriculation through school. The Covid pandemic expedited the withdrawal of many students from local church attendance, and our congregation especially needs to re-engage with students to minister to their spiritual needs and fulfill the great commission that Christ gave the Church.

I am looking for spiritually mature adults over the age of 18 with time to enroll in discipleship training over a two-week period, and mentoring Paine College students for a six-week period. If you are interested in participating in this project, please sign up with me after today's service. You will need to sign a general consent form, attend four discipleship training classes, and complete two surveys during the next eight weeks.

For those who sign up today, you will receive your consent form, and are asked to please return the consent form to me in person by our first training class. If you need further information or clarification regarding this research project, you may contact me by email, phone or speak with me in person.

Participation in this project is not mandatory. Anyone who chooses not to participate or changes their minds after starting the project may withdraw at any time. I simply ask that you notify me of your intent to withdraw, and allow me to keep any surveys, or journaling you have completed prior to your withdrawal.

Thank you for your kind attention. I pray you can join this effort to increase our engagement with Paine College students and attract more students to worship and participate at Thankful Baptist Church.

Request for Approval to Recruit Paine College Student Participants

Greetings Mr. Trey McLaughlin,

I hope all is well with you. I am completing my Doctor of Ministry thesis research project at Liberty University, Rawlings School of Theology this semester on the topic of "Spiritual Health & Maintaining the Connection of College Students with local churches." I'm reaching out to ask for your approval to recruit ten Paine College students to participate in a six-week mentoring and discipleship initiative which will be led by myself and volunteers from Thankful Baptist Church for my research project? The students will be asked to take surveys, be interviewed by myself, will be paired with a mentor from Thankful Baptist Church for six weeks, and attend six weekly on-campus bible study sessions with their mentor, and myself as the instructor. If approval is granted, I would like to recruit potential student participants through posting a flyer, and making direct contact with students after the 11:00 a.m. Paine College Chapel Service on February 22, 2023 and March 1, 2023.

If you have any questions or need more clarity regarding this research project, please contact me on my mobile number at (██████████) or by email at ██████████

Thank you for your kind attention. I look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Christopher J. Waters

Appendix C

Church Member Participant Questionnaire

An Assessment of Church Members' involvement with College Students and their Place in the Local Church.

1. What is your role and position at Thankful Baptist Church?
2. How many years have you served as a church leader at Thankful Baptist Church?
3. What is your connection to Paine College if any?
4. Describe your role in interacting with students from Paine College?
5. What do you believe are the strengths of Thankful Baptist Church's Outreach Ministry to College students?
5. What do you believe are the weaknesses of Thankful Baptist Church's Outreach Ministry to College students?
6. Have you noticed a decline in Paine College students' attendance and participation at Thankful Baptist Church in the last five years?
7. If so, describe what you believe are possible reasons why a decline in college students' participation has occurred?
8. Describe the methods you would implement to attract, engage, and retain Paine College students in Thankful Baptist Church's ministries.
9. Describe the methods you would use to recruit and involve freshmen students from Paine College.
10. Describe the resources you would request to help attract and involve Paine College Students in Thankful Baptist Church's worship activities.

College Student Questionnaire

Date:

An Assessment of Paine College Students and their connection to the Local Church.

1. What is your gender?

a. _____ Male b. _____ Female

2. What is your age? _____

3. Do you regularly attend school-sponsored worship services at Paine College Chapel?

4. If Yes, what do you most enjoy about attending services at Paine College Chapel?

5. What do you least enjoy about attending services at Paine College Chapel?

6. Do you attend worship service at a local church?

7. If Yes, what do you most enjoy about attending services at a local church?

8. What do you least enjoy about attending services at a local church?

9a. Do you believe your faith has continued to grow while matriculating at Paine College?

9b. If Yes, would you attribute your spiritual growth (developing and maturing in your faith) to your participation:

- a. _____ on-campus worship services b. _____ local church participation c. _____ both
d. _____ Neither

10. What outreach ministries or events have you seen a local church sponsor in hopes of reaching Paine College Students with the Gospel?

12. When you attend a local church, what are your expectations of the following (Please be specific):

Worship service: _____

Access to the Pastor _____

Bible Study: _____

Small Group Ministries: _____

13. If you do not attend a local church's worship service, Bible study, or small group ministry, please explain why not. (Please be specific.)

14a. Do you feel comfortable sharing your faith with your classmates and others at Paine College?

____ Yes ____ No

14b. If No, please explain why you do not feel comfortable sharing and discussing your faith with your classmates and others. (Please be specific.)

15. Would you be willing to attend evangelism training to prepare you to share and discuss your faith with your classmates and others? ____ Yes or ____ No

16. Thank you for submitting this survey. Your participation will be beneficial in battling the spiritual decline of students at Paine College and detachment from local church participation.

Please return this completed survey to Christopher Waters or you may forward this completed survey to Christopher Waters at [REDACTED]

Appendix D

College Participant Recruitment Flyer

Research Study Participants Needed



- Are you 18 years old or older and a student at Paine College?
- Are you away from your hometown and miss the connection of worshipping in a local church?
- Ever wanted to be apart of developing, and leading a college ministry that meets you and your classmates spiritual growth needs?

If you answered YES to one or more of these questions, you may qualify to participate with this college ministry research study.

The purpose of this study is to bridge the gap for Paine College students who are disconnected from a local church during their college matriculation at Paine College and help them in their spiritual maturation. The researcher is developing an impactful College Ministry through Thankful Baptist Church to mentor, disciple and connect students with seasoned Christian mentors from Thankful Baptist Church to teach students to become bold in sharing and living out their faith through study of the word of God, intercessory prayer, evangelism training, and forming mentoring relationships over a six week period. Additionally, student participants will be asked to take two surveys to measure their spiritual growth and connection to Thankful Baptist Church. Transportation will be provided for any student desiring to attend Thankful Baptist Church during this study.

If you would like more information about the research study requirements, call or email Rev. Christopher Waters, who is conducting this research. Rev. Waters is a Doctoral Student at Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity.

Liberty University IRB-1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

Appendix E

Outreach Training-Lesson 1

Topic: How to Disciple College Students

Focus Verse: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 8:19)

Biblical Case Study: Mark 10:42 - 45

10:00am-12:00pm

5. Devotion

6. Opening Prayer

7. Purpose of Training

8. Training Session

e. Part I-Discipleship Making (The Call)

- iv. Disciples Making Disciples
- v. Characteristics of a Disciple
- vi. Disciples vs. Christians

f. Break-(10 Minutes)

g. Part II-Discipleship Making (The Commission)

- vi. The Great Commission
- vii. Go-Ministry Outside the Church Walls
- viii. Tell the Truth
- ix. Initiate-Sharing Jesus
- x. Each One, Teach One-Learning to Live for Christ

h. Part III-Discipleship Making (The Community)

- v. Building our Christian Family
- vi. Show Don't Tell
- vii. Christ Witnesses
- viii. Making Space for Others

3. Part III-Planning/Calendar Preparation Session...Group Work

4. Final Thoughts

- vi. As team members in this ministry, each of us must pray for one another, help maintain harmony, and share ideas to improve the outreach to Paine College Students.

- vii. Hold each other accountable.
- viii. Be passionate about reach college students for Christ.
- ix. Thank you for Participating with this research project.
- x. May we all go forth and serve God by serving others. Amen.

Suggested Personal Development Books to read:

- 5. *Mentoring 101*. By John C. Maxwell
- 6. *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*. By Juwanza Kunjufu
- 7. *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. By Stephen R. Covey
- 8. *Purpose Driven Life*. By Rick Warren

Outreach Training-Lesson 2

Topic: How to Witness to College Students

Focus Verse: Luke 24:44

Biblical Case Study: Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8

10:00am-12:00pm

8. Devotion

9. Prayer Concerns

10. Opening Prayer

11. Training Session Part I-Witnessing

e. What is a Witness?

- i. One who shares the Good News about Jesus
- ii. Believes the testimony of the Prophets and the Gospels
- iii. One who reflects the life of Christ in their deeds, compassion, and commitment to righteousness.

f. Christ's Command to Witness.

- i. Acts 1:7-8
- ii. Matthew 24:14
- iii. Matthew 28:19

g. Challenges to Witnessing

- i. Fear of Rejection
- ii. Poor Perception of the Christian Church
- iii. Witnesses who Lack Experience
- iv. Sharing our Faith before Showing our Concern and Care.
- v. Age Gap and Cross-Cultural Communication problems

h. Becoming an Effective witness.

- v. Relying on the Holy Spirit
- vi. Listen and Observe-You were given two ears and one mouth. Always remember to listen twice as much as you speak.
- vii. Remember your own story of redemption. This will remind you of how God rescued your soul and refresh your zeal for others to be saved.
- viii. Get to know people in your circle of connection. Talk to the cashier at your favorite coffee shop. Be a regular at the gym and get to know the people you see each time you go. Smile and acknowledge people.
 - a. The first encounter simply say "hello."

- b. The second encounter stop and introduce yourself and learn their name.
- c. Overtime, get to know people, and take an interest in their life. Get them used to sharing with you and become a trusted listener. As you build trust, look for opportunities to share your faith. From this point every encounter may provide an opportunity for sharing of the Gospel.

12. Mock Witnessing Activity-(Participants will be paired up and given 10 minutes to witness to fellow participant.)

13. Group Review and Discussion of Witnessing Activity and Sharing how each participant could improve being a witness.

14. Prayer and Dismissal

Outreach Training-Lesson 3

Topic: Becoming a Mentor

Focus Verse: Luke 24:44

Biblical Case Study: Luke 21:5-17

10:00am-12:00pm

10. Devotion

11. Prayer Concerns

12. Opening Prayer

13. Training Session Part I-Mentoring 101

a. What is a Mentor?

- i. A mentor is a trusted counselor or guide. One who can hold up a mirror to us.²⁷
- ii. A mentor is a person who raises others to a higher level. And mentors can do this in every area of their lives-at work, home, in Church, social clubs, sororities or fraternities.²⁸

c. Becoming a Mentor to Others

- i. Know Thy Self First-When you have reached the place where you feel secure, important, and appreciated, you will no longer have the need to whittle down others to make oneself seem bigger in comparison.²⁹
- ii. Check Your Ego- "A person consumed with himself never considers spending time raising others up."³⁰
- iii. Develop a Discerning Spirit
- iv. Sow Seeds to Benefit Others

d. Mentoring as Motivator

- iv. Making Others Feel Valued
- v. Using Encouragement
- vi. Supporting Others to Find their Internal Motivation

14. Steps Used in Ancient Hebrew Culture to Mentor

²⁷ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "mentor," accessed March 7, 2023, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mentor>.

²⁸ John C. Maxwell, *Mentoring 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2008)

²⁹ Ibid. 4.

³⁰ Ibid. 5.

- i. Mentor does it. As a mentor you must have the skills you are trying to teach others.
- ii. Mentor does it, and mentee watches. As mentor performs task, he/she explains what is being done and why.
- iii. Mentee does it and mentor watches. The mentor must exchange roles with the mentee to determine if the lesson has been learned. As the mentee works, the mentor remains present to offer support, advice and ensure the job is done safely and correctly.
- iv. Mentee does job alone. Once a skill is learned, the mentor demonstrates trust by allow the mentee to work alone. The mentee has been raised to the knowledge and skill level of the mentor and now the mentor is free to move to a new task.

15. Groups Discussion: How do I implement this lesson into my relationships with college students?

16. Scriptures that Show how Mentoring is essential for Christian living.

- a. John 13:1-6 (Humility Like Jesus)
- b. John 13:7 (Understanding Like Jesus)
- c. John 13:34 (Love Like Jesus)

17. Reflection

- a. Merits of Mentoring
- b. Challenges of Mentoring
- c. Defining Mentorship

18. Dismissal

Outreach Training-Lesson 4

Topic: Mentoring College Students

Focus Verse:

Biblical Case Study:

10:00am-12:00pm

7. Devotion

8. Prayer Concerns

9. Opening Prayer

10. Training Session Part II-Mentoring 101

a. Finding College Students to Mentor

- i. Invest Your Time in Students who will Give the Greatest Returns
- ii. Mining for Potential-The most precious metals, gems and stones on earth started out covered in dirt. When Jesus chooses his disciples, he didn't look for perfection, he looked for potential.
- iii. Be a Friend first. Mentors understand the importance of relationships when it comes to helping others be successful.

b. Mentoring Like Jesus

- i. Narrows Your Focus: Giving More time to fewer people equals greater kingdom impact.³¹
- ii. Servant-Mentorship: It's not about me.
- iii. Be Guided by God's Word
 1. I Corinthians 11:1
 2. Proverbs 27:11
 3. Hebrews 10:24-25
- iv. Being Transparent: share your faith story.
- v. Be Practical: Mentees do not need to learn more theory; they want to learn how to address real life problems with real life solutions.
- vi. It takes Mutual commitment to be a successful mentor.

c. Leading them Higher

- i. Stay committed to the Mission. The goal of a Christian mentor is to fulfill the command Christ gave his followers in Matthew 28:19-21.
- ii. The goal is building Christ's Church. It started with two or three gathered in his name and become Christ's Holy Church.
- iii. Developing Their Fruit: Love, Joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

³¹ Regi Campbell, *Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church*, (Atlanta, Ga: RM Press, 2016), 3.

iv. Finding Purpose through Serving

11. Mentor's Spiritual Health

a. Prayer

- i. Be Intentional. Mentor should set aside a specific time each day for prayer, meditation, and communing with God.
- ii. Mentor as Intercessor. Just as Christ intercedes for mankind with God, so Mentors should intercede for mentees.
- iii. Mentors should pray with mentees and give mentees the opportunity to pray for the mentor.
- iv. Ask your mentee how you may pray for them. Then pray for them in person and during your prayer time each day.
- v. Use a prayer journal to record meaningful moments, scriptures, and prayer needs.

b. Worship

- i. Mentors need spiritual guidance also. Regularly attend worship service.
- ii. Invite your mentee to worship with you.
- iii. Read Christian literature in addition to the bible.
- iv. Listen to music which honors God: Gospel, Christian, Hymns/Anthems, and Inspirational music inspires us and informs us. Whatever you are listening to is ministering to you. So, choose your music wisely.

c. Study

- i. Read your bible daily during your personal devotional time.
- ii. Join a bible study group or class offered by your Church.
- iii. Set a specific time to meet with your mentee to study the bible together or invite your mentee to your bible study group.

12. Devotional Reading Assignment:

A copy of the Circle Maker by Mark Batterson's will be given to each church participant. Mentors will be encouraged to study this book on intercessory prayer and how to circle people with prayer.

Materials

- 1. Writing Journals
- 2. Pens
- 3. *The Circle Maker* book by Mark Batterson

Appendix F

Pre-Training Interview Questions for Church Participants

1. In your opinion, how important is outreach to college students in fulfilling the Great Commission from Christ?
2. What does the term discipleship mean to you?
3. What are some possible reasons that Paine College students have stop attending Thankful Baptist Church?
4. How many times have you visited Paine College's Campus in the last 12 months?
5. What are some reasons you would give to encourage a Paine College student to attend Thankful Baptist Church?
6. Do you believe that an on-going outreach initiative to Paine College would increase the frequency and the number of Paine College Students attending Thankful Baptist Church? (Please explain your Yes or No answer.)
7. How important is maintaining a connection with the local church to a college student's spiritual health?

Appendix G

College Outreach Bible Study Session I

Topic: Discipleship

Objective: To explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and discuss practical ways to live out our faith in college.

Scripture: Mark 1:16-20, Luke 14:25-33, Matthew 28:18-20

Opening Prayer: Dear God, as we gather together to study your Word, we ask that you would speak to us and teach us what it means to be your disciples. Help us to understand how we can live out our faith in college and beyond. Amen.

Introduction (5 minutes): Begin the study by asking participants to share what they think it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Encourage everyone to participate and share their thoughts.

Biblical Examples (20 minutes): Read the following passages and discuss the questions below:

1. Jesus Calls His Disciples (Mark 1:16-20) - What stands out to you in this story? How did Jesus call his disciples? What can we learn about discipleship from this passage?
2. The Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14:25-33) - What do you notice about this passage? What does it mean to count the cost of discipleship? How can we apply this to our lives as college students?
3. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) - What stands out to you in this passage? What is the mission of a disciple? How can we fulfill this mission in college and beyond?

Practical Application (20 minutes): Discuss the following questions as a group:

1. What are some practical ways we can live out our faith in college? How can we be a witness to others?
2. How can we prioritize discipleship in our busy college schedules? What are some ways we can grow in our relationship with Jesus?
3. What are some obstacles we might face in living out our faith in college? How can we overcome these obstacles?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes): Close the study with a prayer thanking God for the opportunity to be His disciples and asking for His strength and guidance as we seek to live out our faith in college and beyond.

Optional Activity: Divide into small groups and brainstorm practical ways to live out our faith in college. Share ideas with the larger group and encourage everyone to commit to trying at least one of the ideas in the coming week.

College Outreach Bible Study Session II

Topic: Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

Objective: To explore the importance of spiritual disciplines and discuss practical ways to incorporate them into our daily lives as college students.

Scripture: Matthew 6:5-18, Psalm 1:1-3, Colossians 3:16-17

Opening Prayer: Dear God, as we gather together to study your Word, we ask that you teach us about the importance of spiritual disciplines and show us how we can incorporate them into our daily lives. Help us to grow in our relationship with you through these practices. Amen.

Introduction (5 minutes): Begin the study by asking participants to share what they think spiritual disciplines are and why they are important. Encourage everyone to participate and share their thoughts.

Biblical Examples (20 minutes): Read the following passages and discuss the questions below:

1. Jesus on Prayer and Fasting (Matthew 6:5-18) - What stands out to you in this passage? What does Jesus teach us about prayer and fasting? How can we apply these teachings to our lives?
2. The Blessed Life (Psalm 1:1-3) - What do you notice about this passage? What does it mean to meditate on God's Word? How can we incorporate this practice into our daily lives?
3. Thanksgiving and Praise (Colossians 3:16-17) - What stands out to you in this passage? How can we incorporate thanksgiving and praise into our daily lives? What benefits do these practices have for our spiritual growth?

Practical Application (20 minutes): Discuss the following questions as a group:

1. What are some practical ways we can incorporate spiritual disciplines into our daily lives as college students? What are some obstacles we might face in doing so?
2. How can we prioritize spiritual disciplines in our busy college schedules? What are some ways we can make time for them?
3. What are some benefits of practicing spiritual disciplines? How can they help us grow in our relationship with God?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes): Close the study with a prayer thanking God for the opportunity to practice spiritual disciplines and asking for His strength and guidance as we seek to incorporate them into our daily lives.

Optional Activity: Divide into small groups and brainstorm practical ways to incorporate spiritual disciplines into our daily lives as college students. Share ideas with the larger group and encourage everyone to commit to trying at least one of the ideas in the coming week.

College Outreach Bible Study Session III

Topic: Finding Purpose

Objective: To explore the concept of purpose and discuss how we can find our purpose in God's plan for our lives as college students.

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11, Ephesians 2:10, Proverbs 16:3

Opening Prayer: Dear God, as we gather together to study your Word, we ask that you would show us how we can find our purpose in your plan for our lives. Help us to trust in your guidance and seek your will for our future. Amen.

Introduction (5 minutes): Begin the study by asking participants to share their thoughts on what it means to have purpose in life. Encourage everyone to participate and share their thoughts.

Biblical Examples (20 minutes): Read the following passages and discuss the questions below:

1. God's Plan for Our Lives (Jeremiah 29:11) - What stands out to you in this passage? What does it mean to have a plan and a purpose for our lives? How can we trust in God's plan for our future?
2. Created for Good Works (Ephesians 2:10) - What do you notice about this passage? How does it relate to the concept of purpose? How can we discover the good works that God has prepared for us?
3. Committing Our Plans to God (Proverbs 16:3) - What stands out to you in this passage? How can we commit our plans to God and seek His guidance in discovering our purpose?

Practical Application (20 minutes): Discuss the following questions as a group:

1. How can we discern God's purpose for our lives as college students? What tools or practices can help us to seek His will?
2. What are some obstacles we might face in finding our purpose? How can we overcome these obstacles?
3. How can we live out our purpose in our daily lives as college students? What are some practical ways we can use our gifts and talents to serve God and others?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes): Close the study with a prayer thanking God for the opportunity to discover our purpose and asking for His guidance as we seek to fulfill His plan for our lives.

College Outreach Bible Study Session IV

Title: Finding Purpose in College

Objective: To help college students understand how to find their purpose in life through a Biblical perspective.

Introduction: As college students, it's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of daily life, studying, and socializing. However, it's important to remember that we are all created for a purpose, and that purpose can be found through God's plan for our lives.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:9 - "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between a goal and a purpose?
2. How can we discern God's plan for our lives?
3. What are some common misconceptions about finding purpose in life?
4. How can we stay focused on our purpose in the midst of distractions and challenges?

Biblical Examples:

1. Joseph: Despite being sold into slavery and imprisoned, Joseph remained faithful to God's plan for his life and eventually became a powerful leader in Egypt.
2. Esther: Esther was chosen to be queen of Persia for a specific purpose – to save her people from destruction.
3. Paul: Paul had a dramatic conversion experience and was called by God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, even in the face of persecution and suffering.

Application:

1. Spend time in prayer and reflection, seeking God's guidance for your purpose in life.
2. Identify your strengths and passions and consider how they can be used for God's glory.
3. Seek out mentors and wise counsel to help you discern your purpose and stay focused on it.
4. Remember that finding your purpose is a journey, and it's okay to make mistakes and learn from them.

Conclusion: As college students, we have a unique opportunity to seek out God's plan for our lives and use our talents and passions to make a difference in the world. By staying focused on our purpose and seeking God's guidance, we can live a fulfilling and meaningful life.

College Outreach Bible Study Session V

Title: Balancing Church and School Work

Objective: To help college students understand the importance of balancing their commitments to church and school, and to provide practical tips for doing so.

Introduction: As college students, we often find ourselves pulled in many directions – studying, socializing, and participating in extracurricular activities, all while trying to maintain our commitment to our faith and our church community. Balancing these commitments can be challenging, but with God's help, it is possible to find a healthy balance.

Scripture: Colossians 3:23-24 - "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to balance our commitments to church and school?
2. How can we prioritize our time effectively to ensure that we are giving enough attention to both commitments?
3. What are some practical steps we can take to balance church and schoolwork?
4. How can we stay motivated and focused on our commitments without burning out?

Biblical Examples:

1. Mary and Martha: In Luke 10:38-42, Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha. While Martha is busy with serving, Mary sits at Jesus' feet and listens to His teaching. Jesus commends Mary for choosing the "better" thing – spending time with Him.
2. Daniel: Despite his demanding job as an advisor to the king, Daniel remained committed to his daily prayers and worship of God, even in the face of persecution.
3. Paul: Paul traveled extensively to spread the Gospel, but he also made time to mentor and encourage young believers, even writing letters to them from prison.

Application:

1. Prioritize your commitments to church and school based on their importance and urgency.
2. Schedule time for both church and schoolwork and stick to your schedule as much as possible.
3. Seek out accountability partners who can encourage you to stay balanced and focused.
4. Remember to take breaks and rest, and to seek God's guidance in all aspects of your life.

Conclusion: Balancing church and schoolwork can be challenging, but with God's help and a deliberate effort to prioritize our commitments, we can find a healthy balance. By staying focused on our priorities and seeking out support from our church community, we can honor God in all that we do.

College Outreach Bible Study Session VI

Title: Improving Spiritual Health

Objective: To help college students understand the importance of spiritual health, and to provide practical tips for improving it.

Introduction: As college students, we often focus on our physical health and mental well-being, but it's important not to neglect our spiritual health. By nurturing our relationship with God, we can experience greater peace, joy, and purpose in our lives.

Scripture: Matthew 6:33 - "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Discussion Questions:

1. What is spiritual health, and why is it important?
2. How can we prioritize our spiritual health in the midst of our busy lives?
3. What are some practical steps we can take to improve our spiritual health?
4. How can we stay motivated and focused on our spiritual growth?

Biblical Examples:

1. David: David was known as a man after God's own heart, and he prioritized his relationship with God above all else, even in the face of adversity.
2. Jesus: Jesus modeled a deep and intimate relationship with God, spending time in prayer and fasting to stay connected to His Father.
3. Paul: Paul viewed his faith as a race to be run, and he worked tirelessly to grow in his relationship with God and spread the Gospel message.

Application:

1. Set aside regular time for prayer, Bible study, and worship, and stick to your schedule as much as possible.
2. Seek out accountability partners who can encourage you in your spiritual growth.
3. Practice spiritual disciplines such as fasting, silence, and solitude to deepen your relationship with God.
4. Remember to prioritize rest and self-care, and to seek God's guidance in all aspects of your life.

Conclusion: Improving our spiritual health is essential for living a fulfilling and meaningful life. By prioritizing our relationship with God and seeking out practical ways to grow spiritually, we can experience greater peace, joy, and purpose in our lives.

Appendix H

In-Person Interview of Paine College Students

1. Can you share your reasons for not attending church while being a college student?
2. Have you ever attended church in the past? If yes, what led to your decision to stop attending?
3. What aspects of organized religion or church services do you find unappealing or disconnected from your personal beliefs?
4. How do you fulfill your spiritual needs or seek spiritual nourishment in the absence of church attendance?
5. Are there any specific spiritual or philosophical beliefs that you identify with outside of organized religion?
6. Do you engage in any practices or activities that promote mindfulness, self-reflection, or personal growth?
7. Have you found any alternative communities or groups that provide a sense of belonging or spiritual support similar to what you might find in a church?
8. What role does nature or the outdoors play in your spiritual or personal growth journey?
9. Are there any books, texts, or resources that have shaped your spiritual beliefs or provided guidance in your spiritual journey?
10. How do you view the availability of spiritual resources and support on college campuses?
Are there any improvements you would like to see in this regard?

Post-Training In-Person Interview for Church Participants.

1. Can you share with us your personal salvation experience during your college years and how it impacted your life?
2. What initially drew you to attend church regularly while you were a college student? Was there a specific event or person that influenced your decision?
3. How did your involvement in the church during your college years shape your faith and spiritual growth? Can you provide specific examples or instances that had a lasting impact on you?
4. Were there any challenges or obstacles you faced in maintaining consistent church attendance while you were a college student? If so, how did you overcome them?
5. Did your college experience provide any unique opportunities for you to serve or engage with the church community? How did these experiences contribute to your overall spiritual development?
6. Were there any specific ministries or activities within the church that you were actively involved in during your college years? How did these experiences shape your understanding of the church and its mission?
7. Did your church involvement during college influence your decision-making and lifestyle choices? If so, in what ways did it impact your values and priorities?
8. Were there any mentors or leaders within the church during your college years who played a significant role in your spiritual journey? How did their guidance or example impact your faith?
9. Looking back, how would you describe the overall importance of church attendance and participation in your life as a college student? How did it contribute to your overall college experience?
10. If you could offer one piece of advice to current college students regarding their faith and church involvement, what would it be based on your own experiences?

Post-Research Project Interview Questions: Assessing Spiritual Growth

Thank you for your participation in this Thesis Research Project. As part of our post-research project, I would like to conduct an interview to further explore and assess your spiritual growth during your involvement in the research project outreach initiative. The information gathered will be used for research purposes only, and your responses will remain confidential. Please answer the following questions openly and honestly.

1. Reflecting on your involvement in this research project outreach initiative, what were some of the most impactful experiences or moments that contributed to your spiritual growth?
2. In what ways did the outreach initiative provide opportunities for you to explore and deepen your faith?
3. Have you started practicing or increased your practice of spiritual disciplines since participating in this research project?
4. How did the college outreach initiative impact your sense of community among the other college participants? Did this sense of community contribute to your spiritual growth? If so, how?
5. Have you noticed any changes in your beliefs, values, or perspectives as a result of being mentored by a TBC volunteer in this research project? If yes, please elaborate.
6. Can you provide examples of how this outreach initiative encouraged you to apply spiritual principles in your daily life?
7. How has your involvement in the college outreach ministry influenced your relationship with God or your understanding of spirituality?
8. Reflecting on your overall experience, do you feel that your spiritual growth has been positively influenced by the college outreach initiative? Why or why not?
9. During this college outreach initiative did you attend any worship services at Thankful Baptist Church? If so, how many?

Appendix I

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 4, 2023

Christopher Waters
Kevin Gift

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22-23-1310 College Outreach Initiative to Connect College Students to the Local Church

Dear Christopher Waters and Kevin Gift,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your project is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

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

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

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office