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Church Adoption: Three-pronged Elements that Support the Revitalization of Coastal Church Battery Park Location in Virginia

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to

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by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT
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The church is God's plan for delivering the good news of Jesus Christ's finished work on the Cross. This finished work is evidenced through the bodily resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15). In the US a steady decline in church attendance has been prevalent over the past three decades and church buildings are either near empty or closing. This research explores the concept of church adoption merger in hopes of one avenue that would promote revitalization of local fellowships. Though multiple elements are supportive in revitalization this research explore three elements that should lead towards centralizing the church on Christ. The project intervention resulted in key congregants understanding the building blocks of Sunday morning worship, discipleship process, and evangelistic strategies.

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DMIN	*Doctor of Ministry*
CBPC	*Coastal Battery Park Church*
BPBC	*Battery Park Baptist Church*
ESV.	*English Standard Version*
NASB	*New American Standard Bible*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Let go. This phrase can have multiple meanings for many people. Some may picture the detachment of an item given to an individual, whereas others may consider a discipline measure they have given to a subordinate or a child. Do people have trouble letting go? Imagine a company letting go of its mission to better sell their product. Consider what it would feel like for a community to let go of a property to preserve other resources. Every year several men and women join one another in marriage and end up letting go of a single way of life, which may include dismissing old patterns, positions, and possessions.

For anyone, letting go can be a hard and complex task, but it can be a worthy and much needed pursuit. Churches in the United States are facing this very dilemma: letting go of their established fellowship. Established fellowship would refer to the traditions, practices, constitution, and bylaws which give them legal status as a church. These churches are holding on to a hope that they will thrive again in the future. Since 2019 Coastal Church has been merging with other local churches in the Tidewater region of Virginia to look at how they can revitalize and re-establish dying and/or declining churches. Four churches have merged with Coastal Church to consider how their companionship of the fellowship can lead to a greater impact of the Kingdom of God in their region.

The end goal for both Coastal Church and the churches that have been adopted is to develop authentic followers of Christ for many years to come. However, the requirement of these churches is possibly, or most often, an acceptance that they must let go. Traditional practice no longer has a position to stifle the potential of growth of the local church. The gospel of Jesus

Christ must become central allowing biblical building blocks of church to take hold of future intentions.

Ministry Context

Coastal Church is a fellowship started by two churches deciding they could do more together rather than as individual entities. In 2001 Tidewater Community Church and Bay Rivers Community Church met to establish Coastal Church. The merging of these two fellowships took place almost one year after the initial conversations. This combining of fellowships started as 243 people began meeting in a high school gymnasium.[1] Over the course of twenty plus years, more than 2000 individuals meet on seven church campus locations.

Six of these campuses exist in the tidewater area of Virginia, which is also referred to as Hampton Roads. Coastal Church adopted four of these six campuses: Chesapeake, Hampton, Bethany, located in Richmond, and Battery Park, located in Smithfield, Virginia. The other two church campuses are Williamsburg and Gloucester, which were established by renting out other spaces in the community with no direct church adoption status. In the previous start of these campuses, most of the volunteer manpower came by way of the Yorktown congregation. In most of those campus starts, volunteers were already residents in the areas in which the new churches were being established whereas other individuals were operating as temporary missionaries to minister in that fellowship. In all the adoptions, some semblance of the "Grow ministry," referred to as small groups, has either gone to establish, or quickly been formed to establish, a consistency in the fellowship.

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[1] "Our History," Coastal Church, last modified 2023, https://www.gocoastal.org/history/.

Small groups for Coastal are a community of people who grow through Bible study that results in care, community, and discipleship. These groups support the mission of Coastal Church by encouraging people to connect to God in corporate worship, grow in small groups, serve in ministry and mission, and multiply by making disciples to develop gospel outposts. No direct training has been offered to these Coastal small groups to prepare the groups for mobilization in the interest of sending them into church adoptions. However, the utilization of small groups operating as support system for new church adoptions has been encouraged by the senior leadership of Coastal. Coastal also utilizes the preaching platform and leadership development trainings to develop leaders to support the needs of new adoptions.

<center>Cultural Settings</center>

One of the newer campuses working toward establishment exists in Smithfield, Virginia, in a neighborhood referred to as Battery Park. Battery Park is a smaller neighborhood of no more than 60 homes, one seafood distribution warehouse, and an old church building sitting in the center of the community. The immediate surrounding community has a population of 1,588 people in the zip codes 23304 and 23430. Watermen, as they are referred to in the community, occupied and developed the neighborhood. Many of their families have purchased the homes maintaining the residence. The Median age in the community is 51 years old and 80% of the occupants are families. Across a small bridge is a portion of the town of Carrollton, VA, with a population of 3,843 individuals where the median age is 41 and 54% of the population are families.[2]

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[2] "City-Data," last modified 2023, http://www.city-data.com/city/Virginia.html.

Church population at the time of the vote for Coastal merger was seventeen individuals, and the first Sunday for Coastal to start the partnership was with seven individuals. Currently the church has between 30-60 individuals attending on a weekly basis. When the church was adopted by Coastal, the average age of Battery Park Baptist Church (BPBC) was 72 years old. Currently, with 40 regular attendees, the average has dropped to 25 years old, which still includes a portion of the older attendees. The shift in age demographics started in February 2023 when a family in the Battery Park neighborhood began to attend Coastal Battery Park. Since February 2023 seven families with kids have decided to attend Coastal Battery Park. Coastal has also welcomed other couples and some single individuals that are under the age of 30. Currently 45% of the church population is under the age of 30.

Prior to the adoption, the people of Battery Park participated in various capacities with the church and attended either an event or Sunday services. The church building was built in 1899 and has been a conduit of Christian spirituality for the community throughout the years. Most residents still feel that Battery Park is a village of its own and the center or main street of the village is right in front of the church. The church is a staple in the community and beloved by the neighbors which surround her.

<div align="center">Spiritual Culture of the Sponsored Church</div>

Battery Park held deeply steeped roots with the Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia adhering to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. The church primarily used resources provided by Lifeway publishers to lead Sunday School as well as the Baptist Hymnal in their worship service. In 2017 the pastor of the church was arrested and dismissed from the church. His participation in illegal activities broke trust with church members both with him and faith in general. Due to the severity of the pastor's activity several people have responded to say they

lost trust in God and church. The pastor's dismissal left the church to dwindle, and only long term invested parishioners chose to stay. Following his pastorate several interims and one Lead Pastor took on the responsibility of heading up the church. In 2020 Battery Park Baptist Church also struggled through the Coronavirus pandemic with minimal participation as several of the aging congregation were concerned with their physical health. Both major events affected the congregation greatly and have influenced the decline.

<div align="center">Partnership: Team Support</div>

To start the adoption of Battery Park Baptist Church with Coastal Church, fifteen Coastal members signed on to assist the work on a weekly basis for a set duration of time depending on each family unit. Some of these Coastal members committed for 6 months while others committed to one year. After the first month of the partnership a gap was observed by the team regarding families and kids' ministry. Knowing that a group was not prepared to host a kid's ministry within the current crowd, a plan was formed to recruit from other Coastal campuses to assist in the endeavor of Coastal Kids. Three small groups from the Yorktown campus signed on to cover the ministry base until a group of individuals could be identified, approved, and trained. The small groups who served in the children's ministry stayed on with Coastal Battery Park Church (CBPC) through November 2023. This gave the Pastor and other CBPC staff time to find ample volunteer support for the Kids' Ministry. Currently, CBPC has enlisted and is processing eight individuals to serve the Coastal Kids' Ministry at Battery Park. These eight individuals are looking to make CBPC their home church and the place they will serve long term. As for the small groups, they have since returned to Yorktown as they live and serve in the Yorktown fellowship.

The lack of available volunteers in kid's ministry was one of several gaps that needed to be filled at Battery Park. BPBC had multiple gap years where they had no baptisms. No documentation exists to demonstrate evidence of evangelistic efforts other than previous Pastor conveying their participation in sharing the gospel in the community. The church had no evidence of evangelism training that had taken place in the previous 5 years. This does not mean that former pastors did not preach on the subject or encourage the activity, but there is no record of the activity. The church also conveyed they did not have a clear process of discipleship or lay-leadership responsibilities such as, but not limited to, deacon and Sunday School teachers. These roles were filled by members, but no process was in place to mobilize the roles in the life of other future or current individuals.

Sunday music worship was covered and was presented in a traditional format with a music director and pianist. The choir, although desired by the church, had not participated in worship services for several years. The music choices were God-honoring, presented with a few missed notes, but led by a willing, and worn out, team. These individuals had invested multiple seasons of leading the congregation and the pianist was struggling with health issues. She also was being paid for her services even when she was not able to play, which was a strain on the small budget. The gentleman who was leading did a great job and since the start of the adoption has been invested in the worship team. Sunday morning worship had an order but lacked a connectivity with a younger crowd. This was verbalized by a few young families in the community under the age of 40. The church asked Coastal specifically about the value of this change knowing that Coastal would make some alterations in music choices and in the order of service.

Transitional Understanding

A comprehension of the transition of responsibility for this local church is needed to be understood on multiple fronts from Coastal support team to the remaining congregants of the adopted fellowship. Although Coastal has done previous adoptions, they are still identifying better ways to make these transitions and assist people as they gain a better understanding of the adoption process. Coastal does offer to the church an introductory class that helps current and future congregants understand the mission, vision, and values.

No documented research or tool has been applied to assist congregants in a comprehensive process of transition other than verbal reoccurring communication. However, patterns have emerged on several Coastal Church campuses that are reoccurring standards of operation within the concept of church adoption. What highly influences the merging of both fellowships is a profound desire for clarity and delivery of the good news of Jesus Christ and salvation found through grace (1 Cor. 15:1-11; Eph. 2:8-10). This unification around the gospel paves the way for making the transition start. Coastal Church is primed to be a church that utilizes gathered data from current church adoption histories allowing others to learn from their effective practices. Not all practices at Coastal Church have worked to perfection, but if Coastal can identify the effective practices they could create a pathway of training that preps them more efficiently for future efforts.

Problem Presented

Church adoption is the idea that Coastal is inviting other churches into a family relationship with the community of Coastal fellowships. In the first church adoption, the financial and physical support was significant from the original campus in Yorktown. As the

campuses spread into other communities, further from the original campus, disseminating the information essential to build the church needs to be conveyed intentionally.

The congregants that attend the church in Battery Park have not experienced the same life flow as Coastal Yorktown. These individuals associate previous experience with current expectations. In other words, the individuals in this fellowship have primarily participated in a traditional Southern Baptist fellowship. A few of the new participants who have started to attend Coastal Battery Park who were not previously affiliated with any Coastal campus come from a variety of different denominational backgrounds. The families and individuals who have been a part of BPBC were involved with building blocks that did not sustain or were not continued resulting in a decline within the fellowship. This led to drops in member participation and financial giving that caused the church to seek other ways to sustain the work of the church. Within the church, evidence of a decline in health was clear and this discovery moved the congregation to recognize a problem.[3] This discovery was familiar from congregations that Coastal Church previously adopted. The problem is Coastal Church adopted churches did not formerly have sustainable life practices that produced objectively healthy church disciplines.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to create an 8-session training intervention for lay-leaders to help establish the building blocks of Sunday morning worship, evangelism tactics, and discipleship process in the life of the church. These sessions will include a four-week classroom experience engaging in conversations related to the building blocks. The classroom intervention will be followed up by four weeks of involvement in one of the three

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[3] Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird, *Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work: Expanded and Updated* (Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2020), 3.

building blocks as a spectator or participant. Church health being the centralized goal for Coastal Church, they want to identify the tangible expectations placed on the church based on scriptural and organizational measurements. The hope of Coastal Church is to provide lay leadership that can help train and provide coverage in different areas of ministry. These lay leaders will give ample time for new attendees to join the church and allow previous attendees to be trained in evangelism tactics, discipleship processes, and in Sunday morning worship.

One resource for Coastal Church to consider is the utilization of their small groups. Small groups are smaller communities of people who meet weekly for biblical study that operate as a conduit for community, care, and emphasizing the importance of discipleship. Small groups have group members in multiple ministry roles and yet are unified under a desire to be deeply growing in community. Utilizing small group participants to be a part of guiding the training demonstrates a practitioner's role to new lay leadership. Also, small group participants, especially those who serve in ministry and mission, understand the nuances of what Coastal has standardized for their fellowships, and what can be customized based on the context of a gospel outpost.

As core participants of the Battery Park fellowship attend the training, they will learn that the standards held by Coastal are aimed at biblical precedents for the church. They will also discover and contribute to some of the customized elements that contribute contextual value to the building blocks. Though Coastal Churches hold some unifying standards, the leadership of the global efforts of Coastal recognize that each community is unique, and the insight of the current community will help solidify gospel efforts in the neighborhood.[4]

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[4] Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches That Multiply* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 147. I am convinced you cannot love a city if you do not know a city. And you certainly cannot reach a city if you do not love it. Don't rush past this important step. Information about the area and people where God is calling you is precious indeed. When working in city research, you must

Basic Assumptions

The first basic assumption of the Project Director is that the participants and sponsoring church wish to agree upon established three-pronged elements that undergird the local church. These three-prong elements hold a strong value on the biblical precedence of worship, evangelism, and discipleship. Though these are defined within this document, a similar agreement of their definition will be accepted by church leadership and the participants of the fellowship this project is designed to address. The Project Director did not assess the entire leadership of Coastal to comprise the assumption that this biblical precedence plays a major role in all church fellowships. The assumption has been derived from a pattern seen in other adoptions by Coastal Church. On all four of their previous adoptions, Coastal has been intentional to set up worship, evangelism, and discipleship early in the life of each church.

The second assumption for this project is that the people who will participate in the intervention will be a solid representation of the population of present and future attendees. Each person will represent a perspective of a committed attendee who desires the overall success of the local church. They will be able to respond with a pattern of reactions that will give the Project Director an understanding of potential pit falls or affirm quality of direction.

The third assumption of the Project Director is that proper training and interaction with current leadership of Coastal Church will help participants to develop, and desire to be deployed, to serve in one or all three-pronged elements. The Project Director assumes that specific identified leaders, who have previously participated with campus adoptions, can partner with him to relay information that communicates patterns seen in the life of other Coastal Church

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consider what to include. Many important things can and should be studied: language and immigration, poverty, church plants, church closures, parachurch presence, crime, etc. Let me remind you that such research tends to be a multidenominational, regional effort. In most cases no one denomination is well suited to undertake the task.

adoptions. The Project Director also assumes that, in the delivery of the information, the content

will have reasonable expectations that can be achieved by all participants.

Definitions

This project will contain key terms primarily focused on church revitalization and

campus adoption affiliated with Coastal Church. Key terms will be used throughout the

document to help clarify the research thesis. Terms include church adoption, revitalization,

kingdom of God, missional, discipleship, worship, and evangelism. These terms help to define

the process that will take place in the intervention and will overlap content for a greater

clarification of the overall problem, purpose, and thesis statement.

Church *Revitalization.* One author writes,

> The church has steadily declined even after various attempts at seeing new life
> established. The church has lost a sense of mission and is generally disheartened at the
> state of affairs. A renovation will require structural changes in the church, along with
> fresh vision and capable leadership. To see results in a renovate revitalization, churches
> should not expect to see clear results until year five.[5]

Church Adoption. Two other authors write, "Adoption mergers. A stable or stuck church

is fully integrated under the vision of a stronger, vibrant, and typically larger church."[6]

Kingdom of God. Another author writes,

> The Kingdom is primarily the dynamic reign or kingly rule of God, and, derivatively, the
> sphere in which the rule is experienced. In biblical idiom, the Kingdom is not identified
> with its subjects. They are the people of God's rule who enter it, live under it, and are
> governed by it. The church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom
> itself. Jesus' disciples belong to the Kingdom as the Kingdom belongs to them; but they
> are not the Kingdom. The Kingdom is the rule of God; the church is a society of men.[7]

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[5] Russell N. Small. *Church Revitalization: A Pastoral Guide to Church Renewal* (Chicago, IL: Kregel Publications, 2023), 14.

[6] Tomberlin and Bird, *Better Together*, 62.

[7] George Eldon Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 111.

Two authors write, "The end of God's creating the world was to prepare a kingdom for his Son (for he is appointed heir of the world) that should remain to all eternity. So far as the kingdom of Christ is set up in the world, so far is the world brought to its end, and the eternal state of things set up." [8] Another author states, "the kingdom belongs to those who, by faith, identify themselves with the person and cause of Jesus— no matter the cost. Everything rises and falls on Jesus Christ."[9] Additionally, this author adds, "In announcing the kingdom, Jesus was intent on establishing a society built on unity and mutual love— a love that would even surrender its life for another."[10]

Missional Churches. One author writes, "Missional churches faithfully move out into the culture in an incarnational manner with a go-seek strategy that fosters spiritual development as it engages the unchurched."[11] Missional churches are finding ways in which to contribute to culture while also presenting culture with the gospel the good news of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship. The pursuit of one individual walking another individual through a process of following Christ.[12] Discipleship typically includes three ingredients: truth, vulnerability, and accountability.[13] The hope is to bring people into maturity in Christ that imitates his character

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[8] Elliot Ritzema and Elizabeth Vince, eds., *300 Quotations for Preachers from the Puritans*, Pastorum Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), page number(s).

[9] Nicholas Perrin, *The Kingdom of God: A Biblical Theology* (Grand, Rapids MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2019), 34.

[10] Ibid., 233.

[11] Marlene R. Reinhold Grandinetti, "Identifying Best Practices for a Missional Approach to Discipleship in the Church Today," (DMin project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2023), 154.

[12] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2018), 39.

[13] Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 18.

and will (Col. 1:27; Eph. 5:1; Gal. 5:23). These individuals are pressed to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.[14]

Worship. One author writes, "Worship is the activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts."[15] Worship is a declarative measure of mankind's surrender to profess their deepest need of having relationship with their Creator. In so doing mankind is also acknowledging God's superiority to all things identifying him as holy, holy, holy.

Evangelism. One author notes, "Work of declaring the gospel is the primary ministry that the church has toward the world."[16] This act of evangelism is declaring the gospel. The Gospel is the expression that Jesus is God and lived a sinless life that did not deviate from the direction of God's will. Jesus, took on the sins of mankind and was placed on the cross to pay the penalty of those sins. As a result of the Cross he physically died and was buried in a tomb. However, because He himself had no sin he could not be confined to the sting of death and thus rose bodily from the dead. This declaration of the gospel, if received by mankind and if mankind surrenders to Christ acknowledging their sin nature, they will have the ability to receive the relationship with Christ.

Contextualization. The act of assessing community dynamics and identifying tactics and best practices to serve the community.[17] One author writes that contextualization is "translating

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[14] J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), xiv.

[15] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 1236.

[16] Ibid., 1064.

[17] Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, 147. I am convinced you cannot love a city if you do not know a city. And you certainly cannot reach a city if you do not love it. Don't rush past this important step. Information about the area and people where God is calling you is precious indeed. When working in city research, you must consider what to include. Many important things can and should be studied: language and immigration, poverty, church plants, church closures, parachurch presence, crime, etc. Let me remind you that such research tends to be a multidenominational, regional effort. In most cases no one denomination is well suited to undertake the

and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without

compromising the essence and particulars of the gospel itself."[18]

Sustained Health/Self-Sustaining Church Growth. This term refers to the ability for a

church to grow while maintaining financial, spiritual, and physical expectations of the local

church. This includes a church that can pay off their debts, pay for resources, steadily grow their

financial budget or exceed their financial budget, providing ministry to the congregants, seeing

evidence of spiritual growth among regular attendees, and seeing numerical growth of

participants.[19]

Limitations

This DMin action research project will reveal some constraints anticipated by the Project

Director. The project will address the potential intent and limited number of future actions of

those who are participating in classroom intervention, interviews, and surveys. Since the project

duration is only eight weeks the Project Director will only be able to measure a few tangible

applications of participants regarding action steps. The research utilizes a convenience sample,

however, the church attendees who will participate in this study will be limited as the

congregation is smaller and the percentage of participants will provide a limited response. The

research is regarding a partnership of two fellowships where the adopting church exists in a very

different environment compared to where the revitalization will take place. This environment

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task… Effective missions and church planting methodologies are contextual and indigenous, meaning the planter lives, speaks, and thinks as though he were "from the area."

[18] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 89.

[19] Tony Morgan, *The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 8. My prayer is that every church will experience the Sustained Health phase. In this stage, churches embrace the tension between vision and systems. They straddle the fine line between outreach and spiritual formation. Growth continues to occur not only with numbers but also with people accepting Christ, engaging a discipleship process, and sacrificing their lives to get on mission with Jesus.

difference may constrain the effectiveness of the study as the sponsored church is familiarizing themselves with the context. Also, due to the distance of the location, the availability of tangible resources, such as supplies or people, may cause some discrepancies in the research.

The research Project Director will be responsible for how the classes are organized and implemented but the results are subject to the follow-through of the participants. If participants willingly neglect to apply an attribute of revitalization, this could influence the overall research. Some participants may even move slower in the process adding unanticipated time to the action research project. The research project also is dependent on lay leadership support that may also present some complexities in completing the research on time. During three sessions lay leadership will be tasked with guiding the process of the class which will also include the focus group. Though the intent of the project is to see how lay leaders handle the content, they may also avoid important aspects in the training.

Delimitations

The Project Director has determined a set group of people to go through the process that have already pursued other opportunities in the church. They have a record of giving, participating in a small group, attended initial membership class, and attend Sunday morning worship two Sundays or more a month. These individuals are at least 18 years of age and are willing to participate in the project intervention. This group will be referred to as group A in the study. Along with Group A another group will be formed, referred to as Group C. They will meet the same criteria as Group A but will only participate in the survey of the project intervention.

Second, the Project Director will assign individuals to help serve and teach different elements of the class. These individuals will be members of Coastal Church and have served in some capacity with Coastal Church adoptions. These individuals have demonstrated an

investment in the community and see the value of helping them understand the key three-pronged elements that lead closer to a self-sustaining fellowship. The individuals must be recommended by two or more staff or deacons and participate in one of the three-pronged elements on a volunteer level with the church. This group will be referred to as Group B, as well as subject matter experts (SME). To delimit any complications with these SMEs the group leader will go through the content leading up to the class. Group B will have ample time to review content with the group Project Director to reduce any concerns or questions.

Third, the intervention classes will take place following Sunday morning worship to encourage the attendance of participants and give ample time for lay leadership to arrive if they do not regularly attend the Battery Park campus. The class will take place over a duration of four Sundays, 1 hour each, so that a session can be covered in a 1-hour time frame. The participants can also participate in the other portion of the study by participating in an involvement option where they will engage with the three-pronged elements during church service or around church events.

Thesis Statement

The key to creating this training is for the Project Director to acknowledge the contextual culture of the church, as well as clarify the best practices that adhere to biblical and organizational expectations. Not all the churches are in similar environments, therefore, to develop best practices, consideration must be taken if the community is urban, rural, or suburban. The other items to consider are what is standardized for the overall operation for Coastal and what is customizable to a specific congregation. The Project Director will want to make sure that these areas are well laid out so that the construct of the intervention will operate with great clarity.

This activity of determining standardization and customization refers only to organizational practices and does not imply that the Bible is customizable to a context. For example, churches can identify music style choices in worship that might better fit the culture of the church. Another example of customization is that churches can determine the tactics for doing evangelism in a community. One fellowship may choose to canvas door-to-door, whereas another chooses to maintain a relational evangelism approach of who is in their sphere of influence. This is a form of contextualization with the desire to intentionally approach each fellowship with consideration of the people group.

Ultimately, training would need to be developed to approach different tactics giving the small groups, current congregates, and missional participants a view of how to approach their mission field. The training would also need to address the tangible elements the team would influence for short-term and long-term support. These tangible support elements would be referring to music worship, community evangelism, and discipleship process intended for leadership development and new believers. If the three-pronged elements of Sunday worship, evangelism tactics, and discipleship process are embraced by the church, then the church can be self-sustaining.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores the literature associated with worship, discipleship, and evangelism as they relate to church revitalization. The content also approaches the implication of literature regarding contextualization of these three elements. Each element is also impacted by various other subject matter that must be assessed considering biblical imperatives. These three-pronged elements will also be examined both theologically and theoretically, solidifying the foundation of this thesis. Ultimately, these three-pronged elements are subject to the biblical text yet the gravity in which they are implemented is through the clear confines of understanding the modern culture.

Literature Review

Mobilization was a great yearning for Christ as He expressed his final words on earth to His disciples. His imperative reminder to His disciples was to replicate what He had built into them to invest this into the life of others (Matt. 28:18-20). He asked Peter specifically to "feed His sheep," in so doing this action demonstrates Peter's love for Jesus (John 21:15-19). At the heart of both passages is the idea that the disciples were called to "go," "make," "feed," and replicate the gospel work done to them in the life of others.

This calling becomes even clearer in the book of Acts. Acts reminds the followers of Jesus to mobilize within their city, and beyond, sharing a refined gospel to a larger audience (Acts 1:8). Therefore, Christ's followers were called to take the Gospel to all nations giving opportunity for others to receive the gift of their Lord and Savior. Thus, the mission is continued in the life of all local churches as the gathering of Christ followers are subject to the same conviction given to the disciples. God is establishing a kingdom no longer corrupted by sin but covered by the Cross and resurrection of Christ.

Kingdom of God Mobilization Implication

"Kingdom of God" is a phrase often used by Jesus as He gives a greater picture of God's grander plan. One author states, "When Jesus announces the kingdom of God, He is introducing a reality that was meant to serve as a trustworthy compass for all we do in life."[20] This particular author addressed the paradox of when the kingdom of God will take shape.[21] Some believe the kingdom of God is a future event that has yet to happen and will be made evident through the unfolding of realities.[22] Others convey the kingdom of God is a current and a future reality that will be even more revealed through one's relationship with Christ.[23] Nicholas Perrin makes this clarification regarding the view of a present and coming kingdom: "Instead, the kingdom belongs to those who, by faith, identify themselves with the person and cause of Jesus— no matter the cost. Everything rises and falls on Jesus Christ."[24]

"Your kingdom come" is also a petition to God for comfort. This comfort is man's yearning to be at the end of a current reality and in a reality that is more reflective of a place of peace.[25] This reality of kingdom come living is a hope that a person's work situation or current living conditions would foster them toward a greater God-sized purpose. For most Christians the desire for the kingdom to come is for Christ to rule over their circumstances. One author even

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[20] Nicholas Perrin, *The Kingdom of God: A Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2019), 27.

[21] Ibid., 31.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Elmer L. Towns, *Fasting with the Lord's Prayer: Experience a Deeper and More Powerful Relationship with God* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2014), 52.

[24] Ibid., 33.

[25] Ibid.*,* 54.

suggests that when Christ came as Emanuel he came as a demonstration of God's reign both in the moment and yet to come.[26]

Another viewpoint of the kingdom of God is from the vantage point of communal exposure of the kingdom. If the church is going to be communal in the future, then the best way to convey the kingdom of God is through a communal system of living. This would align with the viewpoint of the kingdom being now and future. The tension point is based on the idea that a person's way will reveal their quality of life, encouraging others to come to Christ.[27] Therefore, should one ask the question, "what is the best way to convey the kingdom of God?" the response would be, live in a community of believers.[28] However, other authors would debate that to see the kingdom of God, in this type of democratic-socialism infrastructure, would delineate from what the kingdom of God was and is intended to do.[29] Those in the kingdom of God are to make clear within society what is right, what is good, and what is against the will of God. This activity is the agreed upon and acceptable anarchy of the church and the clarification is for the people of God in each society. For the individuals to not speak up is allowing the church people the opportunity to chase down a perception that God does not exist, or the God of the Bible is capable of being questioned.[30]

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[26] Wesley Hill, *The Lord's Prayer: A Guide to Praying to Our Father* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 21. A word like "rule," "reign," or even "kingship" is closer to the original meaning of basileia —which means that when Jesus says "the kingdom of God has come near," He is proclaiming that God is asserting His rule in the world in and through Jesus' ministry. Jesus is heralding the fact that God— like a king who has been abroad and absent from his native land— finally is returning to take back His throne. Jesus is announcing a sort of re-coronation.

[27] Theodore Kallman, *The Kingdom of God Is at Hand: The Christian Commonwealth in Georgia, 1896-1901* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2021), 5.

[28] Ibid., 27.

[29] Džalto Davor, *Anarchy and the Kingdom of God: From Eschatology to Orthodox Political Theology and Back* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2021), 9.

[30] Ibid., 23-24.

Understanding when the kingdom is coming, or has come, can have influence on the view of the Great Commission given by Jesus. This understanding helps those in Christ see the renewed complete work of Christ on the Cross which, when received, ushers believers into the kingdom of God.[31] Perrin's clarification of this matter assists the believer to recognize they have a kingdom role under God's kingdom rule. Perrin writes, "We need a critical mass of Christians who, not only pray, 'Your kingdom come!', but who also have some idea as to what that means so that, by God's grace, the kingdom of heaven may also become a kingdom on earth."[32] One of the keyways to participate in kingdom of God is to effectively make disciples of Jesus.[33]

<div align="center">Culture of Kingdom Mobilization</div>

Making disciples of Jesus is a cultural mindset that is built by bringing a life under the Lordship of Christ and then poured out through the body of Christ. This activity must always be guarded as the church culture can be influenced by outside sources to derail the cause of Christ.[34] Culture in the church is to be determined by the Bible and upheld by the order and governance of the church (Acts 14:23; Eph. 4; 1 Tim. 3:1-7). When a church does not understand their culture, they leave themselves open for interpretation, subjecting themselves to decreased retention or decline. These changes occur when problems challenge original intentions such as making disciples of Jesus and continual expansion of the Kingdom of God.[35] If culture circumvents the

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[31] Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 36.

[32] Ibid.

[33] David Greenlee, Mark Galpin, Andrea Christel, and Cameron Willett, "Exploring the Intersection of Community Development, the Least Reached and Emerging, Vibrant Churches," *Transformation* 37, no. 2 (2020): 109.

[34] J. R. Woodward and Dan White Jr., *The Church As Movement: Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 29.

[35] George Barna, *America at the Crossroads: Explosive Trends Shaping America's Future and What You Can Do about It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 91.

effort of reproducing disciples of Jesus, the result can be catastrophic, causing decline of a local church or even the death of a local church.

Understanding a healthy culture of church requires the church to look at unhealthy church cultures. Churches that are declining are traditionally losing previous attenders and not gaining or retaining new attendees. In the book *Reclaimed Church,* the author summarizes multiple reasons for this decline; three of them stand out as comparable reasons for cultural kingdom mobilization: 1) They neglect to pass down leadership to the next generation, 2) They value preference over need, and 3) they cease to be a part of the community that surrounds the church.[36] Other books agree to this way of thinking and come to similar conclusions. For instance, Thom Rainer discusses how church culture, if not assessed, can lead to stagnate behavior: "But when we avoid culture, we stop reaching our communities. We stop serving the least of these. We stop evangelizing. We stop being the church."[37] These cultural norms are well identified in these books, but the one that holds the strongest influence is the inability to pass on the leadership to the next generation.[38]

For a culture of kingdom mobilization to take place, the church must identify how to pass the best practices onto the next generations. First and foremost, the church needs to understand their culture, both church fellowship and the community in which they reside. One author notes, "Exegeting a culture is an art and a science. It is understanding the people and community God has called us to inhabit, so that the power of the gospel might fully connect and be

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[36] Bill Henard, *ReClaimed Church: How Churches Grow, Decline, and Experience Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 62.

[37] Thom Rainer, *Anatomy of a Revived Church: Seven Findings About How Congregations Avoided Death* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020), 119.

[38] Ibid*.,* 56.

transformative."[39] The church cannot just simply want to exemplify gospel activity, they must do the ground-breaking work of personifying the relationship with Christ to pass on the gospel to the next generation.[40] They must be willing to dismiss comfort and welcome the opportunity to share the gospel in their culture.[41] This cultural shift occurs with greater impact when the church calls their people to commitment through membership.[42]

Health and Vitality

If membership is a healthy step for those involved in the life of the church, then a church must ask the question, what is healthy? A healthy member is one who adheres to biblical principles in their daily lives.[43] These principles take root when someone choses to participate in spiritual disciplines such as reading the Bible, prayer, participating in the local church, and being servant minded. Through these activities, they gain a trust that encourages healthy faith-filled dependence on God.[44] A faith-filled individual seeks community relationship within the church to keep fostering emotional spiritual health knowing that it is advocated by God through the Scriptures (Heb. 10:24-25).[45] These individuals also seek the mentorship of those with multiple years of experience beyond their own. People who are looking for mentorship do so with the

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[39] Woodward, *The Church as a Movement*, 192.

[40] George Barna, *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Plan for Your Life and Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 61.

[41] Mark Eduard Yu, "Discovering Best Practices of Contextual Discipleship Program Leading to Church Growth of Multi-Site Churches: Implementing Best Practices of Contextual Discipleship Program for Win Churches in the Philippines," (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2023), 103-104.

[42] Rainer, *Anatomy of a Revived Church*, 104.

[43] Ignatius W. Ferreira and Wilbert Chipenyu, "Church Decline: A Comparative Investigation Assessing More than Numbers," *In Die Skriflig: Tydskrif Van Die Gereformeerde Teologiese Vereniging* 55, no. 1 (2021): 8.

[44] Woodward, *The Church as a Movement*, 112.

[45] Tamara L. Anderson and Shelly A. Skinner, "Feelings: Discipleship that Understands the Affective Processes of a Disciple of Christ," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 1 (04, 2019): 77.

intention of being healthy so that when they make disciples they come from a place of emotional and spiritual maturity.[46]

Hospitality

Healthy people tend to demonstrate an attribute of hospitality. In fact, some credible sources claim that hospitality has a strong correlation with spiritual vitality.[47] This hospitable characteristic is critical to a culture of kingdom mobilization. When the culture of a church is hospitable, they can address needs and deliver proper care. This hospitable care comes from a mentality of choosing to be present in the conversation.[48] Hospitality is a sign of a healthy disciple. As seen all throughout Scripture, the act of being hospitable has the powerful potential to restore relationships.[49]

Most of the books and articles in this category did not deviate far from one another. If the church, the people, operate out of a spirit of hospitality, barriers can be torn down and the church can gain ground with those in need. This hospitable character should be trustworthy when dealing with a declining or dying church. Hospitality is simply understanding who lives next door, recognizing their need, and working to assist in that need.[50] In a Barna study posted in July 2023, research discovered that unchurched adults were more appealed to value a church that

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[46] Anderson and Skinner, "Feelings," 77.

[47] Craig C. Kraft, "Welcoming Strangers: Church Revitalization through the Practice of Biblical Hospitality," *Journal of Asian Mission* 22, no. 1 (May 2021): 167.

[48] Jason Young and Jonathan Malm, *The Come Back Effect: How Hospitality Can Compel Your Church's Guests to Return* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 45.

[49] Ibid., 154. Hospitality is a powerful practice, with the potential to bring restoration and revitalization to souls in need. It is a virtue espoused in Scripture seen through God's earliest interactions with the patriarchs right through the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles.

[50] Ibid., 170.

could demonstrate they were a safe place for hurting people.[51] Regular church attendees had a

higher expectation of this same perspective.

Missional Mindset

"Missional church" has been a buzz phrase throughout the last two decades. It is the idea

of encouraging a church community to be incarnational, living and serving within their local city,

region, or area where they exist.[52] God is calling the followers of Christ to be the representatives

in the community to bring about gospel saturation, not only through knowledge, but acting and

doing.[53] The concern with missional movement is twofold: 1) missional movements are similar

to activity in the emerging church movement which sometimes championed social justice over

gospel expression[54] and 2) Missional movements can also become individual efforts rather than

the effort of the overall body, relying on the few to do the work of the many.[55] The idea of one or

the few individuals committed to the cause has a positive and negative return. The few people

that are invested can become resentful of the other people in the fellowship who refuse to try.[56]

Other times, the few people invested begin to expose how and where people can be impactful

with a missional movement.

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[51] Barna Group, "2 Things Your Church Space Should Represent to Visitors," July 19, 2023. https://www.barna.com/research/church-space-visitors/. Thinking about Christian churches, close to half of unchurched adults (45%) strongly agree churches should be a safe place for hurting people. Additionally, when asked the purpose of a church building, second on the list among unchurched adults is providing safety and security (36%).

[52] Grandinetti, "Identifying Best Practices for a Missional Approach," 154.

[53] Ibid., 153.

[54] Sabrina Müller, "Church Development from a Missional Perspective," *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 36, no. 1 (2019): 142.

[55] Ibid., 140.

[56] Frederik R. L. Coetzee, Malan Nel, and Johannes J. Knoetze, "Evangelism as an Invitation to Missional Discipleship in the Kingdom of God," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 44, no. 1 (2023): 5.

The activity of a missional mindset (movement) is not only the pursuit of advocating for those in need, but helping to fulfill their greatest need, which is the need for Christ.[57] A person who has missional mindset is someone with a Great Commission mindset as they aim to do the will of their heavenly Father.[58] Individuals with a missional mindset want to engage other believers as they see the task as larger than themselves.[59] These missional minded people share the goals and release leadership opportunity to others in the church body. Position is not the determining influencer for these individuals as vision and action guide them to fulfill the missional agenda.[60]

Sending Mindset

Within a missional mindset a church can demonstrate a similar goal by instituting a persistent desire to send. The root of this approach is found in Christ as he modeled for humanity how to call, equip, and send.[61] Therefore the church's responsibility is to identify believers with the potential to go, equip them for the work, and send them to fulfill the task of infusing new gospel outposts. When the church sends in unity, they can create opportunities for them to be unified, not only as a staff, but as a broader fellowship.[62] The church that operates with a mentality to send does not depend on one individual to inspire missions. These fellowships depend on developing the people of the church to steward their giftings and see the world

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[57] Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 27.

[58] Grandinetti, "Identifying Best Practices for a Missional Approach," 11.

[59] Daniel Thomas Rumple, "Training Pastors to Discover, Develop, and Deploy Church Planters in West Virginia," (DMin diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023), 59.

[60] Ibid., 25.

[61] Ibid., 82.

[62] Kraft, "Welcoming Strangers," 165.

through the lens of the Great Commission.[63] In the book *Gaining by Losing*, author J. D. Greear

implies that the ability to send comes from a spirit of generosity.[64]

This generosity takes shape when Christ begins to work in the believer and the believer

starts to see what God is desiring to do in the world. A culture of sending is formed when the

generosity of the people chooses to be a part of planting churches, becoming foreign

missionaries, a student surrendering summers for missions, and small groups adopting a

missional mentality in the community. The generosity is exemplified when the church leadership

decides to be generous by example and send their best for kingdom advancement.[65] Church

planting or church adoptions are not the result of a denomination network or individuals sending

people to establish the work. The work begins to move toward establishment when the church

sends their very best.[66]

Obedience Mindset

One author writes, "Missional churches teach to obey, rather than to know as they

emphasize practical implications of faith and how to apply them to everyday life."[67] The

missional mindset is a response to reflect Christ and share the gospel. This response is the

attribute of faithful obedience demonstrated in persistent activity. If God has made mankind

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[63] J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 109. Our missions' pastors should not do missions for the church; they should catalyze missions in the church. Big difference. They should not be leading in missions as much as creating opportunities for others to lead in missions.

[64] Ibid., 41. When Paul aims to cultivate generosity of spirit in us, he points us toward the generosity of Christ for us.

[65] Dino Senesi, *Sending Well* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 163.

[66] Ibid., 164. Both senders are vital to God's mission; but both have unique roles. Agencies don't send. Denominations don't send. They support and assist those who do send— beginning with the local church.

[67] Kevin Blackwell, "An Analysis and Critique of Disciple Making within Ecclesial Movements in the United States, 1970-2020, with a View Toward Implementing a Faithful New Testament Missio Ecclesia," (PhD diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023), 176.

righteous through Christ, then the desire to flee from the chains of sin and walk in a manor

pleasing to Him is beneficial for the believer.[68] Therefore, the Christ follower finds greater joy in

obedience, rather than in the desires and sin of the world.

<p align="center">Revitalization and Renewal</p>

Revitalization of local churches is occurring at a steady pace in the United States of

America by using the attribute of merging two local church bodies.[69] In fact the rate of growth of

these types of situations is 2% annually, which equates to six thousand churches.[70] The mergers

that tend to work are typically when healthier, and most often larger, churches step in and either

rebirth or adopt dying and/or declining churches.[71] Healthier churches should not only line up

with good tactics, but they should also represent characteristics of Christ's truth, holiness,

mission, and unity.[72] Christ prayed over these areas in an aspiration for the church and for His

disciples (John 17). Thus, what makes a revitalization take shape? Does the church revitalize

because the proper format of revitalization is followed? Or does the church revitalize because

they refuse to die?[73]

Rainer, in his book *Anatomy of a Revived Church,* claims that churches can choose to

live. Churches have the capacity to plateau and die as well if they persist in shifting the blame. If

the churches in the world today would take responsibility for their lack of obedience they might

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[68] Mark Colebank, "Obedience Oriented Discipleship: A Mixed Methods Study of Effective Discipleship Models in Select Southern Baptist Churches," (EdD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 12-13.

[69] Tomberlin and Bird, *Better Together,* 4.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., 62.

[72] John Stott, *The Church: God's Word for Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 53.

[73] Rainer, *Anatomy of a Revived Church*, 12.

find more solace in the truth rather than frustration in a lie.[74] The encouragement Rainer gives to the Church regarding churches that have revived is that they stop blaming a circumstance and become the solution by adhering to the Great Commandment and Great Commission.[75] This approach does not neglect the potential to use similar tactics discussed in other resources such as the book, *Better Together,* but the concept draws pastors and congregations back to the root of the issue: the loss of their first love, Christ.

Trust Mindset

The capacity to revive a church is dependency on God, and an understanding of healthy tactics that utilize biblical family language while building trust with churches in need. Many Americans have lost trust in institutions over the past thirty years as multiple generations have passed down their concerns to the next generation.[76] However, now, more than ever, most people have allowed an openness that was not previously seen in culture. Through social media large quantities of information has been put out into the world. People are operating with an openness to allow a stranger to couch surf or rent a room overnight. The delivery guy can drop off groceries and other packages inside a costumer's house. From initial appearance culture seems more receptive and trusting of local businesses even compared to the modern church.[77] This presents a unique difficulty when a new church comes to join in with an establishing or established community.

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[74] Rainer, *Anatomy of a revived Church*, 24.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Amy Valdez Barker, *Trust by Design: The Beautiful Behaviors of an Effective Church Culture* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 25-26.

[77] Ibid., 13.

Trust starts with the leadership. Leadership is responsible not only to build trust, but to champion trust in the organization. When leadership trust increases so does the morale and productivity of the organization.[78] Trust, in many of the writings notated in this thesis, has an incredible alignment with care and the quality of the productivity. Groups can still lack trust and be productive in an organization, but productivity is slow and builds transactional relationships with an objective of getting work done.[79] Teams or groups that lack trust are more prone to stray from good moral character.[80] Individuals feel as though they must hide information or lie about circumstances because they do not believe vulnerability is valued. The tension an organization should consider is whether they pursue high performers or people who demonstrate high trust.

The culmination of the messages of *Anatomy of a Revived Church* and *Better Together* work together to give the church multiple considerations to address regarding trust during revitalization. These books can work in tandem, especially if a church merger is being considered. However, a strong argument must be made to address the fact that church mergers can only take shape if trust is built between the churches.[81] Trust is not given because the church has size or experience; trust is earned when integrity is evident. People need to see how the organization and leaders work, and how Jesus has responded in the church who is looking to adopt.[82] Tomberlin and Bird add, "Mergers are built on trust and faith. Trust is earned by demonstrating genuine love and concern for the joining congregation, not just for the gain of

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[78] David Horsager, "How Chapter 13," in *Trusted Leader* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2021), 106.

[79] Simon Sinek, *The Infinite Game* (New York, NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2019), 85.

[80] Ibid., 86.

[81] Tomberlin and Bird, *Better Together*, 30.

[82] David Greenlee, et al., "Exploring the Intersection of Community Development, the Least Reached and Emerging, Vibrant Churches," *Transformation* 37, no. 2 (2020): 111.

their facilities, assets, or increased attendance. Faith is extended by the joining church when it believes the lead church is trustworthy."[83] In the book *Trusted Leader*, trust is built when the leader or organization is clear, compassionate, maintains good character, displays competency and commitment, as well as looks to connect, contribute, and be consistent. No greater place should trust be displayed than within the confines of a local church, especially one that is looking to adopt and steward another fellowship. Trust is deeply connected by care but infused by vision. Therefore, if people gain a grasp of the kingdom of God and are willing to be mobilized and missional with the gospel, the possibility of renewal or revitalization of a church can take shape.

<div align="center">Culture of Equipping</div>

Worship on Sunday

Many authors acknowledge the early days of corporate worship to have taken place during the time of Moses.[84] One such author suggests this as the starting point because this is where God met with His people to start a covenant with the tribe of Israel.[85] Since the time of Moses the followers of God have been taught how to worship, but the question that must be answered is how were they equipped for worship? Worship is the decision to turn the whole of oneself surrendered to glorification of God the Trinity.[86] First, the argument can be made that

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[83] Tomberlin and Bird, *Better Together*, 159.

[84] Yeon Suk Choi, "The Role of Music Ministry in Fostering Intergenerational Corporate Sunday Worship Service in the Korean Church," (PhD diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022). 27

[85] Rory Noland, *Transforming Worship: Planning and Leading Sunday Services As If Spiritual Formation Mattered* (Wheaton, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 23.

[86] Michael Pasquarello, *The Beauty of Preaching: God's Glory in Christian Proclamation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020), 65. God's glory require a giving away of one's whole self, since without wholehearted surrender faith remains divided and turned away from God. The nature of Jesus's ministry is the very enactment of God's reconciliation with estranged creatures that draws them into the Trinitarian communion of love. Such love grasps the whole person in single- minded attentiveness and desire, which is a letting go of the self into the self- giving of God.

one of the best strategies for developing proper worship starts in the home. The home for

believers can be an incubator preparing children for future ministry expression.[87] However, those

individuals who have never worshiped in the home, as they became believers later in life, would

find the first-hand experience of worship in the church. This may be one argument as to why the

gathering of believers is so vital. Yes, the believer is capable of worship on their own, but the

scriptures do not validate worship only from the home. Worship, described in the New

Testament, is intended to be celebrated with multiple families and individual Christ followers

coming around to worship God.[88]

Preaching

The great controversy of the later end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-

first century is addressing the purpose of Sunday morning worship. This controversy focuses the

debate on whether the primary, or even secondary, means of worship is to be appealing to a

broader audience including unbelievers.[89] The other side of the argument is that worship is

intended to be a setting for believers centered around edifying practices and symbolic ordinances

meant to glorify God.[90] Churches who adhere to this standard are not dismissing the unbeliever;

they are simply focusing on the drive to gather as the church, an assembly of Christ followers.

Whereas the other debate of creating churches unbelievers want to attend is not necessarily

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[87] Patrick Lafayette Vincent, "Developing a Resource for Educating and Equipping the Families of Willow Tree Baptist Church to Cultivate a Culture of Worship in the Home," (DMin diss., Eastern University, 2023), 29.

[88] Tony Merida, *Gather: Loving Your Church as You Celebrate Christ together* (Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2022), . Corporate worship should aim to exalt God, and this brings joy to God's people. We go wrong when we aim for the second without majoring on the first; that is, we do not gather for entertainment but for exaltation.

[89] Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 158.

[90] Merida, *Gather*, page number(s).

dismissing the need to use the Sunday worship as an avenue to practice traditions to glorify God. The debate is in how both groups interpret the ecclesial language conveyed in the New Testament.

Preaching is a staple of Sunday morning worship as the exhortation of a pastor's conviction, which should be rooted in the Scriptures.[91] Some pastors preach to solely edify the saints to equip them for the gospel work.[92] They will traditionally wrap the edification in the covering of the gospel presenting a means for those who are not Christians, but that is the extent of the message to the unbeliever. Other pastors, in what is referred to as seeker-driven or seeker-sensitive churches, present every ounce of their presentation with consideration of those who are not Christ followers.[93] One author suggests that either approach still must be subject to the work and affirmation of the Holy Spirit, which should result in fruit.[94] Can a seeker-sensitive pastor have an equal impact for the gospel as much as the pastor who preaches for the sake of nurturing and equipping? This may depend heavily on what other nurturing and equipping steps take place in the life of the church.

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[91] John Piper, *Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 15, 25. I believe with all my heart that preaching in corporate worship is essential for the health and mission of the church…My provocative bait is to say that the plan to meet weekly, say, for teaching but not worship is like the plan to marry without sex. Or eating without taste. Or discovery without delight. Or miracles without wonder. Or gifts without gratefulness. Or warnings without fear. Or repentance without regret. Or resolves without zeal. Or longings with- out satisfaction. Or seeing without savoring.

[92] Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 4th ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 56.

[93] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (City, State: Publisher, year published), 1066. The result is that Sunday morning services are addressed to (at most) the 10% of the audience that is non-Christian, and the remaining 90% of the audience that is Christian is left without substantial, in-depth Bible teaching month after month, year after year. Unless they seek out some other form of instruction, many remain frustrated, shallow, immature Christians. And the seeker-sensitive church is failing its responsibility to "present everyone *mature in Christ*" (Col. 1:28) on the Last Day. It has allowed one purpose of the church (evangelism) to crowd out another purpose of the church (nurturing believers to grow toward Christian maturity).

[94] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (London, UK: Penguin Publishing Group, 2015), 16.

The character of the preaching pastor also plays a significant role in the life of a church. In the last two decades multiple pastors responsible for the proclamation from the pulpit have been dismissed for various character issues. Humility, now more than ever, may be on the hearts and minds of a pastoral search team. Proclaiming the content of the Bible in any environment is a weighty responsibility. Preaching is the attempt of an individual standing in as a humble representative of Christ to convey truth to the church.[95] The concern of the preacher if this is to be the reality is to identify if the preaching presented demonstrates truth. Preaching also must be explored for its effectiveness and influence on the overall picture of church health.

Music

Most often the word worship leans into the means and use of music. Worship cannot be subjugated to just music, but singing music is a great tool in which to convey worship.[96] Worshiping God is to extend an acknowledgment of the worthiness of God's presence and holiness.[97] Worship through singing is intended to draw all the followers together with one voice to convey the absolute truths of God.[98] One of the concerns with music is the emotional pull the music can place on an individual's state of being.[99] However, one author suggests that music

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[95] Charles J. Kim, *The Way of Humility: St. Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, edited by Cathal Doherty (City, State: Catholic University of America Press, 2023), 53. As the Church is the body of Christ on earth and the preacher stands in Christ's place on earth, he has the unique role of embodying the humble Christ as a spectacle for the gathered faithful. He must be humble and must be a means of exhibiting that humility to the people, while pointing them towards the humility of Christ.

[96] Zach Neese, *How To Worship a King: Prepare Your Heart, Prepare Your World, Prepare The Way* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2015), 47.

[97] Ibid., 48. It is a compressed form of the Old English term worthship, and it literally means to give something worth— to demonstratively attribute value, especially to a deity or god.

[98] David Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing: Formation through Contemporary Worship Music* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), 53. The early church's use of music demonstrates this gathering function. In an oral culture, music itself was ubiquitous. The "one voice" of the church brought together a community of shared allegiance through communicating the distinct way of mutuality in Christian community.

[99] Neese, *How To Worship a King*, 47. Music moves our bodies. It inspires us to move, to sway, to dance. It quickens or slows the rhythms of our hearts. We were even created with musical instruments in our bodies. Our hands clap and feet stomp as percussion instruments. Our vocal cords work as both string and wind instruments. We

being sung by the people was intended to be an affirming expression leading to faith steps.[100] In other words, as the lyrics and music are sung, the content of the hymn would lead to making decisions which glorify a godly way of life. This activity of singing seems to suggest that emotions would be stirred toward the things of God rather than the self-serving desires of man.

Music, as well, plays with the great debate of appeal to the Christ follower or the lost soul. Some would say the intention is for both, a reminder of the salvific state of a Christian and an inspiration to those who do not "yet" affiliate with Christ. U2, a band primarily found in secular circles, sings with lyrics that ride the line of biblical implications.[101] This band has played a strong influence in reshaping the scope of the modern Christian music authors. They have been influenced by both the way of writing as well as the instrumental orchestration. This shift in what most people refer to as Christian worship music has been a primary catalyst in the controversy of contemporary versus traditional styles of worship. Perhaps humanity should consider that the debate should not just be about style, but maybe more so on the intention of the song that is written. Whether a person worships by taking in the Word through preaching or a congregation is singing along to a song, the intention of both should be seen through the lens of glorifying God. If that is the lens in which the church pursues, will the intention naturally be to call attention to God rather than draw attention to humanity?

Prayer

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are living instruments (some better tuned than others). Our bodies were made to be musical. That's why music affects and engages our bodies.

[100] Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing*, 53. The idea of participation in music was not distinct from participation in the identities, activities, and occasions that music served. Singing or lyrical speech was a vehicle for ideas and behaviors.

[101] Ibid., 125.

In the rhythm of worship, prayer is deeply embedded in the Sunday morning worship service. Prayer is a conversation reverently expressed from mankind to God as a conduit intended to build upon the relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To the average viewer, prayer seems supernatural as Christians are proclaiming adoration and petitioning the creator of the universe. Mankind prays individually and corporately to grant them greater understanding to assist the mind in processing truth.[102] One author even suggests that prayer is the start to all spiritual awakenings, and historical evidence validates that reality.[103] Both prayer for understanding and for a spiritual awakening can start with an individual, but also can work in the confines of corporate worship.

The question the congregation will wrestle through is discerning whether the prayer is a prayer of petition, shifting the heart of their heavenly Father, or is a prayer of clarification, shifting the congregation toward the heart of their heavenly Father. The tension of prayer should be approached with a knowledge of the Scripture and anticipation that God hears a believer's desires. A person is petitioning yet trusting that even in their petition God's sovereign plan is still unfolding with his direction.[104] In many ways for mankind, God's response to prayer and how He implements His response in the bigger picture is a mystery for those in Christ. Prayer ultimately returns man to a relationship with God where trust is at the center of the practice.[105]

Methodology, Liturgy, and Development

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[102] Piper, *Expository* Exultation, 126.

[103] Charles Thomas Lewis, Jr., "Far and Near: Christian Worship of the Transcendent and Immanent God of Wonders," (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), page number(s).

[104] Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York, NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2014), 183-184.

[105] Keller, *Prayer*, 118.

One methodology suggests equipping new leaders in a classroom setting going through the theological, biblical, and historical information on worship.[106] The other option is to equip by using both classroom and rehearsals to develop leaders for worship. This approach applies to all worship disciplines: prayer, singing, preaching, and meditating on the Word of God. These disciplines can be practiced independently as well, as they are private worship disciplines. The intent is to still give precedents to the historical, biblical, and theological while utilizing normal weekly rehearsals to develop practical skills.[107] One development practice is focused on a larger audience, whereas the other is devoted to a few specifically chosen individuals. The intent is to identify key leaders who have a capacity to develop others.[108] One approach, the classroom experience, maximizes time and capacity of participants to learn the disciplines. The other, a hybrid between classroom and rehearsal, promotes development through passing down expertise, granting availability to experience, and verbally clarifying expectation.

Within the confines of methodology, the fellowships need to determine what qualifies someone to lead in worship. In 1 Chronicles the writer states that the Levites were responsible for leading the nation in worship.[109] The Levites early on operated as the setup and teardown crew for tabernacle worship as they would carry the tabernacle and instruments to the next location during the exodus. Once the temple was established, they no longer carried the instruments or tabernacle but were still responsible for lifting up their God in praise.[110] These

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[106] Kevin Christopher Uhrich, "Developing a Discipleship Methodology to Equip Concord Baptist Church, Anderson, South Carolina, of the Need for Intergenerational Worship According to Biblical Principles," (DMin diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023), 88.

[107] Robert Todd Craig, "Mentoring Worship Leaders to Become Mentoring Worship Leaders," (DWS thesis, Liberty University, 2020), 8.

[108] Ibid., 10.

[109] Navigators. *1 and 2 Chronicles*. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2019). 9.

[110] Ben Hutchison, "1 & 2 Chronicles," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63, no. 1 (03, 2020): 185-7.

men must have been servant leaders as setting up and tearing down of the instruments and tabernacle would be a heavy task.

The setup of musicians early on was determined by King David as seen in the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles. Musicians were subordinate to the priests of the temple and numbered around four thousand individual men. There was an order to the presentation and the choir of men stood in front of the altar to praise and glorify God. These men are acknowledged as skillful and displayed a maturity both in age and character (1 Sam. 16:18; 1 Chron. 25:7; 2 Chron. 34:12; Ps. 137:5). The training to be a musician was quite intensive and took at least five years of preparation.[111] Based on these stipulations the church should explore a few considerations. The implications of these verses imply that worship was taken seriously in the culture. Worship stipulations were very high and required training that churches do not necessarily obligate people to engage in today. The fact that worship leaders during this error were between thirty and fifty would wipe out most of today's worship music culture.

Clearly, not all of David's stipulations are maintained in today's culture, but the churches should look at these passages to consider the high standard David upheld. Though the modern church does not lean into some of the expectations established in the Temple, they do want to guardrail the ministry to minimize distractions and maximize the acknowledgment of God. Therefore, mankind's methods for which they equip matter and should be assessed to demonstrate a value of the responsibility given to the church by God.

Discipleship Process

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[111] Samuele Bacchiocchi, "God and Music: Giving Jesus the Business; the Ministry of Music in the Bible," PraiseNet, March 4, 2000, https://praisenet.org/essentials/music/study/.

The process of discipleship starts with an agreed upon view of the basis for spiritual growth in a Christ-following church. The church's primary source for that baseline is the inspired word of God, the Bible.[112] In the confines of the Bible churches can find the activity of God and determine operations for ministry. Within the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John one can see a process in which to introduce salvation through Christ and a pathway toward maturity in Christ.[113] A church's process is considering the steps to maturity not necessarily a program.[114]

A process for discipleship in a church will want to explore what influences the congregants toward desired goals. If the goal is to maturely walk in a Christlike manner, as testimony of Christ's transformative power in the Christian, then the church will want ministries that motivate that lifestyle. For most church organizations that vehicle is small groups, or Sunday School, where smaller communities in the life of the church can utilize influence to reinforce goals. Influence is gained through the knowledge of the leader as well as by the reflection of their character. [115] A discipleship process is the activity developed by the church that moves people toward maturity in Christ. The church must identify and agree on the process of maturity,

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[112] Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 30. If a person does not regard the Bible as given by God and fully trustworthy, faith and spiritual formation have no solid basis. An abundance of historical evidence demonstrates that once a person, church, or denomination begins to depart from strong conviction about the trustworthiness of the Bible, it is merely a matter of time before any sense of godliness evaporates.

[113] Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2010), 41. Let's look at Jesus' process for discipleship. Over the years, our church sought to study the Gospels to discover Jesus' process for making disciples. Remember, we believe He was the greatest disciple-maker in history — He knew what He was doing. As we studied, we saw a pattern that was passed on to the early church.

[114] Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 89.

[115] Joseph Frejosky, "Identifying Leadership Development Principles to Equip, Train, and Develop Small Group Leaders in the Church for Ministry," (DMin diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023), 16.

so disciples have clear pathways.[116] A shared term used in today's culture is that church is creating a simple church mindset, helping people understand their next step.[117] These steps are growth mile markers that signify someone participating in a ministry that can offer insight to move further into maturity with Christ.[118]

Before further discussion of a simple church mindset, one may want to identify mile markers that signify maturity in Christ. Maturity can be evidenced through two ways of thought: 1) When someone comes to Christ, they experience a change in identity and 2) A new follower also feels and is called to a new way of living out their life. The first is a sense of being and the second is a conviction toward doing. Out of the new-found being or identity of a new believer, they feel Holy Spirit conviction that inspires them to chase after obedience. A Christ follower's understanding of who they are is a reminder that God desired to save people.[119] A Christ-follower's understanding of what to do or how to live in obedience is discovered in their pre-willingness to submit to Christ under his Lordship.[120] Robby Gallaty suggests that defining markers that need to be evaluated in the church are missional, accountable, reproducible, communal, and scriptural.[121] Chasing after these markers will help the discipled individual better understand who they are in Christ and what Christ has designed them to pursue. Other authors have identified similar markers with different language and that is what is communicated in a simple church.

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[116] Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups: Creating a New Scorecard for Groups* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 52.

[117] Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 66.

[118] Ibid., 25.

[119] Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come*, 76.

[120] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 20.

[121] Robby Gallaty, *MARCS of a Disciple: a Biblical Guide For Gauging Spiritual Growth* (Hendersonville, TN: Replicate Resources, 2016), 96.

A simple church is concerned with staying on the pathway moving people toward Christ even when distraction or attacks form.[122] Attacks come by way of people or culture attempting to present a deviation to the plan. Yet churches that see steady growth tend not to allow distractions to attack what is effectively working.[123] This infuses a lot of expectations on one specific ministry that at times acts as the reinforcer for the church. Small groups in the life of a church have allowed congregations to empower people more rapidly than mainline traditional Sunday School and develop leaders at a steady pace.[124]

Some debate can be made that small groups can become the all-encompassing approach to equipping for life and ministry. Most may assume these would traditionally be house churches focused where similar expectations of ministry evangelism are encouraged. That assumption is not always the case when you consider movements like Saddleback Church in California who chooses growth over control.[125] House churches compared to Saddleback's approach would agree on the desire for creating a relational independent function of group dynamic. House churches may differ as they choose control over growth as the intention is to deepen relationship.[126] In house churches the encouragement of the discipleship process is done in one central environment rather than multiple areas of ministry activity.[127] On the other end, the church that hosts a large group gathering working in conjunction with groups encourages

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[122] James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap--and Others Don't*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2001), 91.

[123] Craig Groeschel, *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get it and Keep it* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 60.

[124] Carl F. George and Warren Bird, *How to Break Growth Barriers: Revise Your Role, Release Your People, and Capture Overlooked Opportunities for Your Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2017), 138.

[125] Steve Gladen, *Planning Small Groups with Purpose: A Field-Tested Guide to Design and Grow Your Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 34.

[126] Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift,* 27.

[127] Alexia Salvatierra and Brandon Wrencher, *Buried Seeds: Learning from the Vibrant Resilience of Marginalized Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 241.

maturity to be developed through various outlets such as Sunday worship, small groups, serve teams, and missions. These independent outlets work in conjunction with one another under the headship of a local church. Saddleback would fit this category, but also encourages that their five purposes are active in the life of the small group, which should lead participants to maturity in Christ.[128]

The discipleship process has a variety of definitions, but the goal of the process produces dependency on God and an ability to reflect Christlike character.[129] Saddleback is one of several examples of a simple church with a unique perspective on small group, which have a sense of independence and aim to mature believers in Christ. Small groups can be the primary catalyzer for many churches, but the ultimate intent of these groups is to help with spiritual growth. Still in church culture 48% of church attendees agree that the local church today still operates to support spiritual growth.[130] Therefore, if the church is still considered a valuable asset to the attendees, churches should look at how their vision, as well as methods, can continue to maintain this status or even grow the percentage of adult responses.

Evangelism Tactics

At times evangelism has been equated to more of an event that an individual invites someone to attend rather than a participatory activity of the believer.[131] Whether a crusade from

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[128] Gladen, *Planning Small Groups with Purpose*, 20. Our small group philosophy reflects the philosophy of the overall church. It is not enough for us to think about these purposes in the corporate structure of the church alone. It is not enough for people to be exposed to the five purposes only on weekends. We want them to experience the five biblical purposes in the context of a small group so that ultimately they become part of daily life, a purpose driven life.

[129] Frejosky, "Identifying Leadership Development Principles," 66.

[130] Barna Group, "New Metrics for Measuring What Matters: Flourishing People and Thriving Churches," March 2, 2022, https://www.barna.com/research/churchgoers-new-metrics/.

[131] Nathan Feldmeth, et al., *Reformed and Evangelical across Four Centuries: The Presbyterian Story in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2022), 72.

the 1900s or the Great Awakening, the approach to evangelism was often an invite to visit a

community of people to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. During those points in time,

personal evangelism was not neglected but these crusades, or evangelistic meetings, were seen as

credible avenues for spreading the gospel. This effort puts all the responsibility to convey the

gospel on the preacher, potentially removing the mandate from the believer. However, the pastor

is not dismissed from the responsibility of preaching and prayer. In fact, many churches that

have high levels of evangelistic effectiveness have pastors that are well prepared in their

preaching and prayer time.[132]

The Great Commission is the reference point for most evangelists. Not Matthew 28:18-

20, but evangelists find solace in Mark 16:15, claiming that spreading the gospel is the

imperative to this passage.[133] However the Scriptures reveal that this is not a fair assessment for

either one of these passages to simplify them to one narrative. Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark

16:15 appear to emphasize a particular area of ministry life, but that does not infer that they are

diluting the other. The Bible calls for both discipleship and evangelism to be emphasized; in fact

they work very closely together.[134] Making disciples involves both justification and

sanctification. The evangelistic clarification states that Christ died for the sins of mankind so that

upon receiving Christ they can be justified through the act of his sacrifice.[135] Believers are

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[132] Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 39. In our research on effective evangelistic churches, we found that the leaders spent approximately twenty hours per week in sermon preparation and prayer. The leaders of the comparison (less evangelistic) churches spent only five hours per week in sermon preparation and prayer.

[133] Ernest L. Easley and Jordan Easley, *Resuscitating Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), 30.

[134] Easley and Easley, *Resuscitating Evangelism*, 31.

[135] Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap Between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 29. For centuries theologians have distinguished between justification one-time declaration that we are righteous— and sanctification— the ongoing process of becoming righteous.

sanctified when they are becoming more aware of Christ's work in them through the pursuit of getting to know God.[136] What both discipleship and evangelism offer the church is a reminder of the value of deep community. Sharing the joy of triumph over death through the finished work of Jesus Christ a disciple maker is leading a believer to embrace both justification and sanctification.[137]

Personal evangelism, or more recently referred to as relational evangelism, is another tactic utilized by believers and reinforced by churches. This tactic requires an intentional availability to both know the gospel well and an understanding of how to develop the conversation toward Christ. The relational evangelism strategy has more to do with long-term efforts of both sharing and displaying gospel continuity.[138] The idea is that the Christ follower gains influence while befriending others they wish to lead to Christ. The controversary with this strategy is that a Christian can waiver over time when God maybe calling them to convey the gospel in the moment.

Perhaps the greatest question that evangelism must address is in God's all-knowing, all-present, and all-powerful capacity: what role does humanity truly play? Does God not sometimes work outside the church to spread the gospel?[139] God does expose the potential of the gospel to Cornelius in Acts 10, yet God invites Peter in to help Cornelius better understand the good news

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[136] Ernest and Easley, *Resuscitating Evangelism*, 32.

[137] Dave Earley and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is…: How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 16. Deep happiness never comes through focusing on yourself. It is the result of living a life centered on God and directed toward others. True joy does not reach its climax in a private communion with God. Rather it reaches its fullest extent only when it is compounded by the joy of seeing others share in it with us.

[138] Ryan Denton, *Ten Modern Evangelism Myths: A Biblical Corrective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021), 26.

[139] Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church: Becoming the body of Christ* (London, UK: Hymns Ancient & Modern, 2021), 94.

he has received. Perhaps to better understand the argument one can take a note from the Pastor John Piper: "Faith is the living sign that we have been born again. The miracle of the new birth brings faith into existence. Therefore, the Bible does not allow the argument that, in order to be accountable before God, faith must be a doable decision. Before it is doable by me, it must be given by God. My ultimate self-determination is not a biblical assumption."[140]

Theological Foundations

The key three-pronged elements of the church are spoken of multiple times in Scripture that help the followers of Christ understand in great capacity what matters. Throughout both the Old and New Testament, the key three-pronged elements were encouraged by the leaders of the people of God. The focus of this theological foundation section is to address the key three-pronged elements and their theological implications. Three-pronged elements which will be discussed in this section are Sunday worship, evangelistic tactics, and discipleship process.

Revitalization and Renewal

Church revitalization is not discussed in Scripture; however, Paul persists often to get the church back on task with the gospel. Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth starts with Paul acknowledging division and encouraging them toward restoration. In verse 10, Paul encourages them to be "made complete in," (New American Standard Bible) or "be united in." (English Standard Version) One commentator states,

> The phrase "you may be refurbished" (ἦτε κατηρτισμένοι , ēte katērtismenoi) is a
> perfect passive periphrastic that means to be "put in order or proper condition," to be
> "restored." It was used as a surgical term for setting bones and as a metaphor for

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[140] John Piper, *What Is Saving Faith?: Reflections on Receiving Christ As a Treasure* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 25.

"resetting" broken relationships and reconciling factions (Lightfoot 1895: 47; M. Mitchell 1993: 74– 75).[141]

In verse 17, Paul reminds the church that he came to preach the gospel so that they will know the meaning and value of sharing the truth with others.

John, in the book of Revelation, writes to the church at Ephesus, stating clearly that they have gotten away from their call. The implications of this language seemed to reference that they may have been worshipping other idols and lost sight of what they had in Christ.[142] This warning grants them time before their lampstand is taken to return to the singular worship of God. In so doing, the Ephesian church can restore the relationship with God through worship.

Sunday Morning Worship

Worship of God has been instituted into creation since the beginning of the Genesis narrative. Even in God's unveiling of the heavens and the earth, creating the mountains and the sea, the beasts of the field and breathing life into man, creation revealed His glory. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1, translation). The passage is intended to display how creation gives glory to God, yet the passage also reminds

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[141] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 55.

[142] G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1093. 2:7 The admonitory phrase "the one having ears, let him hear" is based on virtually the same wording found in the Synoptics, which itself alludes to Isa. 6:9–10 (cf. also Jer. 5:21; Ezek. 3:27; 12:2). Part of the point of the exhortation in Isa. 6 was a warning to the remnant not to participate in idolatry, and the context of Rev. 2– 3 indicates that this warning still applies (cf., e.g., the letters to Pergamum and Thyatira; see further Beale 1997a). "To eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" is alluded to again at the conclusion of the book as a picture of forgiveness and consequent experience of God's intimate presence (22:2– 4). The same end-time hope is referred to with virtually identical language in several early Jewish texts (see T. Levi 18:10– 11; Pss. Sol. 14:2– 3, 10; 4 Ezra 8:52; 2 En. 8:3– 7; cf. also 1 En. 25:4– 7; 3 En. 23:18; 4 Ezra 2:12; L.A.E. 28:2– 4; Odes Sol. 20:7). In Gen. 2– 3, as here, the image of the "tree of life" together with the "paradise of God" symbolizes the life-giving presence of God, from which Adam and Eve are separated when they are cast out of the garden paradise (cf. 2:9; 3:23– 25 LXX; Ezek. 28:13; 31:8– 9).

mankind that by giving glory to God, mankind can gain knowledge.[143] The act of worship,

informed by Scripture, suggests that worship is built into God's people and is the purpose for

which they live (Isa. 43:7, 21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 2:10). Scripture claims that worship of God

points man's attention to the all-knowing God giving them clarity on their purpose in life.

Matthew 4:10 affirms the value of worship through the lips of Jesus returning Satan to the words

of God during the temptation and reminding him of Deuteronomy 6:13: "Then Jesus said to him,

'Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you

serve."'" (Matt. 4:10, translation). Though Deuteronomy uses "fear" as opposed to Jesus' use of

the word "worship" the wording and imperative is the same.[144] The attention of Christ could not

be swayed from the order and plan of God.

Old Testament Worship New Testament Worship

Worship, in the confines of a gathering of God's people, is articulated in Exodus as they

worship at Sinai after leaving Egypt. Exodus 19-34 lays out the expectations of the setup for the

continued worship of God. These passages lay out how, where, and when worship is instructed to

take place among God's people. One of the most notable notions in these chapters is the call to

give offering to set aside for God for the sake of establishing worship among the people. John

Durham writes,

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[143] Peter C. Craigie and Marvin Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, vol. 19, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2016), 181. That is, as mankind reflects upon the vast expanse of heaven, with its light by day and its intimation of a greater universe by night, that reflection may open up an awareness and knowledge of God, the Creator, who by his hands created a glory beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

[144] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 176. There can only be one answer, and again it is drawn from Deuteronomy. The wording of the quotation from Deut. 6:13 differs from the LXX in substituting "worship" for "fear" in the first line and in drawing out the point more clearly by the addition of "only" in the second; the first change makes the intention of the OT text clear in the light of the devil's demand for "worship," and the second brings into the quotation what immediately follows in Deut. 6:14, the prohibition of following any other gods.

The call for materials is prefaced by the instruction that the materials be given first as an offering (ת רו מ ה,) that is, as an act of worship, and second, as a joyous expression to be made only by those "compelled" by their own desire to do so. Just how excessively successful this call was is shown by the sequel narrative, which dwells repetitively on the abundance of the fine materials given (35:20-29; 36:2-7; cf. 38:21-31; 39:32-43).[145]

Worship is an aspiration of surrender, articulated throughout the Scriptures, pointing God's people back to the recognition that God is provider. Each element leading through the temple courts into the original tabernacle symbolized how God operates with His people. The layout of the temple was an explanation of worship that God was gifting His people. In the temple the people of God could see how God was going to restore them and how the relationship with their Messiah would take shape.[146]

The temple had a one-way access point, in which scholars believe signifies there is one way to God (Exod. 27:16-19; John 14:6).[147] The entrance was guarded with a curtain covered in four colors blue, purple, scarlet, and white. Scholars have debated what these colors symbolize. Perhaps they are a reference for the four Gospel stories found in the New Testament, or maybe they are a telling of Christ as the gospel representation: Christ coming to earth, upholding a kingly position, dying for the sins of man, and being pure, capable of cleansing the sin of man.[148] As they come past the temple entrance into the temple court they would come across the altar of sacrifice, the laver, to the entrance of the Tabernacle which led to the Holy Place. In the Holy

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[145] John I. Durham, *Exodus,* vol 3 (New York, NY: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2015), 354.

[146] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Exodus* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2021), 502. That sense of divine accompaniment on the people's pilgrimage, literal in the actual years of wilderness wandering, acquires enduring theological meaning as a metaphor for the "journey" of faith.

[147] Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 859. The entrance was made of the same cloth that adorned the inside of the tabernacle: white linen embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet thread. This established a connection between the entrance to the tabernacle and what went on inside. It was the gateway to the Holy Place where God was.

[148] Ibid., 859.

Place was the menorah, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense just before the curtain covering the Holy of Holies (Exod. 26-27).

In the Gospel of John, there is a unique comparison in where he places an order of conversations like the way the temple is ordered. Much like the temple working from the inside out, John refers to each area as it occurs in the time of Jesus. John 6:35 refers to Jesus as the bread of life. In John 8:12 Jesus refers to himself as the light of the world. John 10:7 In Jesus says that he is the doorway for the sheep. In John 10:11 Jesus is the Good Shepherd. In John 11:25 Jesus states that he is the resurrection. In John 14:6 Jesus proclaims that He is the way. This pattern could be coincidence, but each is a reminder of why believers worship God. Ultimately the layout of the tabernacle split the groups into three types of people which was a representative nature of the fall.[149] The temple was a representation of the garden of Eden, and Jesus was the means of restoring the fall of humanity for them to return to a relationship with their creator God.[150]

The Tabernacle's inner portions were a reminder of man's time in the Garden, and how God dwelled with His people. Yet at this time in Exodus, intercession was required and only priests could go to the Holy Place as well as Holy of Holies. The non-priestly Israelites were then incapable of experiencing worship like the priests. Christ's activity on the Cross changed the availability of worship for all humanity as His death tore the curtain and the most Holy Place was left open. Christ's death and resurrection allowed mankind the capability of worship as part

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[149] Ryken and Hughes, *Exodus*, 860. The three main sections of the tabernacle—the courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place—separated three different kinds of worshipers. We encountered a similar situation back at Mount Sinai. Only Moses was allowed to go up the mountain and meet with God. He was the mediator, the man who represented the people before God. The elders were allowed to approach God, and even to commune with him, but they could only go halfway up. Then down at the bottom were the rest of God's people, who were not allowed to approach him at all but had to stay off God's holy mountain.

[150] Wright, *Exodus*, 502-503.

of the holy nation. Through spiritual adoption, God extended a priestly calling for those who would receive Christ to worship in spirit and in truth (Luke 23:44-47; John 1:14, 4:24; Eph. 1:3-10; 1 Pet. 2:9).

First Peter chapter two dives deeper into the change after the vail is torn. The chapter refers to the followers of Christ being living stones to build a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:4). Some argue that the use of the word house is not a referral back to temple.[151] Why not? The temple is where the people worshiped God and numerous biblical references suggest that the bodies of the people of God are temples of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; 1 Cor. 6:19). The gathering of the saints would appear to be a culmination of stones coming together to worship in unification reflecting the operation in the tabernacle.[152] However, now the priestly opportunities are extended to all, and the people can go straight to God corporately as well as individually.[153]

The idea of the people of God coming together as living stones is to signify the concept of the church coming together as evidence of the Holy Spirit in a community. Peter uses the phrase "being built up," which seems to be the imperative, but some could also argue that verse four gives a lead in to the imperative "come to Him."[154] Neither of these are the imperative as scholars place more value on verses one and two. The use of the verbiage "long for" holds

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[151] Ruth Anne Reese, *1 Peter* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 117.

[152] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 71. To speak of a growing temple of living stones stretches an Old Testament figure to convey New Testament reality. The figure of the tabernacle/temple pictured the presence of God among his people. God's tent was pitched in the centre of Israel's wilderness camp; in the land of promise God made the temple at Jerusalem his dwelling. God was there, among his people; they belonged to him, and he to them.

[153] Ibid., 72.

[154] Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 111. Both NEB and RSV, in order to make sense of what they take to be the command "be built." must shift the main imperatival force back to the participle in verse 4 and translate it, "Come to him." But if Peter's main command was to come to Christ (and thus be built up), it would have been much more clearly conveyed by making the verb 'come' an imperative. (Note the contrast with vv. 1–2, where the main force is not in the participle 'putting away' but in the imperative 'long for'.).

greater weight to the overall understanding of the passage. If "long for" is the imperative this puts a great deal of weight on the concept of worship especially after one considers the emphasis of spiritual sacrifice seen in verse 5b. In Wayne Grudem's commentary on 1 Peter he suggests that spiritual sacrifice is referring to the service (Rom. 12:1-2), utilization of spiritual gifts for evangelistic endeavors (Phil. 4:18), singing praise (Heb. 13:15), and doing good while also sharing possessions (Heb. 13:16).[155] These church expressions appear to be evidence of how both the Old Testament and New Testament followers worshiped God subjecting their ways to the Great Commandment (Deut. 6:4-9; Matt. 22:37-40).

In Nehemiah 8, the reminder of surrender and a return to worship is brought to light as, for years, Israel had not worshiped in Jerusalem the same as they were asked to in Exodus. The book of Nehemiah is the story of rebuilding Jerusalem after the inhabitants had been exiled due to war and neglected God-honoring worship. In Nehemiah 8:4-8, the primary focus is the reading of the law for the sake and understanding of the people.[156] Nehemiah 8 also returns the focus back to the feasts that were established in Exodus. The Feast of Booths is observed, and they utilize the time to commemorate what God had done for them in the past.[157] Not only do they commemorate the exodus, but they acknowledge the provision of God throughout all of history. The lack of worship and commemoration of God's activity was the reason why they were

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[155] Grudem, *1 Peter*, 111.

[156] H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah,* vol 16 (New York, NY: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2015), 335. Finally, it should be observed that there is really only one focus of attention in this passage, namely, the reading of the Law. Everything else, including the most obviously liturgical elements, which are found in vv 5-6, is subordinated to this.

[157] James M. Hamilton, Jr., *Exalting Jesus in Ezra-Nehemiah*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 5z.

rebuilding Jerusalem. This worship experience persists in chapter nine through the attribute of

confession that leads the people back to acknowledge God's mercy.[158]

The New Testament reveals similarities with worship, specifically in Colossians.

Colossians addresses that God's people are to gather:

> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all
> wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts
> to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord
> Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col. 3:16-17, English Standard
> Version).

Paul shifts his word choice from "let" to "put on."[159] This shift infers that the phrase "put on" is

something man can do while the word "let" is something God does for the believer. The

emphasis on the overall church is placed on verse 15 encouraging the participation of activity as

church wide.[160] Therefore, verse 16 is a reminder of a worshiping body of believers, not just the

individual believer.

Verse 16 articulates several points significant to worship, one of which is "Let the word

of Christ dwell" with an encouragement on teaching and admonishing. Though the Word of

Christ is not necessarily the law communicated in Nehemiah, it was still the Word of the

Lord being taught among the gathering. Worship has an aspect throughout Scripture of

solidifying the importance of reading the Word of God together. Colossians also gives an

emphasis to sing spiritual songs as part of worship. Grudem, discussing this concept in

Systematic Theology, writes,

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[158] Hamilton, *Exalting Jesus in Ezra-Nehemiah*, 8.

[159] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008),
193. The third section of the paragraph (vv. 15-16) is marked by a shift in syntax. The second-person plural
imperatives of vv. 12-14 — "clothe yourselves," "bear," "forgive," "put on" — give way to third-person passive
imperatives: "Let the peace of Christ rule," "Let the message of Christ dwell." These two parallel exhortations again
focus on Christ.

[160] Ibid., 198.

> Worship in the church is not merely a preparation for something else: it is, in itself, fulfilling the major purpose of the church with reference to its Lord. That is why Paul can follow an exhortation that we are to be "making the best use of the time" with a command to be filled with the Spirit and then to be "singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart" (Eph. 5:16–19).[161]

The Colossians verses conclude by reminding the believers to be thankful and consider doing all activity in the name of the Lord. In doing so, the consideration of doing the activity of worship in His name should cause the church to address practices that do not bring about His glory.

Evangelistic Tactics

Though one could argue for Old Testament evangelism examples with individuals outside the nation of Israel, most of the evangelism discussed in the Bible takes place in the New Testament. The gospels and the book of Acts demonstrate most of the evangelistic strategy in the life of the church. Evangelism is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Christ carried man's sin to the cross, died, and rose again giving them access, through faith by God's grace, to restore an eternal relationship with God. Mankind repents of sin, believes the gospel, and receives the gift of Christ.

Jesus evangelizes during His time with the disciples (twelve followers) and teaches them to do the same. They evangelize that Christ has come to fulfill the law. What they don't understand, but soon experience, is that Christ must stand in as the substitute. He must live in perfection with the law to become the sacrifice worthy of defeating sin and the sting of death that separates man from God for eternity. The disciples and Christ used two tactics during the time of Christ and during the book of Acts to communicate the gospel to those not already in communion with God.

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[161] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1064.

The first tactic is public communication of the gospel through preaching or teaching (Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Acts 2:14-41, 3:11-26, 9:19-22, 10:34-43, 13:16-52, 17:22-34). The second tactic is relational evangelism where Jesus, or the disciples, would sit and have a conversation with an individual to help them better understand the gospel. Relational evangelism takes place in John 3 with Jesus and Nicodemus as well as Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch as told in Acts 8:26-32. These are not the only times relational evangelism occurs but are examples that exemplify the process of sharing the gospel.[162] This was not the act of mankind causing the conversion, but both cases appear that the conversion is the effective work of God and a person responding to the call to share the gospel.[163]

In the example of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip uses individual relational evangelism and demonstrates four steps in his process: 1) Philip made himself available to listen to God (Acts 8:26); 2) Philip listened to the man and addressed his request (Acts 8:34); 3) Philip shared the gospel (Acts 8:35); 4) Philip invited the man to the next step in professing faith (Acts 8:36). These steps are a simple and concise example that the modern church can follow.

Preaching the gospel has a few comparative patterns seen in the Gospels and in the book of Acts. In Matthew's account, he acknowledges that Jesus is setting the stage for the primarily Jewish culture and begins to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23). This same

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[162] Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Acts*, ed. Robert Frew (London, UK: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885), 145. It is not by miracle, but by the use of means. It is not by direct power without *truth*, but it is by a message fitted to the end. The salvation of a single sinner is an object worthy the attention of God. When such a sinner *is* converted, it is because God forms a *plan* or *purpose* to do it.

[163] Bryan Stone, *Evangelism after Pluralism: The Ethics of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Academic, 2018), 16. One might well agree with Thiessen that, in and of itself, proselytization— the attempt to convert others to one's views, philosophy, political outlook, or religious faith— is not necessarily unethical. There are ethical and unethical ways to sell any product, change someone's mind, persuade another person, or subscribe followers. But there are also good reasons not to conflate evangelism with proselytization or to understand evangelism as an attempt to secure converts… I argue that rather than an attempt to secure converts, the task of evangelism is instead to bear faithful witness to the good news.

articulation is presented almost parallel to what is seen in Chapter 9:35.[164] His placement in

Galilee also seems to be strategic considering the large group of people he talked to in a short

period of time.[165] Therefore the preaching presented was intentional in content and intentional in

the location it was presented.

Later in the New Testament multiple patterns of public profession of the gospel are seen

documented by Luke in the book of Acts. In Acts 17 Paul demonstrates among two groups a way

to present the Gospel. In Acts 17:2, while in Berea, Paul reasoned with the crowd, used the

scriptures, and conveyed the tenets of the gospel. In Athens, Paul observed and addressed their

context. Then Paul invited them to turn toward (repent) God (Acts 17:23, 30). Both situations in

Acts 17 resulted in people turning toward God, and both were clear displays of Paul conveying

the truth of Christ to a crowd as opposed to an individual.

<div align="center">Discipleship Process</div>

Scripture expresses that Jesus spent multiple years walking with His disciples from the

time of His invitation to them to the time of His ascension. During those three years, He

instructed them on the kingdom of God and the intention for a future gathering that would gather

for His name's sake. Colossians 1 claims that the process of discipleship should lead to

maturation in Christ-like activity. Commentator Douglas Moo suggests that Christian maturity

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[164] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13,* vol. 33A (New York, NY: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2015), 160.

[165] D. A. Carson, *"Matthew,"* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 120–121. Jesus' ministry included teaching, preaching, and healing. Galilee, the district covered, is small (approximately seventy by forty miles); but according to Josephus (Life 235 [45]; War III, 41–43 [iii.2]), writing one generation later, Galilee had 204 cities and villages, each with no fewer than fifteen thousand persons. Even if this figure refers only to the walled cities and not to the villages (which is not what Josephus says), a most conservative estimate points to a large population, even if less than Josephus's three million. At the rate of two villages or towns per day, three months would be required to visit all of them, with no time off for the Sabbath. Jesus "went around doing good" (Acts 10:38; cf. Mark 1:39; 6:6).

occurs through receiving warning of false life activity that is unfulfilling and taking faith steps that stretch a person's trust in God.[166] In John 8:31-32, Jesus suggests that if someone abides in His Word, they are truly His disciples and that will lead to freedom in life and death. The people in Jesus' day were ruled over not only by their own, but also by the Roman officials. The state of life for the Israelites could have felt as though they had no voice and were in a slave state.[167]

What Jesus is communicating through His comment is that true freedom is not found in the institution of a government, or the fleshly desires popularized in the world, but in the understanding of the value of man's relationship to Christ. In the church's discipleship and small group environments, churches should not be instructing that the world will eventually be perfected if society just changes the leaders. The world will be different if society leans into Christ. Being restrained by the lies that sin place on humanity is imprisoning oneself. Those who are crucified in Christ and abide in Christ eventually submerge themselves in truth (Gal. 2:20). They die to the wants of the world because dead men want for nothing (Ps. 23:1-3; Phil. 4:11-13). Churches should instruct that consistent faith in Christ is where mankind will find freedom. Freedom is not the condition of life by way of living; freedom is the expression of life in a Christ follower's way of thinking. Living outside the intended design will always lead to the slavery of sin. A Christian's shift in thinking happens when they realize that eternity provides a better way when in Christ.[168]

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[166] Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 119.

[167] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 322. The Jews had been enslaved by seven mighty nations, as recorded in the Book of Judges. The ten Northern tribes had been carried away captive by Assyria, and the two Southern tribes had gone into seventy years of captivity in Babylon. And at that very hour, the Jews were under the iron heel of Rome! How difficult it is for proud religious people to admit their failings and their needs!

[168] Leon Morris. *The Gospel According to John*. Revised edition (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995). 404-405.

Paul notates this as well in his epistle to the Philippian church. He explains that good living was to live like Christ and dying was gain, as Christians would be in the presence of Christ (Phil. 1:21). Robert Utley adds, "This is a difficult phrase to understand, but when we look at Paul's other writings, we see that it meant that believers are dead to sin, dead to self, and dead to the law, but alive unto God for service (cf. Rom. 6:1–11; Col. 3:4; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14)."[169] Perhaps a discipleship process, according to Scripture, should call Christians to a beginning and an end: the act of receiving the gospel and the final act of surrendering to the gospel's truth. Lordship can be undermined by evangelism, yet a distinct measure of faith is always seen when some dare to trust who God says He is and act upon that reliance (James 2:17-19). Followers must be cautious when they try to apply the status of Christian and yet be known to ignore the need of a brother or sister.[170] An effective discipleship process should convey a spirit of surrender in an aspiration of true freedom, which is found only in Christ.

Theoretical Foundations

Church revitalization is incredibly important to the continuous pursuit of God building His kingdom. The research seems to allude that intentional mergers may assist in addressing the problem. This action research Project Director has reviewed several constructs to bring about revitalization and merger by way of adoption. These constructs appear to have validity which could lead to success. Adoptions help to do three things that have been cited as helpful steps to revitalize a church: 1) An adoption brings in new overseeing leadership to help redirect the people back to the purpose; 2) An adoption changes the identity of what was the original

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[169] Robert James Utley, *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, Then Later, Philippians)*, vol. 8, *Study Guide Commentary Series* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 172.

[170] Douglas J. Moo, *James: An Introduction and Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 21y-21z.

existence of the church by name and by organizational structure allowing the church to have a new start; 3) An adoption can allow time for a transition of a pastor so that the former pastor can acclimate to a new ministry.[171] The adoption addressed in this project gave ample time and resource to support the pastor's transition.

<center>Leadership Perspective</center>

Leadership plays a critical peace in the theoretical means of a church's capability to shift from dying toward vibrant and healthy. Leadership of a pastor as well as of a team within the fellowship is suggested often in various writings to encourage change operated by a team.[172] However, authors have noted that teams must be cautiously chosen to match a biblically-centric narrative to influence godly change. This directive is given to encourage a shepherd-mindset that can be found in Scripture.[173] Often narratives of leadership are pulled from business models, which may align well with Scripture, but they can find their value better in business rather than the life of the church.

Leadership must also remain attentive to those in the congregation as they come from varying stages of life. Pastors, elders, deacons, or even team members helping to reshape the church should find a great benefit in sharing the responsibilities of congregational care. Understanding the dynamics of a church's make up and the value of the congregation can set a new pastor up for great success. One theory posed by Bill Henard is to know the people by knowing the thirties. Henard suggests that two groups exist in which the revitalizing pastor must

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[171] Henard, *ReClaimed Church*, 85.

[172] Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 49.

[173] Robert D. Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 18-19.

know. One group, referred to as older thirties, has been invested long enough to hold leadership

roles, but does not have long-term family roots.[174] The other group Henard refers to has deep

roots and generational lines connected to the local body. This group, referred to as younger

thirties, has limited church experience. In fact, the current church may be the only church they

have known.[175] This line of thinking takes considerable amounts of time and aligns with the

shepherding theory of guiding the revitalization process. Henard encourages in his writing that

the revitalizing pastor should make every effort to win over influencers in both categories to

inspire the pursuit of renewing a dying fellowship.

Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, in their book *Comeback Churches*, set the stage to consider

how church leadership should see their primary role in revitalization. They suggest that

leadership is helping the congregation understand that the real problems are spiritual.[176] Strong

leadership understands the value of spiritual life and recognizes an eternal reality. These leaders

challenge excuses, pray regularly, see the harvest, model evangelism, and share the ministry.[177]

Stetzer and Dodson add, "Pastors of comeback churches accomplished this by removing growth

barriers, overcoming self-defeating attitudes, casting a God-sized vision, and raising

expectations."[178]

There is no doubt many authors that address revitalization give such a vast understanding

of how the leadership should respond to restoring churches. However, several lean differently in

their trust of leader instruction. Henard finds value in the business world and principles that he

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[174] Henard, *Can These Bones Live*, 52.

[175] Ibid., 56.

[176] Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 41.

[177] Ibid., 44, 45, 46.

[178] Ibid., 46.

believes can cross pollinate with the church. Robert Stuart, on the other hand, maintains a

biblically driven leadership precedence where principles and practices for leaders are scripturally

articulated. Stetzer and Dodson lean a bit more biblically, but also allow the research to reveal

the resources from which comeback churches overcame revitalizing needs. All authors validated

their viewpoints, but perhaps the principle to consider is that all views still must maintain the

chief tenets of the church and not deter people from a gospel understanding. Therefore, each

theory creates the precedents to walk with caution as churches develop and send leadership into

revitalization.

Ministry Structure

One of the proposed needs explained in all texts addressing church revitalization is the

adjustment of church structure. Structure could refer to processes, the physical setup of the

building, organizational operations (i.e. constitution, bylaws), best practices, missional approach,

etc. Tom Cheyney, a voice in revitalization, has created a theory of process that helps with these

types of changes. Leadership plays an immediate critical part in the equation as well as clear-cut

communication throughout the entire process. Cheyney suggests communication requires

removing negative talk, keeping all stakeholders well informed, and making clear milestones to

track progress of restructure.[179]

Creating a new narrative for shifts in structure of a church according to many of the text

requires the guardrail of clear communication. Maintaining clear communication is especially

true when considering the overarching mission of God to make disciples.[180] This mission leads to

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[179] Tom Cheyney, *7 Pillars of Church Revitalization and Renewal* (Orlando, FL: Renovate Publishing, 2016), chap. 1, Kindle.

[180] Stuart. *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out*. 132.

define the revitalization efforts and unify around verbiage and a process that makes disciples of

Jesus. Therefore, authors could argue that leadership that communicates clearly in alignment

with the biblical text are more likely to find effective pathways toward revitalization.[181]

Evaluating structures that make these alignments between biblical essentials, strong leadership,

and clear communication can vary in context.

Warren Bird posits these theories and methods of revitalization in his book *Better*

Together. He notes:

- Rebirth mergers. A struggling or dying church gets a second life by being fully absorbed and restarted under a stronger, vibrant, and typically larger church.
- Adoption mergers. A stable or stuck church is fully integrated under the vision of a stronger, vibrant, and typically larger church.
- Marriage mergers. Two churches, both strong or growing, realign with each other under a united vision and new leadership configuration.
- ICU (intensive care unit) mergers. Two churches that know they're in trouble try to turn around their critical situation but are survival driven. Such mergers often fail.[182]

Each theory has potential for positive and negative effects on the renewing of a dying or

declining church. The question that must be addressed is whether one of these theories of

methodology is more effective than the other. One example is found in the merger approaches

mentioned in the list above. Mergers can be beneficial because they combine resources,

specifically financial and team support. However, mergers can also remove good ministries

where people have been invested. These mergers can also remove key beloved leaders from their

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[181] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 176. In some cases, churches and pastors might want to consider making changes in regard to other factors such as small groups, facilities, and marketing, but these factors are not as important or influential as leadership, vibrant faith, lay ministry, evangelistic efforts, and worship, according to the findings of this study.

[182] Tomberlin and Bird, *Better Together*, 62.

posts and replace them with what seems to be an operational move rather than a relational move.[183]

These theories pose another critical question: How does a church discern which methodology to use? First off, a church may need to answer an even deeper question. Mark Clifton, in his book *Reclaiming Glory*, recommends churches to ask themselves a separate question first. He writes, "The right question is never, 'How can we save this church?' The right question is, 'How can God get the most glory from our congregation right now?'"[184] Clifton infers that some churches may not be heading toward revitalization but may need to hand their resources off for kingdom of God considerations. Once that question is answered and confirmed the revitalization theories of how to navigate the renewal effort will be addressed.

In the book *Better Together*, the authors suggest asking three questions: 1) "Is the merger possible?"[185] This is an evaluation of both party's interest and availability to step into a merger. 2) "Is this merger feasible?"[186] This question assesses the compatibility of all parties involved in the merger. Essentially, seeing if the church may have alignment in larger ministry picture goals. Clifton addresses an example of this compatibility measurement in his book regarding a case study on Citadel Square Baptist Church. He discovered in this study that the mission of reaching young families and a unified view on the gospel won out demonstrating a compatibility

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[183] Tomberlin and Bird, *Better Together*, 64

[184] Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches*, updated ed. (Brentwood, TN: B&H Publishing, 2023), 32.

[185] Tomberlin and Bird, *Better Together*, 77.

[186] Ibid.

measure.[187] 3) "Is this merger desirable?"[188] This question is simply addressing evidence of polled congregants agreeing to merger stipulations.

The determined theory by Coastal Church is an adoption merger. An adoption merger is one of several techniques that can be used to revitalize a church; however, adoption appears to have the most availability to address all revitalization approaches. Historically Battery Park Baptist Church had tried to shift leadership as well as bring in a new pastor. Though Christ-like character was evident in previous members, few were willing to change the structure to approach the community. Under Coastal Church structure the requirements of constitutional expectations would be minimized to potentially an elder vote involving seven voting individuals or a predetermined choice by Coastal overseeing elders delegating decisions to a specific team.

One example that applies to this scenario recently has taken shape at Battery Park. The facilities needed a remodel in a particular area of the building. The Lead Pastor petitioned the need to Coastal executive leadership to request the upgrades. This request would help the fellowship be appealing to new families. The executive leadership already had permission from the elders that if the money was available, they could move forward on updates. Granted, other parties may become involved in the updates, such as Coastal's creative service team, to maintain uniformity, but they already maintain representation on the executive team. The church structural difference in this case is that the request did not require the entire congregation for the decision to be finalized. The current adjustment, which was made to Coastal Battery Park, was to update the Coastal Kids section to be safer and more functional for family involvement. Battery Park Baptist could have voted to make the changes to the building, but the financial and constitutional

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[187] Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 96.

[188] Ibid., 77.

structure was inept to support a change. Therefore, the dynamics of the church were not going to change without leadership making major shifts. The singularity of one aspiration of change did not move the needle toward the desired goal.

In this adoption merger the last goal needed to continue to move the momentum forward is the clarification of structural change. By giving the church members and attenders clear structural targets, the church can understand how the three-pronged elements of the church can place the focus on God, giving a healthy environment for others to join in. A common theme of Coastal Church is the aspiration to pursue spiritual health through biblically established standards as Coastal holds deeply that if health is pursued growth will occur.

Revitalization research is not a new approach in the church world. In fact, several references of revitalization can be found in the literature review. However, Coastal's revitalization approach of adoption merger has been attempted by them only in the last five years. The chief motive for Coastal started out as a mission-driven mindset with a desire to be part of kingdom growth. Several other motivators have also come into play as each church adopted has presented a unique reason for the adoption. Often, the two primary reasons for the adoption are the church's financial position, as well as the pastoral succession plan.[189]

One potential weakness that Coastal Church will have to consider is the idea of which motivator the congregation is agreeing is the reason for the merger. Coastal Church will want to keep their motives clear with each merger. If the church perceives the greatest need to be a new pastor with some minor adjustments to the structure, they may leave when the leadership informs them that the adoption is focused on re-establishing the economics of the church. In most cases for Coastal they are typically dealing with no less than three motivators for the adoption. One of

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[189] Tomberlin and Bird, *Better Together*, 33.

those must be a long-term benefit to the ministry of Coastal and not an anchor that stagnates the entire organization. Therefore, Coastal is intentionally holding onto fellowships with greater care until a primary motivator is fulfilled.

An additional challenge that Coastal Church will face is the availability of time and resources to make these structural changes. These structure changes may, in principle, be ideal, but the real test will be getting the church attendee to be receptive to the alterations. Coastal, as an organization, will need to be cautious to not standardize a practice, but to contextualize maturing in their faith.

Coastal Church's model for adoption is based on kingdom motivators, but practically is adopting smaller churches who need succession plans and/or an economic boost. Coastal Church is not traditionally looking to merge with another fellowship their size; they are identifying churches in need of restoration. Coastal is also not going to get involved with theologically unhealthy or wavering churches that hold to differing beliefs on essential doctrines. Most often Coastal is not looking at doing a rebirth approach with a complete immediate overhaul of the church. Rather Coastal is purposefully looking to make changes gradually as they maintain a persistent relationship with the previous attendees and the community.

The action research Project Director also needs to tie in how each structural element addresses primary motivators for the church. Focusing on worship, evangelism, and discipleship is not a new concept, but may be practices that are being rediscovered by Coastal Church Battery Park.[190] As discussed in theological foundations, Scripture has much to say about each of these three-pronged elements. The research is approaching these three specifically because these are

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[190] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 143.

the typical bases that are covered early in the life of Coastal adoptions. These elements are also being approached first because the hypothesis is that they will lead to ministry and mission. These elements should also lead to an economic change in the life of the church to create a sustainable pace. One of the big picture goals of the revitalization is that these churches also reproduce new fellowships or eventually help other adoption mergers take shape because of sending the people of Coastal Church Battery Park.

Conclusion

The aim of this action research is to address the problem that Coastal-sponsored churches lack the building blocks to self-sustain. The purpose of this DMin action thesis is to create and train through a 4-session classroom training and 4-week volunteer participation intervention where lay-leaders help to establish the building blocks of Sunday morning worship, evangelism tactics, and discipleship process. If the three-pronged elements of Sunday worship, evangelism tactics, and discipleship process are embraced by the church, then the church can be self-sustaining. The literature review has multiple experts affirming these three-pronged elements are essential for sustaining and growing a healthy church. Theologically, Scripture confirms that these elements were used to grow and sustain the church. God, in His nature, is a God of restoration and provision. His chief desire is that mankind would place their attention toward Him so that He can direct the path. This use of worship, evangelism, and discipleship is about redirecting humanity's attention back to the Creator of life so that the prayer for "your kingdom come" can take shape. To achieve this, the greatest requirement of the church is to completely surrender to God's plan and God's purpose for His creation. Imagine if the body of Christ surrendered their life to this call of restoration.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this section the researcher will describe the design and implementation of the project intervention. The Project Director is utilizing a mixed method approach to solidify an understanding of how the three-prong elements of discipleship process, Sunday morning worship, and evangelistic tactics affect Coastal sponsored churches. This project will display quantitative survey results which are administered to two unique group sets. Group "C" is only participatory in the survey portion to create a comparison study between Group "A" who will participate in the full intervention. Group "C" will only be contacted by email and requested to fill out a linked survey that is identical to the one that Group "A" will fill out during the intervention (Appendix D, H, I). These groups are randomly selected yet still meet the criteria specified in the intervention design. Qualitative responses also are administered through means of focus groups and interviews to validate the "why" they buy-in as well as addressing what they are buying into. The primary method used is an intervention training and focus group created by the Project Director to bring about clarification of the three-pronged elements to help self-sustain a church merger adoption.

Christian Formation and Human Development Addendum

This thesis will lean into the concept of cultural development theory by exploring the influence of collectivism and individualism. Culture can have multiple reference points, such as societal culture, neighborhood culture, work culture, and church culture. However, to move forward, one question must be answered: what is culture?

The term "culture" comes from the Latin word *colere* which means "to till, tend, or take care of" as in agriculture and horticulture. It implies an idea of what is pieced together and

refined, as opposed to what is natural and inherent.[191] Culture is the development of a group unified under a set standard, or way of being, that best clarifies the grouping's identity. In each culture, this is passed on to others in the community creating a way of life. This way of life may reference back to beliefs, knowledge, norms, values, and practices.

Collectivism vs Individualism

Within cultural development theory, there are two principal views referred to as collectivism and individualism. Collectivism is the view that, as a collective, they value the group over individual freedoms. Individualism values the individual's rights over the collective giving drastic freedom in choice. Both views have positive and negative attributes that affect a culture. Despite the negative attributes, neither view should necessarily be dismissed but should be understood for the benefit of the collective and the individual.

Positive Views on Collectivism and Individualism

Collectivism has historically been connected to eastern culture and has a high view of making decisions in the community and honoring authority. These cultures also find success in achieving goals as a group. A theological comparative that can be argued as a collective decision-making practice might be the clarification of faith of the gentiles in Acts 15. Concerns are brought to the group and council, and the council debates over the concerns. A resolution is expressed and affirmed. The group moves forward in a collective achievement of clarification.

Individualism, which is connected more to western cultures, is the aspiration of individual achievement of goals. The view of individualism is tied to rational thinking and an individual's ability to reason and resolve within oneself. Individualism differs as rationale wins

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[191] James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2010), page number(s).

out over relational commitment. One could use the argument that when Paul reasons with the people in Athens he is speaking to their individualism (Acts 17:22-34). This view is the idea that the individual makes the decision through means of cognitive rationale behavior.

Implications of Participants

Though both collectivism and individualism hold a strong argument to encourage the practice of both principles, they also can be considered negative if misused or misrepresented. The participants in the action research should experience a little bit of both views as there is an aspiration for the meshing of relational and rationale considerations. Relational unification is communicated often within the context of this thesis and a goal for group decision making is clearly stated. However, the group is made up of individuals and the study is encouraging independent thought. The participants are encouraged to rationalize and express individual desires applicable to the study.

The thesis will address contextual understanding of the community based on the group's comprehension of the church and neighborhood, city, etc. This community contextualization will be summarized based on the collectively agreed response. The group will also be individually interviewed and surveyed, which may give insight into each person's individualized rationale. The goal is that the group responds with a biblical worldview that sees value in both collective relational thought and individual rationale thought.

An example of this comprehension is the explicit trust that will be put on Coastal Church for prior decisions made, such as beliefs and standards of operation. The group will come in already committed to adhering to values and mission. The contextualization will occur when the group determines how to best execute on those values and mission. This decision will be encouraged for the collective, but also for the individual as they reason through the implications.

Spiritually, the group will be encouraged through disciplines of Scripture reading, prayer, and connectivity to the church body to reason through the next steps. By the conclusion of the study the hope is that they don't lose their independent pursuit of God but expound upon it for the sake of edifying and admonishing among the collective group.

Measurement Through Intervention

The primary measurement this project will be assessing is a collective alignment on vision, process, and values (Eph. 4:1-7). The contextual nature of how those play out within a set of agreed upon riverbanks, which are discussed in the thesis, will draw from the creative influence of individuals. The Project Director has placed in the intervention multiple opportunities for the fellowship to respond through focus groups and interviews. The desire is to pull individual and collective insights that address the problem of developing the building blocks needed for self-sustainability of the campus. The study will look for a balanced blend of considering expectations relationally and rationally. The participants at the end of the study should understand how to contextualize their environment and apply biblical principles to help execute overall vision of the local church.

Intervention Design

The intention of this intervention design is to address the question of how Coastal Church addresses the problem of Coastal sponsored churches lacking the building blocks to have a sustainable church. Through this intervention, the Project Director will guide stakeholders in the organization to see why Sunday morning worship, evangelistic strategy, and discipleship process can address this specific problem. Stakeholders, who will also be referred to as participants, are individuals involved in the intervention. The Project Director proposes to address this problem

by creating and training a project intervention clarifying the significance of these three-pronged elements that are building blocks toward sustainability.

Who Will Be Involved

The first step the Project Director will take is to establish a criterion for those individuals who need to be involved in the research. This group will be comprised of three sets of individuals that have an affiliation with Coastal Church's adoption strategy. They must be regular attendees who are attending Sunday Morning worship at one of Coastal Church's adoption locations. The first group will be referred to as subject matter experts or SME Group B. The other two groups must be attendees of Coastal Church adoption, attending church at least two times per month. Group A will be specifically comprised of Coastal Battery Park attendees. Group C will be an attendee of Coastal Church at least two times per month on any of the Coastal Church campuses. This research will also request that each attendee is over eighteen years of age. The SME group must be Coastal attendees that have attended and served in one of Coastal's church adoptions. The individuals in this group must also be eighteen years old or older to participate in this project. The third group, Group C will be a group who will not attend the project Intervention but will be surveyed by the Project Director as a comparison group. These groups will have different roles in this intervention project, but will all be either interviewed, surveyed, part of a focus group, or a combination of all three.

Along with these participants, the Project Director will seek the approval of the senior staff leadership. This senior leadership group consists of the Senior Pastor and Senior Executive Pastor of Coastal Church. They will be presented with the project layout written in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Once approval is confirmed by both individuals, the mentor has also approved, and

the IRB approval has been set, then the Project Director will proceed (Appendix IRB Approval letter).

<div align="center">Contacting Participants</div>

The Project Director will recruit individual participants from groups A and B by contacting them first by phone. Group C will only be contacted by email. No contact specific to this project will be made until the Internal Review Board has determined approval for this project. A script of that invite will be established so that the invite is consistent for all participants. Scripts can be viewed in the appendix (Appendix A, B, C). If contact has not been made by phone, they will be contacted by email, with an email invite, requesting a response to confirm their willingness to participate (Appendix D, E).

Once participants have confirmed their involvement the Project Director will email the participants instructions of future intervention schedule (Appendix F and G). The instructions will be specific to the individual and the categorized group they will be affiliated with in the research will also be included. Group A are individuals who attend Coastal Battery Park, and Group B, referred to as the subject matter experts (SME), are individuals that serve in one of the Coastal Church adoption locations. Group "C" are individuals that attend a Coastal Church campus but are not attending the project intervention (Appendix D, H, K).

<div align="center">Participation and Consent</div>

Group A's invite is to participate in a focus group that will meet for four sessions in classroom format and then participate in four sessions engaging practically with one or more of the three-pronged elements discussed in the sessions. At the beginning of the first session, the Project Director will hand out a consent form to each participant to agree to participate in the

project intervention. Once they have signed the consent form, they can proceed with the class, or they can be dismissed from participation (Appendix H).

As mentioned earlier, the first session is set up to be a classroom environment with curriculum content (Appendix I). The following sessions asks for practical participation and the participant can either chose to serve in an area where one of the three-prong elements are in process, or they watch one of the elements being utilized in the local church. At the beginning and end of the eight sessions, they will be asked to fill out a survey (Appendix J). After the sessions have been completed the Project Director will interview each participant that has participated in two or more sessions (Appendix L). The Project Director will give an opportunity in the last session to sign up for available times. A calendar of availability will be provided through Calendarly, a scheduling application. If the participant is not available to meet in person, they will be sent a questionnaire, via email, to address interview questions based on the project intervention (Appendix M). An email will be sent to this participant to make this request (Appendix M).

Group B will be a small group of individuals who will assist in leading and facilitating one of the sessions. They will start by being interviewed by the Project Director based on the session they will be requested to lead (Appendix N). This interview can be done by phone or in person. In both cases, the Project Director will send them, by email, a form of consent to fill out to participate in the project intervention. If they have not consented prior to the interview meeting the Project Director can provide them a consent form to sign on the day of the interview so that they can participate (Appendix H).

Location of Project Intervention and Logistics

The project intervention will take place at Coastal Church Battery Park in Carrolton, Virginia. The project intervention classroom experience will take place in the auditorium of Coastal Battery Park. These sessions will take place on Sunday afternoons following the Sunday church service. All four sessions will take place over four consecutive weeks with each session lasting one hour. The room will be set up with chairs and tables facing the auditorium stage. The number of tables and chairs will be determined by the affirmed attendees that accepted and confirmed their participation. The intention of this approach is so that participants can write notes that will be included in the project curriculum (Appendix I). Each session will be recorded, and the recordings will begin at the start of the class. Students will be informed and/or reminded of the recording at the beginning of each session.

Leader notes will be provided for Group B to help clarify answers as they facilitate the intervention during their assigned session for Group A participants (Appendix J). Participation in the other four sessions will take place primarily on Sunday morning and will involve either worship service, small group environment, or during a service opportunity provided by the church. These service opportunities can include outreach events hosted by the church, such as a community block party, mission trip, or door to door invites.

The interviews will be hosted at the church or over a phone call with the participant and Project Director. Participants that interview at the church will meet in the prayer chapel at designated times that work for them and the Project Director. The Project Director will audio record on a personal phone app these interviews for the purpose of clarifying comments as well as having record of the conversation. Recording will start after immediate introductions and the Project Director will let the participant know that recording will begin. Consent for this

recording will be provided in the consent form seen in the appendix. Each interview meeting will last between fifteen and thirty minutes.

Group B, following their initial interview, will be given a copy of the curriculum to study prior to their class. In the curriculum, they will have a series of questions and supportive content to facilitate a follow-up focus group style of questioning (Appendix J). These questions are not predetermined answers but are application questions. This will be further discussed in the curriculum layout section of this chapter.

<div align="center">Curriculum Layout</div>

The curriculum will consist of four sessions intended to establish the three-pronged building blocks of the church. This content would include talking points that are staple content terms and definitions traditionally used by Coastal Church to undergird the three-pronged elements to establish the building blocks of the local church. The content will include a definition of Connect, Grow, Serve, and Multiply, which are terms Coastal Church uses to define the discipleship process. The first session will discuss the big overall picture of the sessions and will give a layout of the base line definitions. This session will be facilitated by the Project Director whereas the following sessions will be led by Group B participants. Session two will navigate the value of the discipleship process, session three will cover Sunday Morning Worship, and session four will discuss evangelistic tactics.

At the beginning of session one, Group A will arrive, and the Project Manager will handout the consent form for each participant. Once each participant has the form, the Project Director will read the form aloud and take any questions referring to the form. Once consent forms have been signed and dated the class will pass the forms back to the Project Director. The Project Director will notify the class that the class is officially starting and inform them that the

recording device is in progress. The Project Director will instruct the class to turn to the syllabus page, verbally giving an overview of all sessions in the course.

Syllabus overview and addressing questions referring to the overview will take thirty minutes. The Project Director will then distribute a Likert survey to get initial information of participants' desires and understanding of content. This will be an anonymous survey that will give the Project Director a baseline understanding of the current audience (Appendix K). The class will conclude with a focus group of three to five questions for the Project Director to discuss with the group. These questions are application-based, which will give insight to the Project Director of Group A's understanding of initial content and ability to apply content to a church environment.

The hope is that Group A can also contextualize their current environment as they may function differently to other Coastal Church campuses. Group A's ability to contextualize is important as Coastal recognizes that they adopt fellowships in different environments that may stylistically function unique to their culture. This contextualization can be described as a river in the Coastal Church culture. Rivers are constantly flowing, but they have distinctive boundaries called riverbanks. These boundaries keep the value of the water continuing to flow in the appropriate direction as well as stay close enough so that the river flows at a steady rate of speed.

The river that will be pictured in this curriculum will convey that each bank has a distinct boundary that keeps each fellowship flowing in the right direction and on a good pace. Boundary one is an agreed upon theological structure based on the essentials of the Christian faith (Appendix O). Boundary two is the philosophical riverbanks determined by Coastal Senior leadership and Elders (Appendix P). Between those boundaries is the river and a local fellowship can be represented by a boat riding down the river. The boat can move back and forth between

the boundaries addressing the river as fitting for their boat. All boats can come ashore for equipping purposes, as well as to send riders on to new boats (multiplication), but boats are encouraged to move back onto the river to continue the journey.

Organizational Parameters
Structure, dynamics, and Context

Riverbanks

Philosophical Boundaries

Dynamics

Theological Boundaries

Riverbanks

Structure

Contextualization
Natural flow of church community
- Social activities, Evangelistic activity
- Meeting times
- Teaching style, worship music, and style
- Culture of community
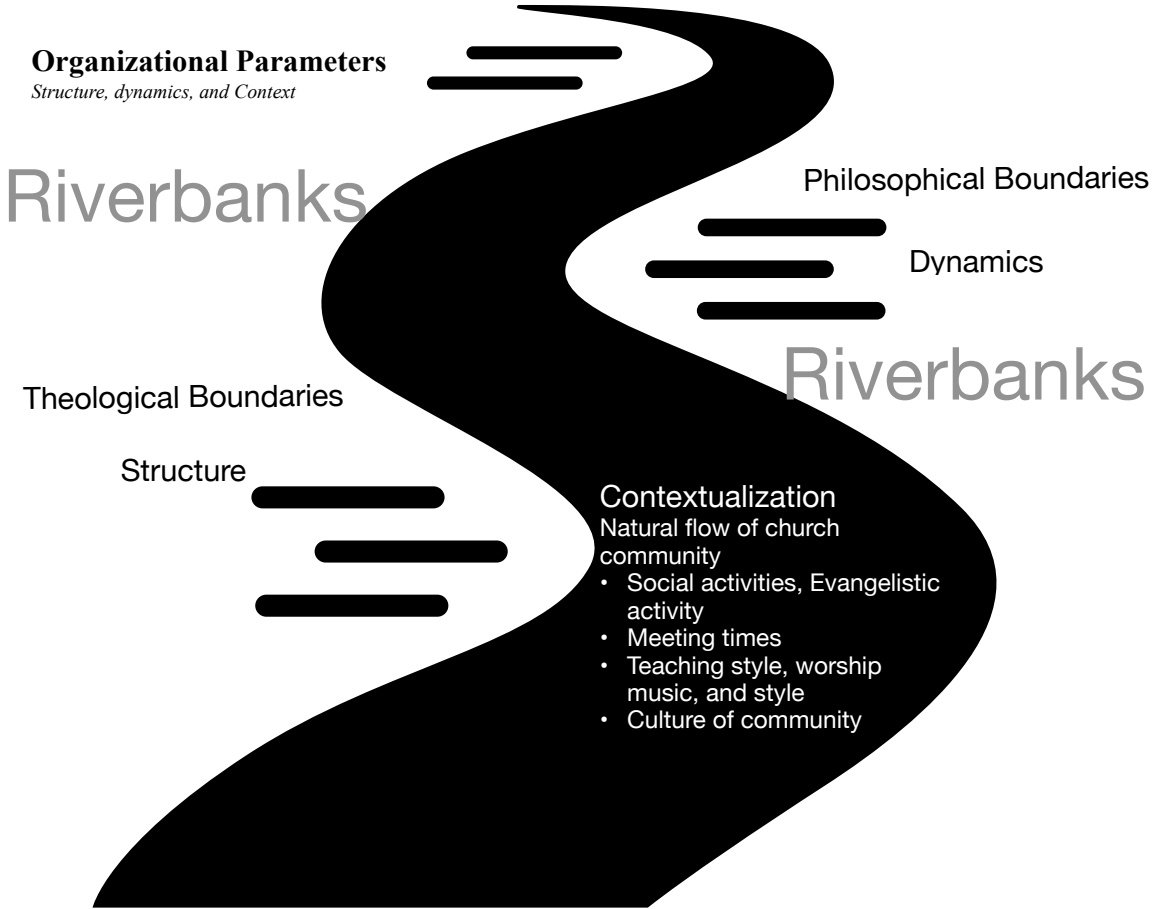
Figure 1. Riverbank Analogy.

The content that will be covered during the teaching sessions will primarily center around the boundaries and how they affect the church. The focus group session will discuss how to customize the efforts of the church to fit the cultural implementation. Some Coastal campuses are small and flexible, capable of pivoting quicker if the resources are available. However, others must adjust much slower in consideration of a larger group. Both contexts have their advantages and disadvantages, but both can be effective for gospel work. To continue the analogy, some can

ride through tighter spaces on the river, whereas others are so large a boat they are less affected by harsh rapids. Having this mentality in each session will help to clarify the process.

Session two will start out with the introduction of the facilitator and trainer from Group B. They will clarify the meeting is starting and remind the audience that this session will be recorded. The purpose of this training will be focused on the discipleship process and how this keeps Coastal attendees moving toward maturity in Christ (Col. 1:28). This session will also clarify how having a discipleship process effectively supports the life flow of the church. Participants will be asked by the trainer to pull out their curriculum guide (Appendix J) to follow along with the notes and fill in the blanks. The session will start with a training section that covers the process quickly by identifying how Sunday morning worship and evangelistic tactics fit within the process. This session will also discuss standardized expectations, both theologically and philosophically. Following the teaching portion of the session the Group B facilitator will walk the group through a set of questions for clarity of the concepts discussed as well as discussion over customizable application.

In session three, the group will again meet to discuss the next set of content, which is Sunday morning worship. Session three will start out with the introduction of the facilitator and trainer from Group B. They will clarify the meeting is starting and remind the audience that this session will be recorded. The class will address the theological and philosophical value of Sunday morning worship by discussing music, prayer, preaching, and the ordinances. Participants will be asked to open the curriculum and follow along with notes, filling in the answers. Once the content is covered the group will again be asked a series of questions that are applicable to the implementation in their environment. This session will look in-depth regarding

stylistic applications of music, order of Sunday service, and preaching while staying in the theological as well as philosophical boundaries of Coastal Church.

Session four, much like the previous sessions, will start out with the introduction of the facilitator and trainer from Group B. They will clarify the meeting is starting and remind the audience that this session will be recorded. The session will cover evangelistic tactics and give clarity to the topic of evangelism through the lens of Coastal Church. Session four will address how the group can participate in evangelistic tactics both corporately, as small groups, and on an individual level as a partner of the local church. The group will also spend time discussing questions applicable to the topic identifying ways to partner in evangelistic tactics regarding Coastal Church Battery Park.

At the end of this session the group will be given the survey they had responded to earlier to see how they respond based on going through the class. They will answer the questions of the survey and hand the survey back to the Project Director. Once all surveys have been turned in each participant will be asked to participate over the next four weeks in an area influenced by the three-pronged elements discussed in the class. Options for participation will be listed in the appendix of this thesis, but also handed out to the participants after completing the class portion (Appendix R).

After Group A participants participate in four environment sessions, the Project Director will reach out to the participants by email to request an interview either over the phone or in person (Appendix L). If the participant is not able to interview, the Project Director will send a questionnaire with instructions (Appendix M). The desire is to get a written response of the experience to help the Project Director gain clarity of the participant's experience. The instructions will provide the participant with a clarification on how to return the questionnaire if

not digital. Digital questionnaires, which will be the initial option for participants to respond, will have a submit option at the bottom of the questionnaire.

Research flow

Classes, surveys, interviews, questionnaires

Interview Group B Participants	Class session 1 Group A and project director	Survey Group A participants in first class
Class 2 Group B trainer/ Facilitator	Class 3 Group B trainer/ Facilitator	Class 4 Group B trainer/ Facilitator
Class 4 survey Group A	Group A Participation in Three-Pronged elements 4	Project Director Interviews Group A
		Questionnaires Sent out to Group A participants unable to interview
Survey Group A participants following intervention	Survey Group C For comparison study. (Non-participatory individuals in project intervention).	

Figure 2. Research Flow.

Measuring Quality of Research

The research will have questionnaires, surveys, focus group time, and interviews to assist in clarifying the efficacy of the study. The Project Director will also be maintaining a journal throughout each of the four classes, after each interview, and when analyzing the results of both surveys. These journals will be dated on which they are written with the time included at the top of the entry. The Project Director will also attempt to complete these within a short window of

the content being submitted or interview being completed. The goal is that the journal is completed within twenty-four hours of completion of the tool.

Along with the journals the study will also have a comparative survey given to Group C, who will not participate in the complete project intervention. The hope is to verify whether the project intervention encourages Group A to participate in the attributes of the three-pronged elements. This Group C may not give a full glimpse of the impact, but the Project Director can explore changes in Group A and measure the results between the two groups.

Data Measurement Illustrated

The two surveys that will be distributed at the beginning and end of the class will be illustrated by bar and pie charts. These surveys will measure the likelihood of participation of the Group A participants in the three-pronged elements of the church. The other survey will ask the same questions to see if the participants' likelihood has increased or decreased based on class content. The Project Director will document all the responses, comparing them to other participants by submitting a summary of the results. The summary will provide clarification on the outcomes and implications that impact the study.

The journals, interviews, and questionnaires will be assessed by looking for key words utilized in ways described in the study. The Project Director will also look to see that responses align biblically with recommended text and align with the faith essentials listed in the appendix. Everyone will also be assessed on next steps following the project. The Project Director will create and ask questions regarding next steps and how those steps affect the participant's faith. The goal is to see participants express a confidence in serving the great commission efforts available through Coastal's network of church campuses.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The initial implementation of the intervention took place during the month of April 2024 following IRB approval. Once the approval was confirmed the participants were selected and contacted by the Project Director. The group participants were contacted by email. These participants were requested to respond with affirmation of their participation. Eleven individuals participated in the class and ten of the eleven attended each week. The class lasted on average one hour in length each week and was presented by four different subject matter experts, which included the Project Director. The Project Director hosted the first class and focus group, where he set clear expectations for the project intervention as well as defined key terms that would be used throughout the project. The room was left as it was and participating parties were asked to sit toward the front of the auditorium to record the responses of class members. Originally, tables were going to be used, but the Project Director opted out of using them as the students were able to function well with the class handouts.

The project intervention was considered complete when the class participants finished the classroom experience along with four weeks serving or participating in an environment where the three-pronged elements were able to be observed. Following the involvement of these environments the participants were encouraged to participate in an interview with the Project Director. The hope of the interview was to gain clarity of the effective perception by the participants regarding intervention requests. This interview was anticipated to discover if the material presented changed or enhanced the participant's understanding of the three-pronged elements.

Three tools were used to gather data in this research: 1) the focus group, which occurred at the end of each teaching session; 2) a survey given after the first session as well as during the

follow-up interview; and 3) an interview by phone or in person to follow participation of the completed intervention. Along with the implementation of these three data collection configurations the Project Director also inquired from those outside the participation group who meet the general criteria to take the survey assessment. The remaining sections in this chapter express the implemented process of the intervention.

Intervention Class Experience

The classroom experience was hosted in the auditorium/sanctuary of Coastal Battery Park with the class facing the stage. The class intervention took place on Monday evenings as opposed to the original intent of hosting the group on Sundays. The Project director had made this adjustment due to personal schedule. The first class began by the Project Director handing out the project's consent forms for the class to review. The Project Director read through the consent form and invited the current participants to either sign the form and continue with the class or allow for uninterested participants to dismiss themselves at that time. All participants chose to stay and signed the documents submitting them to the Project Director following the class. These documents are now housed with the Project Director and properly stored and locked away for project use.

Curriculum for Classroom Experience

The curriculum was designed to help the project participants better grasp the three-pronged elements of discipleship process, Sunday Morning Worship, and evangelism tactics. The first class's outline was developed to give clarification of definitions that would be used throughout the study. The classes were laid out in this order as each class helped to build toward the other.

Discipleship process came first to reflect the Great Commission, knowing that the priority of the church is to make disciples. Sunday Morning Worship was presented second as the chief end of mankind and the aspiration of mankind, who is a disciple, is to glorify God within the grounds of unity of the church. Evangelism tactics was listed as last as this seemed to be a proper segue from commission to glorification to relaying the gospel. If the church knows how to make a disciple and know where they are pointing that disciple, then they are ready to proclaim Christ to others by giving them clarity in direction.

Class one laid out definitions that were determined by the Project Director and reflected theologians, as well as church leaders both present and past. Discipleship process discussed theological and philosophical approach with the intent for the group to recognize that discipleship does not only take place in a small group, but in the participation of life and ministry. The aspiration of the church and the Project Director is for the people of the church to see discipleship as a journey. Therefore, making a disciple is walking with someone as they connect to God, grow in community with others, and serve in ministry as well as mission toward those outside the church.

Class three's curriculum was designed similarly to class two in that the class addressed theological and philosophical expectations. However, class two also approached the practice of cooperate spiritual disciplines: the disciplines of praying together, singing together, giving together, and hearing the application of the word together. All these disciplines are intended to center the church around Christ by glorifying God.

Class four closed out with evangelism tactics again addressing the theological and philosophical precedence conveyed by Scripture and the local church. The primary focus of the curriculum was to show how in Scripture both preaching publicly the gospel and relational

evangelism were the prominent ways of spreading the good news. This section was intended to lighten the burden of sharing one's faith while at the same time conveying the inspiration to unashamedly do so. This portion of the implementation was guided by an individual with evidence of continued practice in relational evangelism.

Week One

After documents were signed and turned in the Project Director informed the class that the session would be recorded. The recoding began and the Project Director proceeded to instruct on session one. A handout was given to the class participants to follow along with definitions written out with fill-in the blank for the terms (Appendix I). The Project Director also offered writing utensils and a clipboard for those who desired those resources. Session one covered an outline of the remaining sessions as well as definitions that would be used in the them. Each teaching portion was followed by a focus group.

All class subject matter experts allowed for interactions during their lecture. The subject matter expert addressed questions from the class as well as prompted questions that helped engage the content. The intent of the interaction was to reinforce or clarify the content so that the remaining portion of the study would reveal participant retention and application of information. Teaching times varied between subject matter experts, but most maintained a thirty-minute window of time to relay content.

Week Two

Week two was hosted by the subject matter expert regarding discipleship process. The Director of Engagement (D.O.E) of Coastal Church led this discussion and helped the group see biblically, as well as practically, how discipleship process functions in the life of the church. The class materials were discussed ahead of the class between the Project Director and the D.O.E.

The base of the class was designed by the Project Director and the D.O.E. provided contextual statistics applicable to the campus. Some rewording was determined by both the Project Director and D.O.E. after the meeting. Most of the content stayed true to the original intent of the Project Director and his designed study.

The D.O.E. was introduced by the Project Director and the class was informed by the Project Director that the session was being recorded. The D.O.E. began the class session by handing out the designed work sheet for this section, referring to discipleship process. The content covered both theological and philosophical perspectives of Coastal Church. The content also covered areas in which this fellowship could consider what they can customize within their context. The D.O.E. revealed multiple statistics that factored into considerations of this Coastal fellowship. The D.O.E. concluded the session by walking the group through the Focus Group discussion.

Week Three

During week three the subject matter expert was what Coastal refers to as a Shepherding Elder. A Shepherding Elder is an individual responsible for spiritual encouragement and oversight of a group of people. This Elder is responsible to help new members onboard to Coastal's Yorktown campus and respond to care issues through his assigned members. He was selected as he is an elder, father, and husband who faithfully participates in his local church. Due to his wife's role on staff this subject matter expert has seen several of Coastal Church's campuses firsthand. The participation of this expert would have seen several of Coastal Church adoptions and how they have functioned.

Prior to the class the subject matter expert and Project Director went over the content and discussed any additions or removals of content. This subject matter expert guided the group

through a discussion on the value of Sunday morning worship. The session began with the Project Director informing the class that he would be recording the session. The Project Director introduced the subject matter expert and gave background to the expertise of this individual. The subject matter expert then started to introduce the subject, and the participants were handed a guide, much like the other two sessions, to follow along with the discussion. The answers in this discussion were much more extensive and the Project Director decided to leave the answers in the handout to reduce distraction from the lecture. The subject matter expert concluded the session and introduced a focus group conversation regarding the content.

Week Four

Week four operated very similarly to the previous three weeks. Before the class the Project Director and the subject matter expert met to review content and collaborate over any necessary changes. The subject matter expert in this case was a deacon who had helped at a previous campus of Coastal Church in a multitude of areas. On the Monday of the class the Project Director informed the class the session was being recoded and introduced the subject matter expert. This expert was asked to focus on leading the class through a lecture on evangelism tactics. A handout was distributed to each of the participants with fill-in-the-blanks. The subject matter expert addressed theological and philosophical precedence for evangelism among God's local church. This lecture was followed up with the subject matter expert guiding the group through a focus group discussion.

Follow Up Interview Invite

Prior to the evening of the last class the Project Director had sent out an email detailing the desire to meet with each participant to interview them after the participant had completed the intervention (Appendix M). After the fourth session the Project Director appeared in front of the

class to let them know they had received the email and were encouraged to sign up for a time for the interview. Class participants followed a link online to set up appointments and interviews took place at the established times.

Intervention Focus Group

The focus groups took place following the classroom teaching of the subject matter experts. These focus groups lasted twenty to twenty-five minutes in length, addressing the three-pronged elements of this research and questions regarding the context of this local Coastal fellowship. The intent was to gather participants' understanding of the specific content discussed in the classroom session as well as to evaluate if the participants could contextualize the information in practical application.

The questions were intended to see how participants related the data to future church aspirations that would help create sustainability. Another desire was to evaluate if the group would take ownership of their ideas and identify ways to put them into practice. The qualifications of an applicable idea must align with the theological boundaries established by Coastal Church, as well as work with current campus expectations, which are referred to as standardizations. Within those boundaries participants were encouraged to textualize their current conditions as the Coastal Battery Park fellowship.

The subject matter experts presented the questions to be open-ended, not enforcing a standard answer. The experts were allowed to introduce new questions if those questions helped to better clarify the participants' answers. Experts were asked to not lead the participants toward the ideal answer, but just help guide them in the process. These questions and answers were collected by way of audio recordings and a journal made by the Project Director. Each focus group was intended to identify gaps that may be missing on the campus level. For instance, if

prayer was missing during Sunday morning worship, the questions were intended to identify the problem as well as hope for recommendations by the group to resolve the problem.

Intervention Assessment Survey

The intervention assessment survey was designed to measure the intention and current participation of participants. The test was given to the classroom participants after the first session. The first twelve questions were Likert scale questions, and the next twenty-seven questions were yes or no questions evaluating current participation. The first assessment was collected by physical paper handouts. The hope of the classroom group was to see if what was collected in the original survey changed from the original responses to show signs of greater commitment or to reveal signs of continued unified commitment.

The other group that was surveyed was to reveal if any distinct difference could be found between the classroom participants and those who just attend Coastal church on a regular basis. The hope of the survey is to help quantifiably demonstrate the value of the classroom experience. This group was contacted by email and given instructions to fill out the survey and submit it back to the Project Director. In one situation the Project Director reached out to small group leaders to encourage the survey to be filled out by participants in their group.

No information on the individual was collected to identify them. The only information gathered was regarding the study and how they would respond to the questions that Group A was given. The Project Director hoped the results would reveal if there was a disparity between both the classroom intervention and those who have not been exposed to the content in this type of format. The data was collected by a similar survey website, but two surveys were created to capture Group A and Group C separately. This was done to maximize the distinction, if any, in the data collection.

Intervention Church Participation

Participation in the church following the classroom experience was intended to see if the class participants demonstrated clearer desire as to why they serve. The participant used the remaining four weeks of the intervention to be involved in areas where the discipleship process, Sunday morning worship, and/or evangelism tactics were required. The ideal scenario is that the participant was engaged in all three activities either within the church or in daily life pursuits. The hope is that the participants also have a heightened sense of awareness as to what may be missing or what areas may be meeting expectations. Chapter four will reveal these results and display how the participants stewarded their time.

Intervention Interview

The intervention interview is the culmination of all the research revisiting with participants regarding all collection tools. These interviews were recorded, and the Project Director notified each interviewee that they were being recorded at the start of the conversation. The interviews took place from the last week of May to the first week of June. Each session took between fifteen and thirty-five minutes in length, depending on the participant. Some of the conversation between spouses were discussed together, which in several cases expounded on the information in a positive way. The conversations were positive as the participant responses revealed an understanding of the content and application of the subject matter discussed in the class experience. More details about the responses can be found in chapters 4 and 5.

Two questions were asked of each participant to both identify whether they captured the information and their level of ability to relay what they learned from the experience. The Project Director wanted to see if any, or all, of the participants had shared responses that emphasized a strong leaning as to what will influence their future in the church body. The respondents

discussed the impact of their experience with the Project Director and posited some proposed considerations. Each participant varied in their response but gave a clear sign of their understanding of the three-pronged elements from the intervention. They also highlighted take aways that demonstrated their practical grasp of the material. The interviews lasted fifteen to thirty minutes in length followed up with them filling out the survey online.

<div align="center">Summation of Implementation</div>

The project intervention was completed in eleven weeks, which included interviews with each participant. Data from Group C was collected during the end of May to create a comparison group between Group A and Group C. It took three weeks to collect all participant data via interviews so that the Project Director could assess content. All interviews were recorded, and most of them were done by phone call. The Project Director initiated all phone calls by contacting the intended participant. Following the collection of data, the Project Director went back through the recordings and journal notes to prepare for writing the results portion of the thesis.

All data collected was clarified for the research, but the Project Director did identify a few areas where increased data could have been collected. In the case of the survey, data that collected the verbalization of the questions could have helped to give clearer insight. For instance, asking if a participant would be likely to give 10% or more of their income to the local church could gain better insight into that participant's level of involvement. Saying giving 5%+ did not clarify the intended target that the Project Director was hoping to discover. In the interview section, the Project Director had to build on the previously developed questions to gather information about participation following the classroom experience. No direct questions were targeted to signify that the participants spent time either in Sunday morning worship,

discipleship process, or evangelism tactics. The Project Manager had to expound on questions to get the perspective of the participants' reaction to involvement in these elements. Overall data collection did sufficiently help to gain a better understanding of the value of the project intervention.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Was the Sistine Chapel's ceiling painted exactly as Michelangelo anticipated? Was the Eiffel Tower specific to the desires of the three architects who laid out the plans? A project on church adoption merger is by far no comparison, but the questions of precisely nailing down each detail to the specific expectation is one pondered often by the Project Director. The content's intention was to potentially create a tool to show how the intervention could be duplicated and utilized by others. The hope was that the information results would demonstrate clear correlations between content and church adoption merger success. In some ways, this was the case, as the project survey displays a desire for the congregants to be invested more in the life and operation of the church. This display will be evident throughout this chapter. However, this project does lack a bit of perfection, and further additions could add tremendous value, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Ultimately, the results demonstrate how the three-pronged elements were received by the intervention participants as well as the effectiveness of the elements application. The responses of the participants were very helpful and gave significant clarity to their understanding of these building blocks as applied to church adoption. The Project Director wanted to demonstrate how these three-pronged elements help to influence church adoption mergers. However, this research does not demonstrate every clarifying factor to fully implement a church adoption. Most of what is discussed in this thesis is after the church's willingness to be adopted and more evidence of what has occurred after adoption was finalized. The three-pronged elements are to explain how the church has, and is, moving toward sustainability to have long term effects on the community. The official adoption merger was finalized on February 7, 2023; the Project Director has interacted with the fellowship since December 25, 2022.

Collective Results

Survey Collection

Data for this project was collected via a focus group, interviews, and surveys. This section of the thesis will cover the results of the surveyed individuals. The surveyed parties included individuals in the project intervention group and those surveyed outside of the group, but still affiliated with a Coastal Church adoption. The project intervention group included ten individuals who participated in four classroom experiences, focus groups, and participation opportunities at Coastal Battery Park Church. The other group, Group C, also referred to as the comparison group, included ten individuals who did not participate in the project intervention but participated in a church adoption as part of Coastal Church.

The questions were designed to assess both group's intentions regarding church involvement with an adoption. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the results appear to clarify a quality understanding of the three-pronged elements but do not show profound correlations with adoption as was anticipated. The content demonstrates more of a representation of the value of understanding the elements in the early days of a restructuring church. In this section, the Project Director will parse and synthesize the varying responses and how or if they connect with the intended results.

Adoption

The first question of the survey was designed to solidify the participant's willingness to be a part of future church adoption mergers. The project director wanted to assess whether or not participants were deterred from participation in adoptions due to experience in the current adoption of Battery Park Baptist Church.

The first question states, "How likely are you to support a new adoption in the Coastal Church network?"

There was no response of opposition to partnering with a new adoption, however the responses of the comparison group compared to the responses of the project intervention group were uniquely different. The project intervention group stayed in favor of adoption, even displaying an increase to be very likely to participate in an adoption. However, no decline in participation was seen in the survey regarding change from initial response to survey response following the project intervention.

How likely are you willing to support a new adoption in the Coastal Church network?
10 responses

- Not Likely
- Less Likely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Very Likely

60%
20%
20%
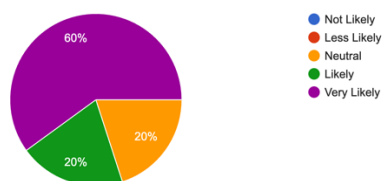
Figure 3. Project Intervention Group Follow-Up Survey Support New Coastal Church Adoption.

How likely are you willing to support a new adoption in the Coastal Church network?
10 responses

- Not Likely
- Less Likely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Very Likely

30%
50%
20%
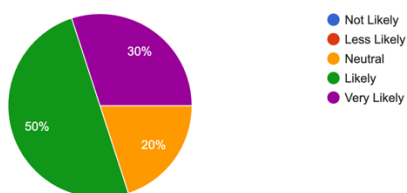
Figure 4. Project Intervention Group Initial Survey Support New Coastal Church Adoption.

How likely are you willing to support a new adoption in the Coastal Church network?
9 responses
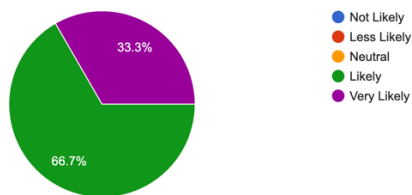
Figure 5. Group C Comparison Group Survey Support New Coastal Church Adoption.

Significant changes occurred when survey participants were asked if they would support a non-Coastal Church adoption. According to the initial survey taken by the intervention group the percentage of participants being a part of a general adoption (non-Coastal) was split in all responses. Some conveyed not likely or less likely in the pursuit of partnering with a new adoption. This mindset shifted in the follow-up survey conveying that at least 20% of participants had shifted from less likely and not likely to neutral, likely, or very likely. The comparison group had 50% of respondents claim they would be less likely to be a part of a non-Coastal Church adoption.

How likely are you to participate for a set season of time with a new church adoption?
10 responses
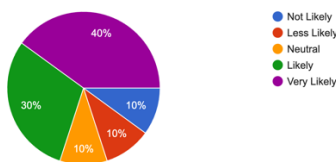
How likely are you to participate in going to be a part of a new church adoption?
10 responses
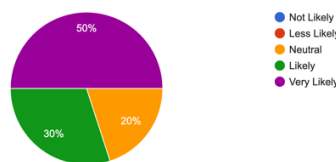
Figure 6. Non-Coastal Church Adoption (Intervention Group, Initial vs. Follow-Up Survey).

How likely are you to participate in going to be a part of a new church adoption?
10 responses
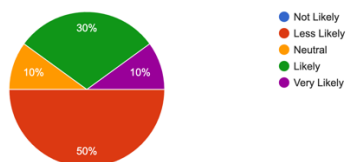
Figure 7. Non-Coastal Church Adoption (Comparison Group).

Another question proposed in the survey was used to identify who would be likely to participate in an adoption for a set period. The comparison group claimed 40% were likely to participate, 10% very likely, 20% neutral, the remaining 30% less likely. No one stated not likely in the comparison group survey. The intervention group reflected that all parties were either neutral (10%), likely (40%), or very likely (50%). Previously, 10% less likely and 10% were not likely to participate. The difference between the intervention group and the comparison group was significant but appeared positively in favor of adoption.

Evangelism

In the survey (initial project intervention group survey and comparison group survey), the section on evangelism displayed stats from both groups that demonstrated limited desire or ability to share one's faith. When asked "do you have a defined strategy for sharing your faith with others," 80% of the intervention group and comparison group said, "No, they did not have a defined strategy." However, following the intervention, the project intervention group increased from two to six individuals identifying that they have a defined strategy for sharing the gospel. This question will be discussed further in the interview result section of this thesis.
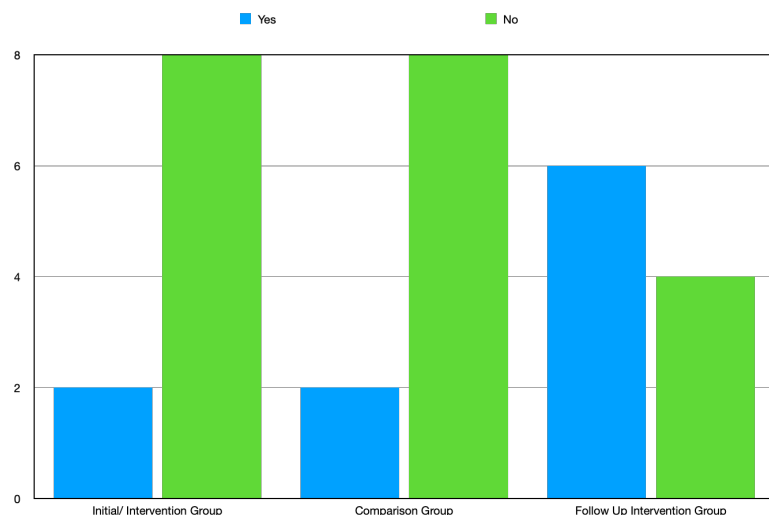
Figure 8. Defined Strategy to Share Faith.

These results may also signify why the next set of data is not as robust as other faith disciplines seen in other sections of the survey. Again, as mentioned earlier, evangelism varied from other practices presented through the questions in the survey. Another example of this challenge regarding evangelism is presented in a question to signify reoccurrence of sharing faith amongst participants. The participants in the project intervention, both in the initial survey as well as in the follow-up survey, expressed that only 40% of them shared the gospel more than one time per month. The comparison group survey revealed that only 30% of respondents shared the gospel more than once a month. However, the respondents all had high percentage responses to inviting someone to a faith activity at some point in their involvement with the church.

Sharing the gospel with a friend increased to very likely by a large percentage of the class between the two surveys. The initial survey conveyed that 60% of the project intervention group was likely to share the gospel with a friend. In the follow-up survey, 60% of the group claimed they were very likely to share the gospel with a friend. Also, within the project intervention group, 10% said they were neutral as to whether they would be willing to share. The survey wanted to also evaluate if they would share with coworkers and family members. In both areas participants responded 80% likely or very likely to share the gospel with family members or coworkers. The comparison group revealed that they are much more likely to share with family and friends as opposed to co-workers where they were 30% less likely to share the gospel.
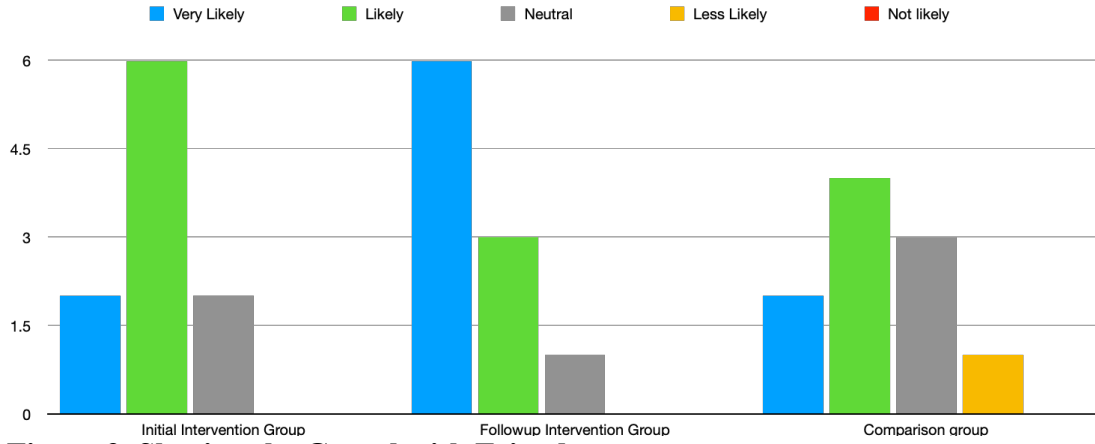
Figure 9. Sharing the Gospel with Friends.
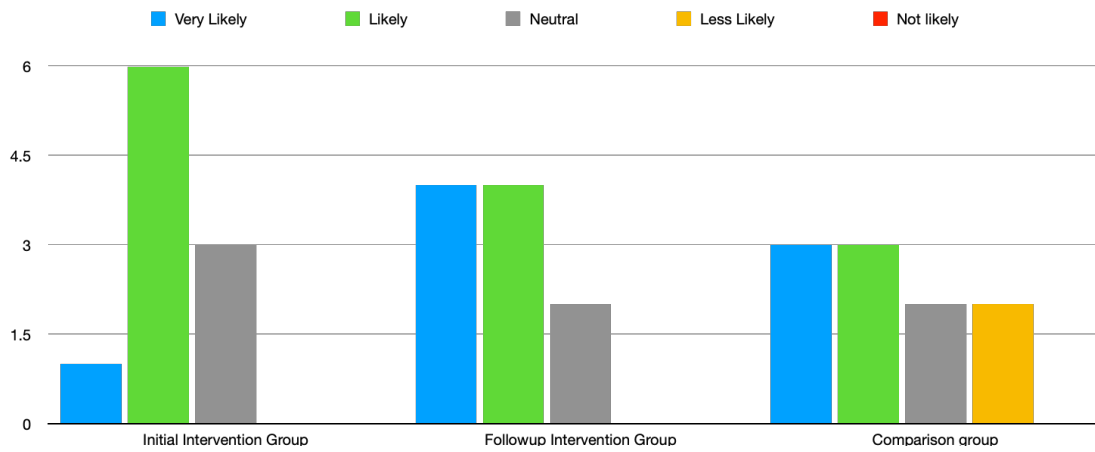
Figure 10. Sharing the Gospel with Family.
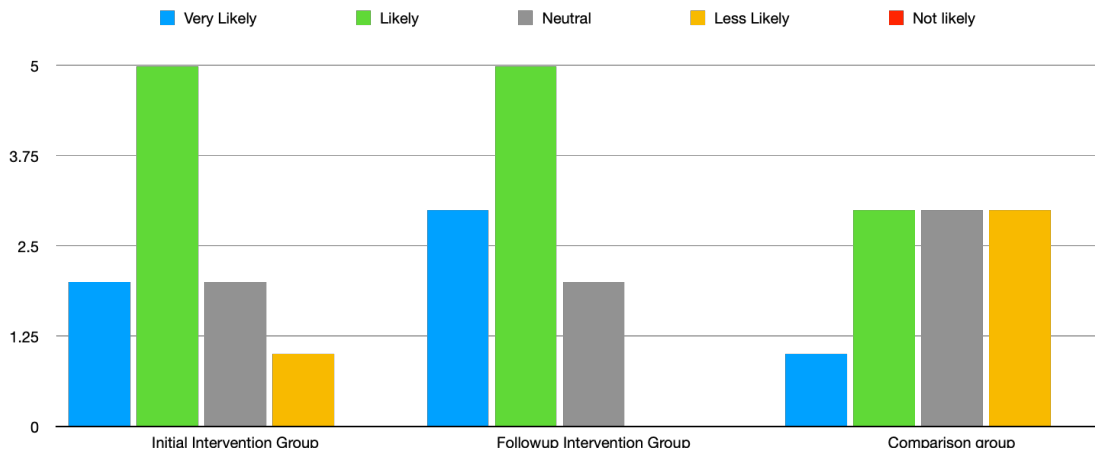
Figure 11. Sharing the Gospel with a Coworker.

Prayer in Evangelism

The survey petitioned participants to answer questions with correlation to evangelism. All groups displayed a great desire to pray for friends and family that do not know Christ. Both the initial and follow-up survey in the project group had a 100% yes response; they have prayed for their friends and family. The comparison group responded with 80%. When asked, "are you praying for opportunities to share the gospel," 50% of the comparison group said yes. The project intervention group in both surveys remained at 70%, claiming yes, they were praying for opportunities.

The groups were also asked if they were praying for boldness to share the gospel with others. The project group saw an increase from the initial survey to the follow-up survey. The project intervention group shifted from 50% to 90%, affirming that they were praying for boldness. The comparison group demonstrated that 60% were praying for boldness. This question was followed up by "Are you praying for clarity on how to share the gospel?" The project group stayed steady at 80% praying for clarity and the comparison group was 70%, claiming they pray for clarity on how to share the gospel.

Discipleship

This part of the survey evaluated the likelihood of individuals stewarding the responsibility of helping someone follow the process of discipleship in the life of the church. The church (Coastal) agreed that due to the Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:18-20, followers are responsible to make disciples of Jesus. Coastal phrases the concept through the means of a process of involvement that encourages followers to fulfill the Great Commandment as well as the New Commandment discussed in John 13:34-35. Coastal Church states this mission by saying "Coastal exists to develop authentic followers of Christ that connect to God in

corporate worship, grow in community through small group, serve in ministry and mission, and multiply by making disciples for the advancement of the gospel."[192] All four areas demonstrate loving God, loving one another and loving others by giving the saints a means to participate in the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

Ultimately the charge laid out by Coastal Church's pastors and staff is to encourage individuals to partner with others to walk through each step of connect, grow, serve, and multiply. This step-by-step process was laid out in the class experience for the participants. The surveys combine to show a significant difference between the participating groups. In the survey the question was posed "How likely are you to help someone participate in the discipleship process?" The project intervention group in the initial survey responded 50% likely or 50% very likely to walk someone through a discipleship process. The comparison group responded 30% were likely and 40% very likely; the remaining were 20% neutral and 10% less likely.
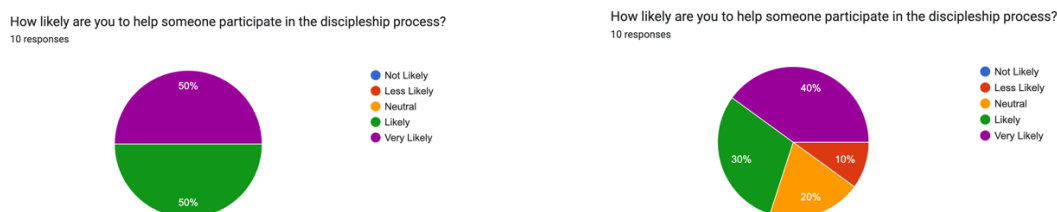
Figure 12. Discipleship Process (Intervention Group Initial Survey vs. Comparison Group Survey).

This measure changed during the follow-up for the intervention group. 30% of the individuals following the intervention changed from likely to very likely.

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[192] Coastal Church Staff, and Editor Bethany Lay, *We Are Coastal.* (Yorktown, VA. Coastal Church Publication 2024). 2.

How likely are you to help someone participate in the discipleship process?
10 responses

- Not Likely
- Less Likely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Very Likely

80%

20%
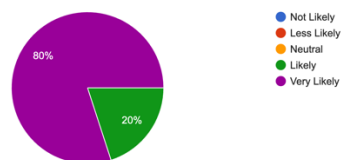
Figure 13. Discipleship Process Intervention Group Follow-Up Survey.

Reflective Activity of the Discipleship Process

In this survey four topics applying to the discipleship process were conveyed. Two of these topical questions can also overlap with Sunday Morning Worship. Sunday morning worship, although a main three-pronged element in this thesis, is a response to the discipleship process. Evangelism tactics are also considered part of the three-pronged elements and can also fall under the heading of the discipleship process. In the intervention, evangelism was presented last, but in this case, placing evangelism first showed the progressing lines from evangelism through the discipleship process. The hope of this survey was to see how likely and willing surveyed parties were to disciple others. To disciple others, a reflective attitude and response to the finished work of Christ can be displayed in the individuals who surrender their life to Christ and His will.

This section will discuss the activity of participating in gospel community, understanding the tenets of the gospel, giving financially to the work of the church, and serving in the ministry/mission of the church. The first section that will be displayed is the response of surveyed individuals participating in Gospel community.

Three areas were explored through the survey questions regarding participation in gospel community. Gospel community would refer to church activities intended to educate and encourage people in their faith. The first question addressed in the survey referred to the likelihood of participating in Sunday morning worship. This question was one of a few questions

where 100% of the respondents answered very likely to participate. The response was further affirmed when 100% of respondents in both surveys conveyed "yes" to whether they participate two to four times per month in Sunday morning worship. Other attributes discussed under the premise of Sunday morning worship were the ordinances of the church. These ordinances are the Lord's supper and baptism with the respondents in each survey conveying 100% participation in each ordinance.

The group was also asked about their participation in a small group. Small groups are environments where a set of individuals (three or more) participate in study of the Bible and encourage accountability among each other. The question was posed to see if the surveyed parties participated in a small group six or more times in a small group season (eight weeks). Most small groups are requested by the church to meet eight times per semester during the spring and fall. If someone were to attend a group six times in an eight-week small group season they would be participating 80% of the time. This question was set as a low bar as the Project Director was hoping that no more than two or three individuals would answer "no." Between all three surveys only one individual claimed to participate less than six times per semester and they were part of the comparison group. The project intervention group replied 100% participation on both the initial and follow-up surveys.

The other gospel community topic assessed was time spent in the Word of God. This was an implication question that the Project Director was hoping would infer the amount of personal time the participant spends with God one-on-one. In the data analysis this will be further evaluated as there is no absolute proof that reading the Bible can imply direct interaction with God. The project intervention respondents responded to this question with 80% of them claiming in the initial survey that they spent three to four times per week reading their Bible. This

response of the intervention group changed in the follow-up survey as 70% responded that they spend three to four times per week in personal time with the Bible. The comparison group replied with only 60% of respondents saying they spend time three to four times per week reading the Bible.

The question was also asked of the surveyed parties if they are praying for God to grow them in their relationship with Jesus. The initial survey of the intervention group responded with 90% of individuals saying they are praying for God to grow them in their relationship with Christ. The follow-up survey conveyed that 100% were praying for God to grow them in their relationship with Christ. The comparison group responded with 80% of the individuals saying they were praying for God to grow them in their relationship with Jesus.

The questions posed in this section were to identify unifying beliefs that are commonly referred to as essential beliefs. The survey only addressed two primary essentials by focusing on and assessing a salvific understanding of the gospel. Both questions were yes and no questions so that the Project Director could receive definitive responses rather than varying degree responses. The two questions asked, (1) Do you believe Christ was sinless, and (2) Do you believe the gospel refers to Jesus being God, Jesus dying on the Cross for man's sins, and Jesus raising bodily from the dead defeating death giving mankind access to God through the receiving of Christ Jesus? All respondents conveyed that "yes, they believe in these tenants of faith." This set a baseline implying that each respondent has a similar understanding of the gospel as those anticipated to be considered followers of Christ. No question was asked if they were believers in Christ. The question only inferred that they have a clarification of the gospel narrative.

The last two attributes are combined in this section as the Project Director proposes that these are outpouring responses affirming conviction and commitment to a Christ-centered life.

The first question addressed financial giving: "What is the likelihood of you financially supporting the church above 5% of your income?"
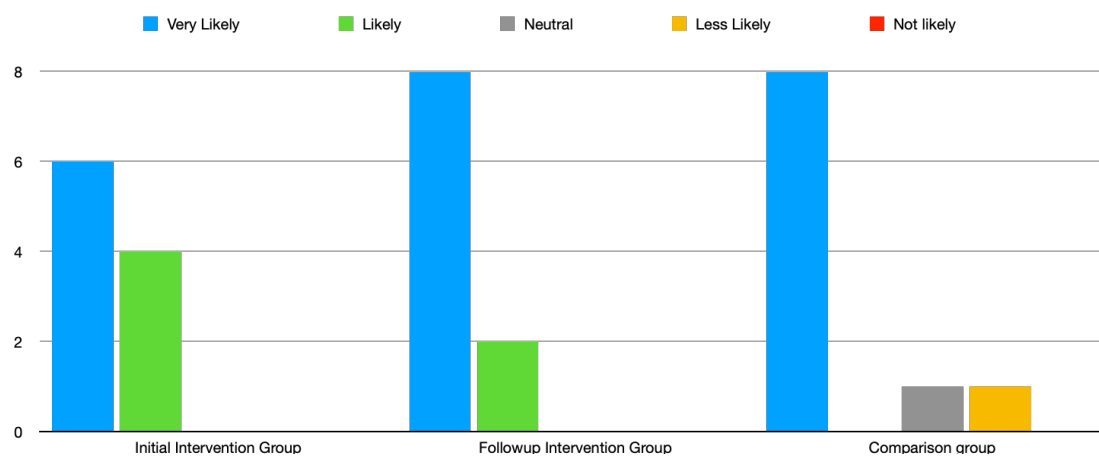
Figure 14. Likely to Give Above 5% of Income to Local Church.

This question was posed again to see if any of the data would shift by posing the question as a yes or no response. The data shifted slightly in the intervention group with 50/50 split in the initial survey; however, the follow-up survey remained similar. 80% of respondents stated "yes, they do give more than 5% of their income to the church," and 20% responded that "no, they do not give beyond 5%." The comparison group responded that 88% do give more than 5% of their income, but this question was missing the response of an individual participant. Thus only nine of the respondents answered the question.
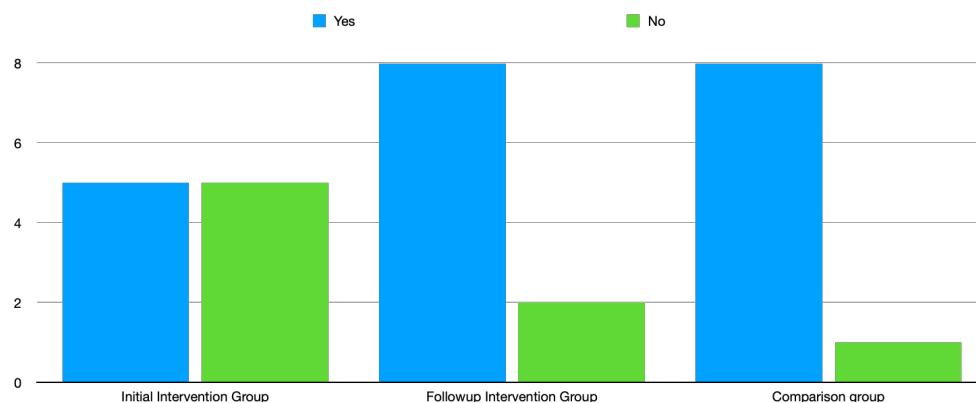
Figure 15. Do Give Above 5% of Income to Local Church.

The Project Director also wanted to assess commitment to serving in the local church as well as the reminder to invite others to join serving opportunities. Three questions were posed regarding personal serving: (1) What is the likelihood of you serving in this church more than one time per month?, (2) Are you currently serving here at the church?, and (3) Are you serving more than one time per month in any of the church's ministries?

These questions hoped to evaluate if the respondents are connected to the work of the church and not just the fellowship of the church. All respondents had a high percentage of participation in favor of serving. The baseline question that the Project Director wanted to attain was question two, whether they are currently serving. The initial project intervention group survey responded with 100% participants serving in the current local church at the beginning of the intervention. The comparison group responded with a 90% participation rate regarding serving at the church. However, a significant change was seen when surveying the intervention group in the follow-up survey. They responded with an 80% participation rate. The data analysis section will cover the possible reasons for this shift.

In question one, the group was requested to respond to the likelihood of their participation in serving through the local church more than one time per month. The initial project intervention survey displayed that 90% were very likely to serve more than one time per month with the remaining 10% being likely to serve. The follow-up survey adjusted in this case yet both surveys still had the group respond with either likely or very likely. The comparison group responded with 50% being very likely to participate, 40% being likely to participate, and 10% neutral on their willingness to participate more than one time per month serving. When asked if they are serving more than once per month, the response for the initial survey was 90% yes, the follow-up survey was 80% yes, and the comparison group was 80% yes.

In conjunction with these questions another set of questions were asked regarding participation in missions. Mission refers to ministries outside this church body that are still affiliated in kingdom of God efforts in the community or overseas. Missions that take place outside the church body within the fifty U.S. States are domestic mission fields. The missions that take place overseas, or even in U.S. Territories like Puerto Rico, are considered foreign missions. The intended exploration of these questions is to see if the intervention group and comparison group are likely to serve in these types of ventures. These questions demonstrate the most dynamic variations compared to other content in this survey.

The majority of the intervention group was either likely or very likely to participate in missions, both foreign and domestic. However, the intervention group in the initial survey responded with 10% claiming they are less likely and another 10% were not likely to participate in a foreign mission opportunity. The initial intervention group responded to domestic missions by claiming that 10% were neutral for involvement and another 10% less likely to engage in a local mission. The intervention follow-up group survey saw an increase in neutral responses when it came to foreign mission participation. No one in the follow-up survey conveyed not likely to participate in a foreign mission trip. The ratio remained the same for local missions with the intervention group. The comparison group responded similarly to local missions. Regarding foreign mission trips, the comparison group claimed 30% very likely, 30% likely, 30% neutral, and 10% not likely to participate in a foreign mission.
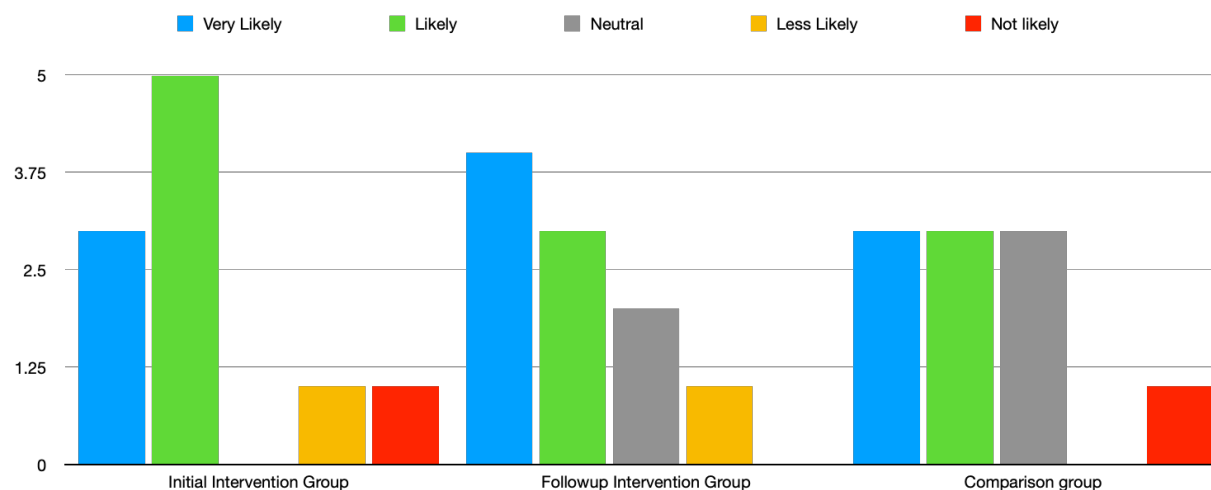
Figure 16. Likelihood of Foreign Missions Participation.
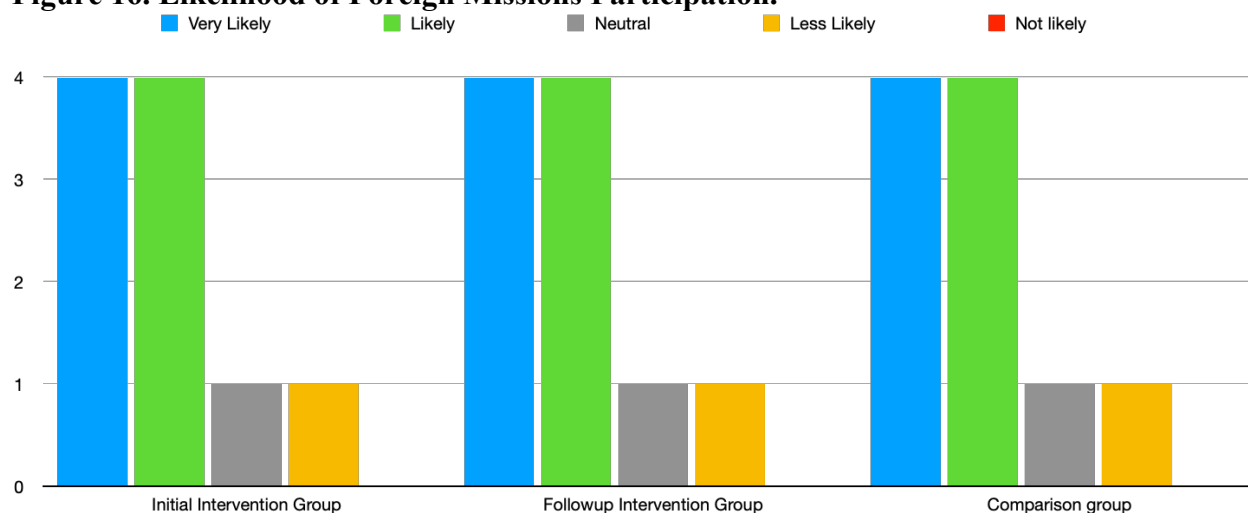
Figure 17. Likelihood of Local Missions Participation.

Focus Group Data Collection

The focus group data collection helped the Project Director see moments where information was retained and creativity was expressed. In the initial conversation with the participants, the Project Director gave them definitions that would apply to the overall intervention to help provide clarity. The focus group discussion asked the group about future expectations of the content and was intended to identify the baseline understanding the groups gained from the discussion on definitions. The group responded to the focus group by repeating several of the comments they had heard during the class intervention. They also put the terms

into their own words showing that they not only understood the definitions, but also understood how to apply the definitions. This response was very clear when discussing the discipleship process. Phrases such as "discipleship is walking with someone," "discipleship is like iron sharpening iron," "discipleship is not just Bible study, but helping others make decisions in their lives toward Christ-centered attitude."[193] These phrases, among others, communicated to the Project Director that the group had received and conveyed a clarity of the definitions.

Discipleship Process

In the discipleship process the focus group respondents expressed that they valued and appreciated the strong press of Coastal Church to make this clear within the local campus fellowship. The group commented that the process is biblical, and simple. N. W., who is now the Teaching Resident at the campus, elaborated on how the simplicity is helping him to convey the path with greater ease to the average congregant. The group affirmed in their discussion that the key to moving people through the process is to take individual responsibility to steward new attendees. One individual even acknowledged the need to not look just to the pastor to help people through the life of discipleship, but to look to the body of believers for future disciple makers. This did not ignite immediate creativity for the group that evening, but later in one of the interviews, a unique concept was brought to the table. See the interview section of this thesis for more details.

Sunday Morning Worship

The focus group's responses highlighted information regarding Sunday morning worship and demonstrated a clear retention of the group content. The intervention group discussed each

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[193] D. A, H. A., and D. R., focus group discussion lead by author, Carrollton, VA, April 8, 2024.

section, touching on the elements of Sunday morning worship. The group discussed the implications and application of each element discussing singing, prayer, preaching of the Word, and giving. Singing, prayer and preaching was given more attention than the act of worship through giving. Not much discussion was given to the ordinances as the practice and participation has been set in the context of the church. This response was not perceived as a negative by the group as during the discussion expressions of affirmation were discussed during the teaching portion of that evening's class. Most of the responses lead back to the conversation about community and how impactful communal time was for the overall group.

Highlights of many of the conversations lead the group toward an evangelism discussion at the end of each point. Also, creative liberties were not discussed much in the focus group for this section. The group did highlight various aspects that are already established in the life of the body. The creativity was emphasized when the group diverted toward another conversation about helping people find ways into church as opposed to the current operation of Sunday morning worship.

Evangelism Tactics

Evangelism was understood by all and was conveyed as a challenge for several in the project intervention group. Most of the concerns mentioned by the group came in the element of comparison. Individual believers compare themselves with what appear to be experts in the craft, and they tend not to match up to those expectations. Therefore, an individual's desire or feelings of inadequacy can eradicate their willingness to share. They claimed to reserve evangelism for the experts and place their efforts elsewhere. The other concern mentioned regarding evangelism was that the act of sharing one's faith may come off as judgmental or critical. The group

mentioned being concerned with knowing what to say and when to say something to friends, family, or co-workers.

The group also responded on how to overcome these concerns and address practical implications that can encourage gospel activity. Some of the suggestions mentioned were to read and know the Scriptures to be ready to respond in a biblically-centered way. Another individual mentioned to acknowledge the perspective that as believers they are planting seeds that eventually could result in salvation. It is not the job of the saint to fulfill the work of the Savior. Yes, a believer should share the gospel, but the work is that of the Holy Spirit's intervention. One of the other participants expressed that the hope of their ability to help should outweigh the fear of the presentation. The individual was referring to his own loneliness he was experiencing prior to knowing Christ. In his search for a sense of community he ran into individuals that influenced him to be a part of the church. This eventually led to his understanding of the gospel and his drive to follow Christ. In other words, someone should allow their empathy to help convey their testimony. Ultimately the consensus was to be aware and attentive to the environments people are in so that the believers are intentional about utilizing opportunities to share the gospel.

In this focus group, multiple suggestions and more creativity came from the parties involved in the project intervention. Several acknowledged potential concepts to build rapport and relationships in the community. Within the immediate community one participant mentioned getting to know the neighbors by simply walking the neighborhood. Others mentioned interacting more with those they are already connected to in the community. One of the elder statesmen in the group talked about the use of verbiage he conveys at work. He works to know Scripture in a way that he can easily encourage someone in his work environment. He also stated

that he looks for ways to be involved in the community of his work, such as participating in a Fantasy football league where he gives himself a unique name that provokes gospel conversation.

In conjunction with the focus group question on how to build rapport in the community for gospel effort, the group was asked about tools the church could supply to support those efforts. The group acknowledged that Coastal as a church offered theological tools such as teaching on evangelism, pamphlets on how to articulate the gospel to others, and classes to help train on evangelism. The suggestions they mentioned regarding evangelizing specific to the Coastal Battery Park fellowship emphasized some event-driven options to consider.

The intervention the group did not default to these events quickly. Many of the respondents were clear they wanted to be more relationally intentional in their circle of influence. However, the suggestions they did advocate in favor of pursuing were at-home events such as grilling burgers for neighbors and friends in the community. They also recommended a parent night out for church families to interact with new potential families, while their children were engaged in a safe and fun environment at the church. The group also suggested serve events by partnering with local ministries in the community. The intention of these events is to both reach out to those in need as well as invite those outside the church to serve with the group. Needless-to-say, the group was very engaged in this focus group conversation.

Interview Data Collection

Each interview asked two questions and all the interviews either substantiated a consideration or affirmed an assumption in research. The respondents expressed appreciation for the four-session class and made mention of how each session altered their previous ways of thinking regarding the church adoption. One of the consistent critiques mentioned was the

transition from the previous attendees to the more recent attendees. Several of the previous attendees (previous Battery Park Baptist Church members) who had attended since the start of the adoption had stepped away from the fellowship within three to six months into the adoption. Therefore, if one of the goals was for the adoption to retain most of the original attendees, the Coastal Battery Park adoption did not meet that goal. This will be further explored in the data analysis section of this chapter.

Another critique that was discussed as influential for the church to show a measure of revitalization was a stronger emphasis on serving venture within the local community. These comments would refer to partnership with food missions, foster programs, ministries to new mothers, and potential partnership with local schools. At this early season, Coastal Battery Park has not attached themselves to a mission within the community. C. S., one of the participants, mentioned in his interview that the church could benefit from having point leadership in serve ministries. Point leadership, in his opinion, was an individual either volunteer or staff member who pursued relationships with these outside domestic missions. This individual would have freedom to plan as well as schedule opportunities for the congregants to serve in these endeavors. He believed that being involved in these ministries could also connect the church to potential people as an evangelistic opportunity. Other interviewed parties concurred with that sentiment.

When meeting with D. A. and H. A., who have the longest tenure with the community, they made an insight regarding the evangelism section of the intervention. During the interview the Project Director expounded on a question about highlights of the class. The Project Director wanted to evaluate if the curriculum laid out an easy-to-use pathway toward relational evangelism. In a general sense they could spot avenues in which to accomplish relational evangelism, but neither could remember the pattern design laid out in the class experience. They

suggested utilizing an acronym or alliteration tool, which could have been helpful for them to grasp the pathway pattern.

D.R and N. R., while discussing the discipleship process, discovered a gap they wanted to further discuss. That gap was regarding people who are new believers and how they can get placed in discipleship opportunities immediately if they so desire. D. R. and N. R. suggested that the church together raise up one another to be ready to step in as individuals who are available on a Sunday morning and ready to be assigned to a new believer. If visitor A shows up on a given Sunday, then church member B is ready to meet with them and invite them to walk together to the next step. D. R. and N. R. expounded on this thought by saying this individual would be in a small group that has space in the group to invite the new guest to join. The member would have the time to meet with them outside of group to discuss the fundamentals of the faith. This member would also invite them to serve alongside them in a ministry within the life of the church, which is the pattern discussed in the class intervention.

If this concept was to take shape this would potentially serve and support the concern presented by Jn. B. and Jm. B. They mentioned a desire to know about the steps between the steps in Coastal Church's discipleship process. The process was laid out well by the Subject Matter Expert, but due to time constraints portions of the subject were not going to be discussed in the class. However, this does not negate the value of the consideration and the possibility of expounding on the current curriculum to discuss foundational content that could benefit the fellowship.

Data Analysis

Overall, the results received led to good data that helped the Project Director assess the adoption process of the current fellowship. During the data collection, the Project Director also

discovered challenges to consider for future church adoptions. The primary assessment of data was intended to see if the participants understood church adoption and their role in the process. This intervention would assess their understanding of the three-pronged elements and see if they were participating in the life of the church. The data collection gave the Project Director a clear view of who would be willing to participate in future church adoptions.

Addressing Adoption

The first data analysis point to review was the response to the question of supporting future adoptions. Both the intervention group and the class were asked if they would participate in future endeavors with Coastal Church. Most respondents claimed likely or very likely, but a neutral status remained consistent in both the initial survey and the follow-up survey. The Project Director believes this neutral status could be a result of one or two scenarios. One of the proposed scenarios is based on a couple who live in the neighborhood the church is located. The couple has a sincere compassion for their neighbors and wishes to see tremendous growth within the fellowship by locals. This response could have been them desiring to maintain connection to the community as opposed to unwilling participants in another adoption.

Another response could be that one of the individuals works for the church and has committed themselves to long-term obligations to this fellowship. Therefore, to move would be a breach of loyalty to the group. Neither can be fully validated as an official reason for the neutral response, but the positive note is that they did not respond with less likely or not likely on the survey. The Project Director believes both parties would commit to an adoption in certain conditions as they are technically engaged heavily in the life of this adoption.

In the two questions with adoption the comparison group was high on participating with a Coastal Church adoption but had a high percentage of people claim they would be less likely to

participate in a non-Coastal church adoption. This could convey that Coastal Church does a great job creating loyalty among its fellowships. This could insinuate that they don't have a picture of what that would look like to serve in a non-Coastal church adoption, so they would prefer more information. This could mean that the class was not attended by these participants, and they don't have a context of reference for the question.

During the interview several of the conversations led to the question, was the church adoption successful? The Project Director has often wondered if this is true in the eyes of core congregants. The respondents of this question were clarifying in their hope to answer the question with the best of integrity. First off, the attendance over the year had doubled since the initial agreed upon vote. Seventeen voting adults from Battery Park Baptist Church had participated in the initial vote of the church. By Easter of 2023 sixty people were in attendance for the service. Over the first year, the attendance averaged forty-five attendees according to records maintained by Coastal Church. Four of those forty-five attendees are currently going through leadership development.

From the official start of the adoption (February 2023) through June 2023 the church has also had six professions of faith expressed through baptism (Appendix P). Four of the baptisms came about because of going through Coastal Church's membership class. All were professing believers who were looking for an outlet to profess their faith through baptism. One of the baptisms was a result of community involvement of individuals in Coastal Battery Park and non-Coastal relationships sharing the gospel with this individual. One was the Project Director's son who decided this was the season he wished to profess his faith in Christ through baptism.

These are all positive stats moving in the right direction. Granted these stats do not bring clarity to what is being preached and the theological accuracy of what the congregation is

learning. They also do not clarify if the individuals in the congregation are approaching the acts of worship out of pure heart for God. However, the measured stats in the congregation do bring about some consideration for positive restoration through church adoption merger. The only measurement that can be considered a potential negative on the adoption is the transition of several previous attendees. Out of the seventeen voting adults from Battery Park Baptist Church, only two remain a part of the fellowship. Much of this change took place in week one of the adoption merger with only six of the voting members being present for the first service. Other attendees were present, but no record or role could be identified in which they had participated in the church prior to that day.

As of recent three families from the immediate Battery Park community have committed to being a part of the church community, which has been demonstrated by regular attendance and pursuit of membership. The shift has been explored to some degree, but official documentation of those individuals' parting ways with the fellowship are unavailable. The speculation based on conversations with several previous attendees could be categorized into two categories: (1) some people left because they felt a shift in the music from hymnals to contemporary worship practices; (2) the congregants that were a part of the fellowship prior were tired and unable to fulfill the obligations of the fellowship. The second category is speculative on behalf of the Project Director.

Most of the congregants that held significant roles in the church were in their 70s and 80s. Upon arrival of Coastal Church several of these individuals passed on key information to the Lead Pastor as well as other leaders determined by Coastal Church who were serving at the church. These leaders that passed on the information made mention that they wanted the new church leaders to know so they could take responsibility for these areas of upkeep. Shortly after

these responsibilities were handed off, the people originally tied to Battery Park Baptist Church began to pursue attending other fellowships. They were incredibly faithful individuals that allowed Coastal Church to operate in their community and the fellowship is thankful for their legacy. Whether or not this was a measure of unsuccess cannot be determined, but in many ways should be investigated. However, time will reveal if this loss of congregants had a negative impact as the church continues to pursue ministry in the community.

Addressing Evangelism

Evangelism displayed one unique insight worth discussing in the data analysis. The intervention group stayed consistent from initial survey on how many are sharing Christ more than one time per month. What was unique is the correlation with prayer and evangelism. In the area of prayer, specific to evangelistic efforts, every area shifted from its original percentage to 90% claiming "yes, they are praying for opportunities to share their faith, and they are praying for boldness." The true test of this analysis would be best assessed a year from now to see where the intervention group truly lands with their evangelistic efforts. This response demonstrated a positive increased response regarding responsibility for prayer and evangelism.

Addressing Discipleship Process

Personal time with God was discussed in the survey and had limited discussion in the project intervention class. This decision was made by the Project Director knowing that limited time could be dedicated to the more expansive research of time with God. The Project Director, after filtering through the questions, considered additional questions that may have helped to assess the data. For instance, did the question limit the respondents due to the question only suggesting up to four times per week? One individual in the group changed their response from being invested 3-4 times per week to not being involved at that number of times per week. Was

it possible respondents did not claim 3-4 times per week because they read more than that number? Also did this evaluation grasp a broad enough picture of time spent with God? The type of content being consumed was not addressed. Was this time spent on one verse? Was time spent in meditation of the Word? Were these individuals applying the Word into their lives? Was the application conducive with orthodox theology? Having this clarification may have assisted the Project Director in understanding better who participates in the life of a church adoption.

Questions about prayer were addressed in the survey and discussion on specific prayers was part of the class intervention and focus group. Expounding on this section of prayer in both class interaction and survey could have demonstrated further attributes of the group. Was the group consistent in prayer? Were they liturgical in their prayer life? Again, like reading the Bible for application, were questions posed to at least assess their orthodoxy in pray? Were they responding to God with a clear biblical understanding to their relationship with God? In the area of prayer, the survey and discussion group only assessed perspectives related to the three-pronged elements. This evaluation of prayer displayed a candor of the group's current understanding and value of prayer in the life of the church. Most of the participants responded with a certainty of the great value of prayer in the life of the church. The group responded with 90% participation in the areas of prayer asked in the survey.

The group was also asked if they were praying to God to help grow in their relationship with Christ. This question should have been reworded to ask were they praying to know and reflect Christ. The question reworded would have given similar results but would have aligned better with the Project Director's consistent language within the intervention. The Project Director thought this wording conveyed a refined theological perspective. After reviewing

content, the Project Director would have added an additional question to the section of questions referring to the gospel: "Are you followers of Jesus Christ under the tenets mentioned in the two previous questions?" This question could have helped to give the baseline understanding of whether they just understood the gospel or if they believed in the gospel of Jesus.

In the questions on giving, the Project Director purposely avoided asking if congregants gave 10% or a tithe. Based on the results received, a question of tithe could have brought to light the position people hold regarding the practice of tithing. Also, the Project Director would have wanted to create a question around the perception of financial giving as an act of worship. What the Project Director wanted to assess was whether the contributing parties give out of an aspiration of obedience, inspiration of the mission, or even a combination of both. A question of that nature could have assisted in seeing discipleship points that may need to be affirmed or addressed in the life of the church body.

When questioning the intervention group on serving in the local church the follow-up group survey changed by 20% in what could be perceived as a negative response in the data. However, the Project Director was aware that two respondents would respond no. These two respondents were very faithful in the church and had stepped back following the intervention for a well-deserved break. Had these respondents not stepped out at the time they filled out the survey, the Project Director projects that the response would have been 100% yes, they serve. The response of these individuals also affected the other two questions related to serving in the church.

The intervention group's response to missions demonstrated that a small majority were not ready to take the steps to participate, especially in foreign missions. Not much time was given to the conversation on missions as a whole, referring to both foreign and domestic

missions. In fact, the only conversation on the subject was related to the questions in the survey and footnotes in the evangelism section of the class notes. The class was primarily focusing on the early stage building of the church, which in this season could be viewed as a domestic mission field. If more study is given to this group about missions, even based on the consistent increase in response to other questions, this group would be likely, if not very likely, to serve in a mission's context.

Summary of Results

Clarity of ideals in ministry is a strong tool for those who are participating in the life of the church. Before the intervention group stepped into the picture to contemplate the meaning of church adoption, a separate group was there in the church building first. They had discussed ideals of worship, discipleship, evangelism, and biblically, could reference the contextual reason why they designed the church for her long-term purpose. A pastor, a leader, or a set of deacons could probably tell any visitor why they do what they do as a fellowship of believers. These leaders taught classes, preached the concepts from the pulpit, and may have even been so bold to express how the methods of that day were the will of God for that fellowship.

This may be why a steady exodus takes shape when new leadership enters the church family. Church adoption is not an easy task for any party involved. This is why the ability to clarify ideals may be the strongest tool to help all parties adapt. Clarifying how the leadership desires the church to adapt is the church's ability to be stuck on why they do ministry rather than concerned with what method of ministry they pursue. The church needs to be more prepared to marry a mission and date a model.[194] Marrying a mission is a lifetime pursuit as opposed to

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[194] "Marry your mission. Date your model. Fall in love with your vision. Stay mildly infatuated with your approach." Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*, Expanded Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 284.

dating, which is a temporary commitment to a set standard of doing ministry. Missions are the aspiration to chase after the desire of God's heart for the church, whereas a model is one of several tactical ways to address completing the mission. Biblically, the church was unified, but the unification changed when the model was being laid out. This was not a surprise to the congregants and that is possibly why no retaliation took shape from previous members. The members just truly desired a healthy gospel fellowship to steward the building well, present the gospel often, and attempt to engage the community. Therefore, the intent of this intervention class was to continue this gospel endeavor by clarifying and educating a contingency of members who could shape the future.

Prior to the class taking the first survey, the congregation could have been perceived as moderately engaged. After the class and spending time in the life of the church, participants responded as though they had more clarity on what they were engaged in as attendees of a church adoption. Yes, the adoption did not retain most of the previous attendees as expected, but the parties involved in this intervention showed uniquely different responses to the comparison group with a more likely sense of engagement. Not only did they demonstrate an understanding of the content discussed in the intervention, but they also conveyed a driving commitment to the fellowship through the survey and the focus group. This is why the Project Director's assessment is that the group's ability to make these adjustments are based in the clarification of ideals.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to create an eight-session training intervention for lay-leaders to help establish the building blocks of Sunday morning worship, evangelism tactics, and the discipleship process in the life of the church. The crafting of this thesis was not one of shifting leadership as much as it was about shifting structure and organization. The key to this training, for those involved in the project intervention, was learning how to adapt, and why to participate in an adoption merger. In the intervention the Project Director was not working on leadership development; he was working on clarifying and exposing the group on how they can operate for the future. This organization adjustment was not absent of participant insight, but the clarification of ideals regarding the three-pronged elements helped them understand why to adapt. Thus, the responses of the participants could be on the same mindset when the group had to consider the rhythmic practices specific to Coastal Battery Park. This campus at Battery Park was different from other Coastal fellowships and needed some consideration to wrap around Coastal Church's standardizations.

In the book *Canoeing the Mountain,* Tod Bolsinger brings to light a consideration that is applicable to what the church has experienced since the start of this Coastal Battery Park adoption merger. Bolsinger utilizes the historic events of Lewis and Clark to illustrate the ideal of adaptability. He describes how Lewis and Clark's original goal was to find a waterway to the Pacific Ocean, knowing that having a waterway would provide passage for import and export needs. However, when they discovered no waterway existed, they had to ditch the canoes and find an alternative route to the Pacific Ocean.[195] Coastal Battery Park in many ways was

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[195] Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 26-27.

uncharted territory for Coastal Church. First, the context was an adoption in a rural area of Carrolton, Virginia. The building was in an established neighborhood that also has a long-term history. Plus, Coastal, at the time, did not have a large contingency of congregants frequenting any of the other Coastal Campuses who were living near or in that neighborhood. In fact, only two current Coastal Church families lived within a ten-mile radius of the church prior to adoption. Yes, Carrolton/Smithfield has some similarities to the Coastal Gloucester campus, but Gloucester already had a strong presence of Coastal attendees and members participating at the Yorktown campus before starting. A good portion of operation could be mimicked at the Battery Park Campus, but a little bit of improvisation was needed to move the congregation to unify with Coastal Church's best practices.

Please note the process to grow Battery Park was not to go rouge, but to adapt until certain components could be ready to participate in the unified mission of Coastal Church. To build off Bolsinger's analogy, the canoes were not obsolete; they were going to be used again, but to get over the mountain the church needed to consider a different approach. The result was still going to be a united state, but the intervention was the process attempted to get there. Often the Project Director referred to the intervention as "We Are Coastal 2.0." "We Are Coastal," is the church's introduction class of her history, beliefs, mission, vision, values, practices as well as an invite to church membership. However, most people learn about Coastal Church by just existing in her context and having relationship with members invested in the fellowship. Outside of one couple in the intervention, all participants were new to Coastal within the last year and had never attended a service at any of the other Coastal Church campuses.

Another consideration Coastal had to process was having trusted leadership to take on the endeavor of church adoption. Granted this is a reference to the writer of this thesis, but no less

important to state that years of trust were built with core team members and those who helped to restart the fellowship. The Project Director, prior to the intervention, was tasked to find team members to assist in leading various areas of ministry. The Project Director, along with other staff, recruited individuals to spend a set period in Battery Park. They, over a year's time, built relationships with the forming congregation, which built the trust to encourage the participants of the project intervention. This Project Director believes this is important to mention as this pursuit is also like a notation made by Bolsinger: "There is plenty of work to be done— and credibility to be won— in the everyday experiences of administrating, teaching and caring for people. Indeed, without demonstrating technical competence on the map, a leader will never be given the chance to lead a true expedition off the map."[196] The timing of the project intervention, and the exposure of care, built credibility as well as clarity toward intended results with all parties involved.

Having this trust with the congregants, especially the project intervention group, gave permission to another advantage for the intervention. The other intended advantage to the intervention was the exposure of the group's insight relevant to the community. The group was able to articulate ways in which to connect with the community without deviating from the established standardization or theological expectations. These conversations allowed the Project Director to see how the three-pronged elements could be unitized in relationship to the culture. The most profound overarching theme the group affirmed was just creating a sense of community within each environment. This feeling of community would let people know that they are welcome, and they can be part, or at least a faithful participant, within the church. Whether the feeling of community be Sunday morning worship, the discipleship process, or how

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[196] Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 14-15.

the church engages others in evangelism, the group wanted to convey the potential for new participants to belong.

Research Implications

The literature review in this thesis set the tone for what was desired by the project intervention. The project intervention wanted to walk the project group through an understanding of a kingdom of God mindset. Having believers' eyes driven toward the kingdom of God, the Project Director theorized this activity would lead them toward revitalization and renewal, missional mindedness, and a culture of equipping one another for the work of the ministry. The Project Director's hope was for the people to be a culture mobilized for God's kingdom purpose, ready and willing to fulfill His will. They would become a people willing to risk the creature comforts of a stabilized church to help stabilize other potential church adoptions. This ability to take a risk is also an ability to be aware of gaps that need to be maintained. The true test of the disciple is to know where and when God wants an individual. Sometimes this discernment may also mean taking the risk to stay in the fellowship and be part of the community to send others. None-the-less an attentiveness to the kingdom of God was a desired result of this intervention.

Implied Aspirations

Standard of Living

The original problem discussed in this thesis is that Coastal Church adopted churches that did not formerly have sustainable life practices that produced objectively healthy church disciplines. The first reality Battery Park Baptist Church had to face is the acknowledgement that sustainability was not taking shape under the current standards and efforts of the church. Though biblical practices were continuing among the fellowship, some key alterations and the support to

fulfill them were needed for improving long-term conditions. After discussing standardizations and definitions in the first two project intervention class sessions, the group conveyed an adherence to these boundaries.

Christ obviously is the originating boundary line for which there will be no compromise to establish the fellowship. Therefore, the Bible, in its the full context, sets essential beliefs that unify the global kingdom of God, including this adoption. Thus, scriptural alignment among the membership was important to be recognized by the project intervention group. Multiple people in the focus group sessions mentioned the value of how Scripture was utilized in the talks to set the participants up for clarity on the three-pronged elements. In the literature review, a portion of the content was dedicated to the idea of renewal and revitalization. Battery Park Baptist did not want to extinguish the resource of the church building and people which initiated the conversation with Coastal. The original church understood the value of gospel-centric ministry that was wrapped in scriptural vitality.

The other side of the equation was the aspiration of Coastal to maintain essential standards of operation. These standards are biblically-driven as well but are interpretations of practices that occur in the life of the church. Specifically, Coastal wanted to continue the practice of worship with the life of the congregants and Sunday morning worship was the best place to display the practices emphasized in Scripture. Nehemiah 8 was utilized in the literature review to show the synchronization of the people of God with the people of today. Yes, the people are under a covenant of grace, but several rhythms sit in Nehemiah 8 that still occur within the church today. During the project intervention, the class was made aware of practices such as prayer, giving, reading, and teaching on the Scripture, and singing. Participation of these practices, which were surveyed by the group, was substantially affirmed by group participants.

More importantly these standards are intended to unify the fellowship in all measures of the three-pronged elements. Sunday morning worship is the church coming together not just to receive a word of encouragement or an expounded education of the Scriptures. Sunday morning worship is the physical body of the church gathering physically together to inspire one another toward gospel living. Evangelism is still more relational than just presented by the trained evangelist. The discipleship process is not a handoff as much as it is a "come follow me as I follow Christ." All of these are paraphrases used in the classroom content as well as asserted by the intervention group. The group also affirmed that implementation of these would be unique to Battery Park but unified in the big picture of Coastal Church.

Team Effort

Another assessed commitment made by the group but was specified by D. A. in the focus group, was the idea that the church is a team effort. The church was not built from the back of a staff team or individual member, but the fellowship of individual congregants contributing together to fulfill the mission of the church. For instance, there is a need for the church to be unified in the process of Sunday morning worship. The church prays together, the church sings together, the church gives together, and the church hears the Word together. All parties work together to lead music, welcome the community, raise up the next generation, and steward the responsibility of engaging in conversation with one another for encouragement to maturity in Christ.

The activity of the church does not conclude on Sunday but continues throughout the week. In the discipleship process the group learned that the simple action of inviting someone to the next step is the responsibility of who claims Christ. The next step is twofold: the invite to an activity and the fact that the activity and those involved are intended to refine one's

understanding of the gospel. Finally, as those involved are raising up disciples, they are to point those disciples to similar activities: building the body together to evangelize and guide people toward the same steps of faith learning the saving nature and Lordship of Christ.

Research Applications

Initiating Project Intervention

This project was developed for use in a small church context with less than one hundred attendees. During the project, the church had four Sundays in the past year where attendance exceeded sixty individuals. With the size of the congregation, randomizing the selection of individuals involved was complicated. The average attendance of the given year was forty-two attendees, and some were new to church, as well as some being under eighteen years old. The reality of ten participants in the project intervention was a strong representation of the congregation and a good segment of future leadership. The study had a great variation of age diversity as well as family dynamics represented.

Communication was another complication faced in the intervention design. The Project Director, in the future, would have proposed an earlier start to the communication. Invites went out on March 15 and intended respondents were followed up with at varying dates by phone call. The use of text messaging as means in inviting participants into the intervention would have been better to gather individual involvement. Some follow-up phone correspondence was made to solidify provisions for the class, such as childcare. Some improvisation took place to provide writing utensils and clipboards for participants to take notes.

Class Curriculum

To the surprise of the Project Director, the class participants in the focus group and interviews highlighted the benefit of the class for clarification of the intervention's purpose. Originally, the Project Director was concerned on how definitions were presented. For example, if they would be easy to recall and associate in later weeks. Some of the definitions were reintroduced throughout the week depending on the application to the specific content. More involvement could have been identified with definitions, making sure to integrate content by way of additional footnotes in the lesson. However, several focus group responses, survey responses, and interview responses demonstrated a general understanding of the definitions.

Having run the lessons, the curriculum could be better served to tighten the fill-in-the-blanks, as recommended by H. A., who mentioned specifically the section on evangelism. Utilizing alliteration, or similar verbiage, in both preaching evangelism and relational evangelism would have been beneficial. Also, the Project Director would have considered sending out the content ahead of schedule by email or text for people to preview. This could have helped expand the focus group to some more creative content, especially with Sunday worship and the discipleship process.

Class Instructors and Focus Group

The implementation of the class was effective and the perspective of training and implementing key leaders to instruct and expound on how the class could function. Teacher interaction during the class and adding questions to the presentation that would have been better as part of the curriculum are examples of how key leaders could be implemented better. The utilization of the other teachers helped the Project Director to not convey his opinion of the application. This decision allowed respondents to communicate without feeling critiqued or

forced to respond in a favorable manner toward the Project Director's intended goal. Thus, responses exposed gaps in the intervention that needed to be addressed.

<div style="text-align:center">Survey</div>

The Project Director utilized the survey following the conversation on definitions. This helped to bring greater clarity to the questions within the survey as some terms used were explained in the definition section of the class. The Project Director did not originally intend for the survey to be at the end of class. Upon concluding the first class, the Project Director realized that the survey was scheduled first. This mistake resulted in what the Project Director perceives as better results for the study.

An added benefit to the survey could have been to include these definitions in the survey instruction for the comparison group. The comparison group survey should have had questions to give demographics for the comparison group. Primarily age, years of involvement in the local church, years involved with Coastal Church, and possibly denominational background and ethnicity could have aided in the data. For each group, the Project Director would have preferred to have a question that signified if the participants had been discipled.

<div style="text-align:center">Participation; Where to Go from Here with the Content?:</div>

One consideration for the Project Director was having a potential participatory option for evangelism. With each of the other elements the group could participate by just being invested in the rhythms of the church. Evangelism required an individual to have a relationship with someone they were already discussing the value of the gospel with. Yes, people attend the fellowship who are not professing believers, but most of the congregants may not readily know that. This knowledge was not something the Project Director felt he could publicize. However, an option to go into a public space as a group to intentionally share the gospel could have given

clarity of the effectiveness of the study. Or the Project Director could have given more time for gospel relationships to be built in their circle of influence, which may have shown results to either validate or nullify the content for the class intervention.

Preemptive measures could be taken in future aspiration to help create opportunity for groups connected to Coastal Church to understand the adoption process. Coastal has enough unique environments that they could use spiritual formation season to develop leaders toward participating in a Coastal Church adoption. Spiritual formation season happens four times per year during January, May, June, and July. These are classes presented in similar fashion to this project intervention dealing with historic, biblical, soul care, or missional-living content. Training like the one in this thesis could help train people prior to Coastal adoptions to understand the intricacies that apply to the adoption. The intent would be to train up a group of leaders on all campuses who are intentionally ready for environments in which they have or could have influence. The curriculum would need to be expounded upon to build a greater understanding of each environment but could operate as an incubation chamber preparing the saints for the work of the ministry.

Comparably, this is complementary to other studies on revitalization and/or adoption mergers. Some areas in the project intervention lacked some fine tuning, but based on responses of interviews, the focus group, and surveys, an efficacy can be seen in this study. The survey validates many of the areas where improvement was seen and changed after the class experience. Anyone who would desire to utilize this content for a similar study would need to consider the context and support system in which the project was built. Also, people need to consider before adapting this research as a source of support that improvements in technology, such artificial intelligence, as well as new research emerging in the context of adoption, can affect the efficacy

of future duplicated studies. Thus, researchers should adjust accordingly as this content may only be good for a season and a context.

Research Limitations

The limited number of participants due to the current size of the church has been a limitation mentioned multiple times in the thesis. Only ten individuals participated in the study, therefore, a limited number of responses were available to the Project Director. This group being at a limited number may not give clarification as to whether a general population would respond with similar results. This group was also not multiethnic and some of the age demographics may be underrepresented compared with others. Limited responses of comparison group participants were also included in the study. Major demographics of church involvement are unknown other than knowing that they participated more than twice per month with Coastal Sunday morning worship prior to starting the survey.

On the survey the Project Director wished he would have accumulated some general demographic information to help draw closer conclusions with both the intervention group and comparison group. An example of how demographics could have brought clarity to the survey is in a question such as how often someone serves. Some demographics on the location of an individual's residence could hypothesize that an individual lives at a great distance from the church and it is difficult to be there to serve more than one time per month. Someone could be a single parent and serving once per month is the only availability they may have as a participant. Or though it is two parents, other family variables may impact their availability due to the season of life, or activities of their children. Other variables may apply, but this very well could limit the research to draw a much more profound conclusion.

Some other considerations that were mentioned periodically throughout the thesis are evangelistic tactics. One interviewee mentioned that it could have been beneficial to have steps that were concise and memorable, either an acronym or alliteration. Also, around evangelism, granting more time between the conclusion of the class and the interview may have given them more opportunity to share their faith with a friend, family member, or coworker. Intervention also could have offered an intentional outing for participants to go into the community to share their faith utilizing tactics mentioned in the meeting. Perhaps concluding the evangelism session by identifying next steps, timelines, and mile markers to gather measurements of participants would have aided in their level of comfort and success too.

A limitation the Project Director wish he would have known is documented responses as to why former members were no longer attending the Coastal Battery Park fellowship. Not knowing the full responses of previous attendees, such as changes perceived as negative or positive, or indifferent, left a gap in the research that could have benefited the intervention group's response. As the thesis mentions, earlier a contingency of individuals left the church just after Battery Park's initial vote of affirmation in December 2022, as well as another group within four months after the completed adoption by Coastal Church (February 2023). Some private conversation by Coastal Battery Park attendees were had with these individuals, but no documented consensus can summarize what effectively moved parties on from the new adoption fellowship.

The Project Director speculates that these transitions took place due to tiredness of previous attendees, a desire to practice previous traditions such as singing from hymnals, and alterations made to spaces that shifted congregational rhythms. One such example was that most of the useful spaces at Coastal Battery Park were on the central floor of the building. A Sunday

School class was using a space that was going to be best used, according to Coastal leadership, by the children's ministry. The class was requested to adjust their time to an earlier time or after service. When the adjustment of time was initiated many of those involved opted out of participation.

At the end of the class intervention the Project Director asked all the intervention group members to participate in an interview following their involvement in the ministry involvement portion of the intervention. Some signed up individually and were asked the interview questions. However, several couples opted to be interviewed together. Though the Project Director did not see any interference removing the opinion of the individuals, these combined interviews may have restricted responses. On the other hand, sometimes the response of one individual appeared to encourage a broader conversation from the other spouse. Also, no questions were asked to assess verbally if and how class participation shifted their value of the three-pronged elements. This assessment could have helped to clarify the benefit of the project intervention and the applied changes of the participants.

Further Research

The research in this thesis only studied the three-pronged elements theorized that support church adoption merger. Other consideration should be discussed regarding an adoption merger to move toward sustainability. This adoption project intervention dealt with solidifying values after the adoption merger had officially taken effect. More research should be conducted to assess how merger conversation begins. Three books that discuss this thoroughly are *Better Together* by Bird and Tomberlin, *Reclaimed Glory* by Mark Clifton, and *Anatomy of a Revived Church* by Tom Rainer. Though all three books were used in this research not all recommendations were thoroughly addressed in the creating of this content.

Another consideration for further study regarding revitalization is to explore the value of emotional intelligence. Timothy F. Ireland wrote his thesis on church revitalization and the correlation of emotional intelligence. He states in the concluding chapter of his thesis, "Revitalization and conflict go hand in hand. Change takes time and persistent effort, but church leaders' training can help pastors learn practical techniques to manage conflict effectively. Conflict, however, need not be a bad thing. On the contrary, it can be healthy if managed by revitalizers with good EQ."[197] Though conflict was never extensive in this scenario, some evaluation of emotional intelligence could have navigated the team through any potential land mines. Knowing the church and the team helping to orchestrate the transition requires having individuals with sensitivity to the context on the team so that major changes are made with pastoral care. Also, having a tool to explore emotional intelligence can help an adopting church identify core leadership and, potentially, even recruit individuals early for specific endeavors.

A Financial section on addressing stewardship of the Church could be a consideration for further study. This financial section could discuss building needs, sustaining ministries within a revitalization, and recommendation for healthy stewardship of a church adoption merger. Some detailed research to consider is the profit loss expectation of an early adoption merger realization. This revitalization required a part-time seasoned lead pastor for the first year, a full-time resident, a part-time worship leader, and a quarter-time kid's ministry service supervisor. To supply the Lead Pastor for the first year at Coastal Battery Park, the church pulled a staff member who was obligated to small group ministry but did not have a definitive Sunday

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[197] Timothy F. Ireland. "Church Revitalization: Strategies for Revitalization and the Importance of Emotional Intelligence for Pastors and Church Revitalizers in the Frontier Baptist Association," (DMin thesis, Liberty University, 2022), 155.

morning obligation. This exploration of ideals could help validate why churches with staffing resources can explore avenues to maximize multiplication efforts.

Coastal Church, already having rapport in the community, also could be a point of discussion to study further. The adopted fellowship may not have been as open to a newer church coming into the facility. This thought also brings up the consideration of which churches have the infrastructure to handle an adoption. Having an appropriate infrastructure allowed Coastal Battery Park to make physical and spiritual adjustments not available to the previous congregation. Even the exploration of the biblical stewardship of resources could help people understand the potential of adoptions. Coastal was able to quickly provide chairs when pews were removed from the sanctuary. Coastal had relationships with construction groups that were already working with Coastal, which allowed the fellowship to purchase in bulk and steward resources for several campuses. Overall, an exploration of communal stewardship could also be assessed as Coastal adoptions are truly accomplished by means of the community of churches and a shared vision of kingdom impact.

One of the other explorations in research that can be studied in Coastal adoptions is leadership dynamics. When Coastal starts a fellowship, they aim to send in pairs, and they typically send a seasoned pastor and young future pastor.[198] Coastal church's senior staff have encouraged the lead pastors to steward a developmental relationship with their counterparts. These Lead pastors are to train the future pastors to understand how to handle different ministry scenarios and have someone present in case they make a mistake or miss a mark. This allows these young leaders to have a net to fall in and learn from life's tough moments knowing they

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[198] Jeff W. Mingee. "Designing a Veteran Pastor-Involved Training Program for Developing Young Pastors in the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia with Select Leadership Competencies for Leading a Church," (DMin thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 68.

have someone to lean into. This relationship dynamic also helps as young leaders are wanting to progress forward. As older leaders the lead pastors can give these future leaders opportunities and help them build credibility. This handoff of leadership is prevalent especially behind the pulpit. A Lead Pastor's vote of confidence in a young leader will set that leader up for future success and may lead to the succession of the lead pastor's leadership.

Conclusion

Legacy. What will be left after the effort? Does a local fellowship have a lifespan? Will anyone benefit from the efforts of change? Were the efforts of this church honoring to God? How many pastors leave their posts asking these questions? Over the next year, and hopefully years to come, Coastal Battery Park will grow spiritually and numerically. This research was developed to see how the Project Director could add value to the congregation in hopes they would understand what is valuable in the kingdom of God. The research demonstrated great responses and insight for the project intervention group. Giving clarity of expectations of the three-pronged elements inspired many participants to view the church through the lens of stewardship. The group came to a firmer realization that they are the church, and the work of the ministry is not completed through the efforts of a sole pastor or one lay-leader, but by those who follow Christ.

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APPENDIX A

GROUP A PHONE INVITE SCRIPT

Hello Participants Name

I am calling you today, because, as a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research on church adoption, specifically, the church adoption of Coastal Battery Park. The purpose of my research is to look at the discipleship process, Sunday morning worship, and evangelistic tactics to better understand the building blocks that bring about sustainability. I am calling to invite [you] to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years old and be considered a regular attendee of Coastal church (2 or more times per month). Participants will be asked to participate in 4 classroom sessions and 4 activities in the life of the church [Date and time of Participation]. Each class will be 1 hour in length and the 4 activities you, the participant, will choose from are reoccurring church activities (Sunday worship, outreach opportunities, small group).

You will be asked to fill out two surveys during the classroom sessions as well as participate in a focus group during the hour-long session. It should take approximately 4 to 8 weeks of participation depending on your selected activity. To complete the procedures, each participant will be asked to interview or fill out a questionnaire. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

Each participant will be requested to fill out a consent form when they arrive for the classroom session. Consent forms are required to participate in the research. The consent document will contain additional information regarding the study. Participants will receive lunch and a gift card for the participation in this study. Would you be willing?

APPENDIX B

GROUP B PHONE INVITE

Hello Participants Name

I am calling you today, because, as a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research on church adoption, specifically, the church adoption of Coastal Battery Park. The purpose of my research is to look at the discipleship process, Sunday morning worship, and evangelistic tactics to better understand the building blocks that bring about sustainability. I am calling to invite [you] to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years old and be considered a regular attendee of Coastal church (2 or more times per month). Participants will be asked to participate in a classroom session by training and facilitating one of our building block elements [Date and time of Participation]. The class will be 1 hour in length, and you will guide the class through provided notes and facilitate a question-and-answer session with the group. You will be requested to participate in a pre-interview with me to discuss content. Following your involvement with the group, you will be requested to fill out a questionnaire regarding the leading of the class session. Name and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

You will be requested to fill out a consent form when you arrive for the interview. Consent forms are required to participate in the research. The consent document will contain additional information regarding the study. Participants will receive lunch and a gift card for the participation in this study. Would you be willing?

APPENDIX C

GROUP A EMAIL INVITE

Dear [Potential Participant],

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research on church adoption, specifically, the church adoption of Coastal Battery Park. The purpose of my research is to look at the discipleship process, Sunday morning worship, and evangelistic tactics to better understand the building blocks that bring about sustainability. I am emailing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years old and be considered a regular attendee of Coastal church (2 or more times per month). Participants will be asked to participate in 4 classroom session and 4 activities in the life of the church. Each class will be 1 hour in length and the 4 activities you, the participant, will choose from are reoccurring church activities (Sunday worship, outreach opportunities, small group).

You will be asked to fill out two surveys during the classroom sessions as well as participate in a focus group during the hour-long session. It should take approximately 4 to 8 weeks of participation depending on your selected activity. To complete the procedures each participant will be asked to interview or fill out a questionnaire. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

Each participant will be requested to fill out a consent form when they arrive for the classroom session. Consent forms are required to participate in the research. The consent document will contain additional information regarding the study. Participants will receive a gift card for the participation in this study. The 4 class sessions will take place on Monday evenings during the month of April (April 8, 15, 22, 29). Would you be able to attend? If so, please let me know at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely
Michael Bard
Pastor of Small Groups
Interim Pastor Coastal Battery Park

APPENDIX D

GROUP B SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT EMAIL INVITE

Hello {Participants Name,

I am emailing you today, because, as a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research on church adoption, specifically, the church adoption of Coastal Battery Park. The purpose of my research is to look at the discipleship process, Sunday morning worship, and evangelistic tactics to better understand the building blocks that bring about sustainability. I am emailing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years old and be considered a regular attendee of Coastal church (2 or more times per month). Participants will be asked to participate in a classroom session by training and facilitating one of our building block elements on {Day, Date, and time of event}

The class will be 1 hour in length, and you will guide the class through provided notes and facilitate a question-and-answer session with the group. You will be requested to participate in a pre-interview with me to discuss content. Following your involvement with the group you will be requested to fill out a questionnaire regarding the leading of the class session. Name and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

You will be requested to fill out a consent form when you arrive for the interview. Consent forms are required to participate in the research. The consent document will contain additional information regarding the study. Participants will receive a gift card for the participation in this study. If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email affirming your interest.

Sincerely,
Michael Bard
Pastor of Small Groups
Interim Pastor Coastal Battery Park

APPENDIX E

EMAIL INVITE FOR SURVEY

Dear [Potential Participant],

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research on church adoption, specifically, the church adoption of Coastal Battery Park. The purpose of my research is to look at the discipleship process, Sunday morning worship, and evangelistic tactics to better understand the building blocks that bring about sustainability. I am calling to invite [you] to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years old and be considered a regular attendee of Coastal church (2 or more times per month). Participants will be asked to participate in a survey regarding the research subject matter. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please click the [button/link] to proceed to the survey/complete and click the submit button to return the survey to the Project Director. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Sincerely

Michael Bard
Pastor of Small Groups
Interim Pastor Coastal Battery Park

APPENDIX F

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

[Participant Name]

      Below is the schedule of events you will be participating in over the next four weeks. No items will be needed on your behalf. Please show up 5 minutes before class and we will provide you with necessary materials to participate. A thank you gift will be provided in the form of a gift card. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research we look forward to seeing you [Date and time]

Sincerely,

Michael Bard
Pastor of Small Groups
Interim Pastor Coastal Battery Park

Group A Schedule of Events
[Event Date(s)]

12:00 PM Start time.
12:01-12:05 Consent form information.
12:05 Recording of class begins.
12:05-12:15 Syllabus overview.
12:15-12:20 Survey distributed to class participants and turned back in to Project Director.
12:20-12:30 Defining terms (Discipleship, worship, evangelism, etc.).
12:30-1:00 Question and Answer session (Focus Group).
1:00 Class dismissed.

Session 2
12:00 PM Start time.
12:01-12:05 Consent form information.
12:05 Recording of class begins.
12:05-12:30 Discipleship Process.
12:30-1:00 Question and Answer session (Focus Group).
1:00 Class dismissed.

Session 3
12:00 PM Start time.
12:01-12:05 Consent form information.
12:05 Recording of class begins.
12:05-12:30 Sunday Morning Worship.
12:30-1:00 Question and Answer session (Focus Group).
1:00 Class dismissed.

Session 4
12:00 PM Start time.
12:01-12:05 Consent form information.
12:05 Recording of class begins.
12:05-12:30 Evangelistic tactics.
12:30-1:00 Question and Answer session (Focus Group).
1:00 Class dismissed.

APPENDIX G

GROUP B SCHEDULE EXAMPLE

[Participants Name]

   Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Attached to this email, you will find the schedule for you to train and facilitate the content for the day you have been assigned. Also, attached is the content you will be presenting for the day you are assigned. As mentioned in the initial invite I would like you to participate in an interview with me prior to the date of you leading the group. The recommended date is [Date/time]. At that point you will receive a form of consent to confirm you would like to move forward with assisting in the research project. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely

Michael Bard
Pastor of Small Groups
Interim Pastor Coastal Battery Park

Group B Schedule of Events
[Event Date(s)]

12:00 PM Start time.
12:01-12:05 Consent form information.
12:05 Recording of class begins.
12:05-12:30 [Discipleship process, Sunday morning worship, Evangelistic tactics]
12:30-1:00 Question and Answer session (Focus Group).
1:00 Class dismissed.

APPENDIX H

GROUP A AND GROUP B CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Church Adoption: Three-Pronged Elements that Support the Revitalization of Coastal Church Battery Park location in Virginia.

Principal Investigator: Michael Bard Doctoral Candidate, School of Divinity Liberty University

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, attend a Coastal Church twice per month, and the church you currently attend twice per month must be an adoption merger of Coastal Church. 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.

The purpose of the study is talk about the building blocks that help to self-sustain our Coastal Church sponsored churches.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:
1. Participate in an in-person, audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 30 minutes. (Group A will be interviewed and recorded at the end of the completion of the class and activity session requested by the study. Group B will be interviewed before the sessions begin to gather data on the topic they are discussing. Group B will also be subject to answer questions regarding general understanding of church adoption).
2. Participate in class sessions for 1 hour over the course of 4 weeks where audio and video will be recorded.
3. Participate in 2 surveys lasting no more than 10 minutes. Participant should be aware there will be video recording of class participants taking survey.
4. If Participants are unable to complete interviews, they will be asked to accept and respond to a questionnaire to assist in the completion of this research.

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

Benefits to society should not be expected from this study.

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous/will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and/or all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted/erased. The researcher and his doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

In person participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the survey/interview/focus group/each procedure, the participant will receive a $10.00 gift card. Any participant who chooses to withdraw from the study after beginning but before completing all study procedures will receive the $10.00 gift card. Email addresses may be requested for compensation purposes; however, they will be pulled and separated from your responses by the survey software/will be collected through a separate survey from the study survey/will be collected by email at the conclusion of the survey to maintain your anonymity. Some surveys may be taken in person, but you are requested to not submit your name to the survey.
To participate in the research, you will need to pay for your own transportation to and from the classroom site.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Coastal Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

The researcher conducting this study is Michael Bard. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or

██████████ . You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Rod Earls, at
██████████ .

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 IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

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

An anonymous survey will be used in this research. Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records/you can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

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

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

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

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

APPENDIX I

CURRICULUM EXAMPLE: DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

Discipleship Process

This class session will cover the importance of having a discipleship process for a local church. During this session we will discuss what discipleship includes and how discipleship leads God's people toward his intended end goal.

Define: Discipleship

> "The pursuit of one individual _____ another individual through a process of following Christ."[199]

Theological Basis
1. Discipleship is a _____.

- Colossians 1:24-29
  o What are the riches of his glory – _____.

  o What is the aim of the church according to Paul in this passage –

  _____ in _____

    - _____ the Truth of the Gospel. (1 Corinthians 151-7)

    - _____ against sin. (Romans 6:1-11)

    - _____ the way of Christ. (Hebrews 13:1-20)
- Ezra 7:10
  o What did Ezra do?
    - _____

    - _____the _____to _____.

    - _____ the _____ to

      _____ so that they can _____ the

      _____.

Philosophical Basis
- Coastal has a process so that they can present everyone maturing in Christ authentically living out relationship with Christ.

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[199] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2018), 39.

- o Coastal wants people who come to church to have availability to go from unbelieving to _____ follower of Jesus Christ.

- o _____, _____, _____, and _____.

  - o Like Ezra we are to apply the Scripture to our lives and help others to apply Scripture to their lives.

    - Walk through the _____.

    - Walk them through the _____.

Contextualization

"While the majority of Christians experiences some form of relational investment in spiritual growth, two in five (39%) aren't engaged in discipleship at all."[200] Barna Group

Every Church at Coastal will function slightly differently from the other as they exist in different cultural contexts. Some are in suburban regions that are areas where the economics of the community may determine the flexibility of the church's financial capabilities. Others may be in areas of the city where the consistency of income is lower. The area may also be more neighborhood centric as opposed to where others are very regional.

- How a church follows through on the discipleship process depends on their

  _____

  - o _____ – Where a church fellowship chooses to make their primary location determines who they are going to reach.[201]

  - o _____ and _____

---

[200] Barna Group, "Two in Five Christians are Not Engaged in Discipleship," January 26, 2022, https://www.barna.com/research/christians-discipleship-community/.

[201] Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches That Multiply* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 181. Every church needs to find a facility that connects with the people they are trying to reach. Finding the right facility means considering common trends and following general guidelines, but these must be applied in your individual context.

- - _____

- So what? Knowing this information influences how we articulate the discipleship process at Coastal Battery Park.
    - Facility Example: Coastal Battery Park will not host a Sunday School or small group on the second floor of the church as they will be using the space for kids' ministry prep.
    - Location Example: Small group participation can choose to utilize church or house during the week to provide opportunities for neighbors to engage.
    - Population and demographics: Battery Park would like to identify an individual around the age of 50 to 60 for leading a small group as the average age of the community is 51 years of age. They may want to identify an individual who is in their 40s living in the neighboring community, Carrolton, as the average age is 41 years of age.

Focus Group Questions: (Provided by trainer/facilitator)

APPENDIX J

PROJECT INTERVENTION LEADER GUIDE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

Discipleship Process

This class session will cover the importance of having a discipleship process for a local church. During this session we will discuss what discipleship includes and how discipleship leads God's people toward his intended end goal.

All content in red are the directions for the instructor. Please read through all direction to help instruct and facilitate the class experience.

Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): Start the class out by introducing yourself and the project intervention topic. During the class you will cover the theological basis of discipleship and the process based on biblical passages. The next section will discuss the philosophical basis that are standardized for discipleship process at Coastal. In the final section you will talk about contextualization regarding the campus you are training. You will follow the contextual conversation with a question-and-answer section which we will refer to as a focus group session. This will be the group's opportunity to answer the questions. Instructions on how to lead that time can be found below.

Define: Discipleship

> "The pursuit of one individual <u>walking</u> another individual through a process of following Christ."[202]

Theological Basis
- Discipleship is a <u>process</u>.[203]
  - Colossians 1:24-29
    - What are the riches of his glory – <u>The Gospel</u>.
    - What is the aim of the church according to Paul in this passage – <u>Maturity in Christ</u>.
      - <u>Proclaim</u> the Truth of the Gospel. (1 Corinthians 151-7)
      - <u>Warn</u> against sin. (Romans 6:1-11)
      - <u>Teach</u> the way of Christ. (Hebrews 13:1-20)

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[202] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2018), 39.

[203] Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship: Revised and Expanded* (City, State: Crossway, 2022), 43. This is sanctification— the process of becoming more like Christ. Our initial, saving gaze is followed by continual sanctifying glimpses. Where we look is important because we become what we behold. Children become like their parents, apprentices like their mentors, and players like their coaches. We reflect the character of our models, whether for good or for ill. But when we behold the beauty of Christ, we become beautiful like Christ. A disciple of Jesus is a person who so looks at Jesus that he or she reflects his glory in everyday life: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18).

o   We are to present <u>Everyone</u>.[204]

Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): In Moo's commentary listed in the footnotes he suggests that though the verse cannot imply that we reach the whole world, the verse does imply that we reach those we encounter. Specifically speak to the current context addressing where people live, work, and play. A lot of the current population in the community is military, watermen, and shipyard affiliated workers. Most are not doing labor intensive work as much as they are managing labor workers or minimal labor positions. They are in blue-collar environments but manage the white-collar responsibilities for their industry.

- Ezra 7:10
  - o   What did Ezra do?
    - Studied
    - Applied the Scripture to Himself
    - Taught the Scriptures to others so that they can apply the truth.

Philosophical Basis
- Coastal has a process so that they can present everyone maturing in Christ authentically living out relationship with Christ.
  - o   Coastal wants people who come to have the availability to go from unbelieving to authentic follower of Jesus Christ.
  - o   Connect Grow Serve and Multiply.

Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): In this section go over the Coastal Church definitions of these terms letting them know this is how Coastal disciples their people through process.

- *Connect to God in corperate worship.*
- *Grow in small groups*
- *Serve in ministry and mission.*
- *Multiply disciples and gospel churches.*

Then continue with the notes.

  - o   Like Ezra we are to apply the Scripture to our lives and help others to apply Scripture to their lives.
    - Walk through the Process.
    - Walk them through the process.

Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): The next section you will be talking about contextualization giving some tools of how to work within the riverbanks of philosophical and theological expectations. This section will conclude with a focus group time to apply the understanding of all theological, philosophical, and contextual principles to the campus.

Contextualization

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[204] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (City, State: Eerdmans, 2008), 119.

"While the majority of Christians experiences some form of relational investment in spiritual growth, two in five (39%) aren't engaged in discipleship at all."[205] Barna Group

Every Church at Coastal will function slightly differently from the other as they exist in different cultural contexts. Some are in suburban regions that are areas where the economics of the community may determine the flexibility of the church financial capabilities. Others may be in areas of the city where the consistency of income is lower. The area may also be more neighborhood centric as opposed to where others are very regional.

- How a church follows through on the discipleship process depends on their <u>Context</u>

> Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): Remember in this section you have solidified that theology and philosophy impact the church. These two components are contextual as well but are globally contextual much like a denomination or network affiliation. In other words, to be a part of the network you must uphold applicable standards (Appendix E.1, E.2). You may navigate this section as you would prefer by either giving them the underlines first or taking each underline one at a time.

  o <u>Location</u> – Where a church fellowship chooses to make their primary location determines who they are going to reach.[206]

> Instructor/Facilitator (Group B participant): Use this time to define Coastal Battery Park location and compare to your location if not an attendee of Battery Park. Here are some points to address and then ask the group respond to their observation of the area.

  o Between Smithfield and Carrolton, VA.
  o Considered a neighborhood community.
  o Known as the battery for the military during the revolutionary war.
  o Rural

  o <u>Population</u> and <u>Demographics</u>

  o The immediate surrounding community has a population of 1,588 people in the zip codes 23304 and 23430.
  o Watermen established the community.
  o Within the Battery Park neighborhood there are 60.
  o Generational ownership. Families are passing down the residence to other family members.

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[205] Barna Group, "Two in Five Christians are Not Engaged in Discipleship," January 26, 2022, https://www.barna.com/research/christians-discipleship-community/.

[206] Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches That Multiply* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 181. Every church needs to find a facility that connects with the people they are trying to reach. Finding the right facility means considering common trends and following general guidelines, but these must be applied in your individual context.

- o <u>Facilities</u>

> - o Sanctuary.
> - o 3 story classroom space with currently limited first story usage.
>   - Kids space on second floor with 4 classrooms, a small café area, prayer chapel, restrooms, and two offices.
>   - Upstairs has 8 potential classroom spaces, a storage closet, and the entrance to the baptistry.

- So what? Knowing this information influences how we articulate the discipleship process at Coastal Battery Park. Here are some examples of contextualization regarding location, population/demographics, and Facilities.

  - o Location Example: Small group participation can choose to utilize church or house during the week to provide opportunities for neighbors to engage.
  - o Population and demographics: Battery Park would like to identify an individual around the age of 50 to 60 for leading a small group as the average age of the community is 51 years of age. They may want to identify an individual who is in their 40 living in the neighboring community as the average age is 41 years of age.
  - o Facility Example: Coastal Battery Park will not host a Sunday School or small group on the second floor of the church as they will be using the space for kid's ministry prep.

Focus Group Questions

Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): Instruct the class that you will be leading the class through a series of questions to apply the content they just discussed. Have them remain in their seats and pose the questions to the group. Signify to the group how you want them to respond (raising hands, going around the circle, etc.). The hope is to hear comments that line up with philosophy and theology of Coastal yet uniquely address approaches that work in the context of this fellowship.

1. What stuck out to you regarding the content you heard today?

Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): What we are hoping to see is that they refer to the notes quoting clearly the content they heard. If they are not going off something directly from the content, ask some probing questions.

> Example:
> **Participant response:** The part on Ezra and the importance of discipleship
> **Facilitator response:** What about Ezra stood out to you as profound?

2. What can this local Coastal (Battery Park) Church do to help others apply Scripture to their lives? Consider the Colossians passage mentioned in the conversation.

Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): Home in on the language used in Colossians 1:28 to help guide this process of the focus group.

Participant: We can be a part of proclaiming the truth of the gospel.
Facilitator: How can you help proclaim the truth of the gospel?

3. How can you walk someone through the discipleship process in our church?

Instructor/facilitator (Group B participant): The most ideal answer in this section is that they respond by finding ways for people to walk with the individual physically together while they connect, grow, and serve. This is where the contextualization comes into play helping them see the value in participating in a small group and getting attached to that group by way of the other individuals inviting them to the group. Therefore, the individual action would be the promotion peace rather than depending on printed or publicized sources.

Participant: I can walk with someone as they join a small group.
Facilitator: What are the steps you need to take to help them join that group?
How would you communicate those steps?

APPENDIX K

SURVEY

Instructions: Please circle the answer that best fits your perspective.

1. How likely are you to help someone participate in the discipleship process?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

2. How likely are you to participate in Sunday morning worship?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

3. What is the likelihood of you financially supporting the church above 5% of your income?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

4. How likely are you willing to support a new adoption in the Coastal Church network?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

5. What is the likelihood of you sharing the gospel with a friend?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

6. What is the likelihood of you sharing the gospel with a co-worker?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

7. What is the likelihood of you sharing the gospel with a family member?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

8. How likely are you to participate in a foreign mission trip?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

9. How likely are you to participate in a local mission trip in the United States?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

10. How likely are you to participate for a set season of time with a new church adoption?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely
11. How likely are you to participate in going to be a part of a new church adoption?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

12. What is the likelihood of you serving in this church more than one time per month?

Not likely   Less Likely   Neutral   Likely   Very Likely

Answer the following questions circling the most applicable term to you.

1. Are you involved 2-4 times per month in Sunday morning worship?

Yes   No

2. Are you involved in your small group more than 6 times in a semester?

Yes   No

3. Are you currently serving here at the church?

Yes   No

4. Are you serving more than 1 time per month in any of the church's ministries?

Yes   No

5. Are you reading your bible 3-4 times in a given week?

   Yes   No

6. Do you believe Christ was sinless?

Yes   No

7. Do you believe the gospel refers to Jesus being God, Jesus dying on the cross for man's sins, and Jesus raising bodily from the dead defeating death, giving mankind access to God through the receiving of Christ Jesus?

Yes   No

8. Are you participating in taking the Lord's supper?

Yes   No

9. Have you been baptized?

Yes   No

10. Do you sing during the worship music portion of the service?

Yes   No

11. Do you give financially to the church?

Yes   No

12. Do you give financially more than 5% to this local church?

Yes   No

13. Do you give to other ministries outside the church?

Yes   No

14. Do you believe that salvation is through Christ alone?

Yes   No

15. Do you believe salvation is offered to man by grace and not the works of man?

Yes   No

16. Are you sharing the gospel of Jesus with someone more than 1 time per month?

Yes   No

17. Do you have a defined strategy for sharing the gospel with others?

Yes   No

18. Have you invited a friend or family member to attend a Sunday morning worship service?

Yes   No

19. Have you invited a friend or family member to participate in a small group?

Yes   No

20. Have you invited a friend or family member to participate in serving with you at a church mission or ministry?

Yes   No

21. Are you praying for clarity in God's Word?

Yes   No

22. Are you praying to have freedom in worship of God?

Yes   No

23. Are you praying for your friends and family that do not have a relationship with Christ?

Yes   No

24. Are you praying for opportunities to share your faith?

Yes   No

25. Are you praying for boldness to share the gospel?

Yes   No

26. Are you praying for clarity on how to share your faith?

Yes   No

27. Are you praying for God to grow you in your relationship with Jesus?

Yes   No

APPENDIX L

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How did the study affect your view on the three prong elements (also referred to as building blocks) used in the church?

Good or bad, what was the primary takeaway you experienced in the project intervention?

APPENDIX M

EMAIL REQUEST AND FOLLOW UP QUESTIONAIRE

[Participant Name],

As part of the final procedure for my research study, I am asking all participants to answer two follow-up questions. These questions can be completed in an interview process with me, and I write down your responses. You can click on the following link to set up a time [link] and select a day and time. If you have a scheduling conflict, I have attached a link to the questions in this email for you to complete. Would you let me know by either setting up a time for an interview or complete the questions by clicking this [link]? Once completed hit the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Sincerely,

Michael Bard
Pastor of Small Groups
Interim Pastor of Coastal Battery Park

Instructions: Please respond with no less than three sentences your thoughts on the following questions.

How did the study affect your view on the three prong elements (also referred to as building blocks) used in the church?

Good or bad, what was the primary takeaway you experienced in the project intervention?

APPPENDIX N

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUP B SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Introduction to conversation: You have been chosen because you have participated in a Coastal adoption and are 18 years of age or older. You have also been asked to be a Subject Matter Expert because you have been involved in this subject matter on two or more occasions. You have also been recommended by staff or deacons to represent this subject matter.

- How do you determine the value of your [specified subject] in the life of the church?

- What do you believe this subject adds to the Church?

- What are the key components needed for this subject to be beneficial to the church attendee?

- (Project Director: Present the curriculum to the individual) What would you add to this content to help our people understand this subject matter?

- If any, what would you take away from this lesson to add value to this subject matter?

- What do you hope people will gain by participating in a class experience regarding this subject?

APPENDIX O

SENTIALS OF FAITH

STATEMENT OF FAITH

In matters of doctrine and belief, the Church strives for three things: in essential matters, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, love.

Essentials We Believe

1. About the Bible
   The Bible is God's inerrant Word, infallible as originally given by God through human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, and absolutely true and trustworthy. It is our only standard of faith and practice. (2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20–21; Matthew 5:18; Psalm 119)

2. About God
   There is one true and living God. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and He is revealed to us as the Godhead existent in three co-equal, co-eternal, and co-substantial persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:3–6, 13–14; 4:6; Matthew 28:19; Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; Genesis 3:22; Philippians 2:5–6; John 1:1, 3, 14, 18; Isaiah 9:6)

   - The Father – The first person of the Trinity who orders and disposes of all things according to His own purpose and grace, and who continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events for His own glory. Fatherhood denotes spiritual relationship; first, within the Trinity; second, within mankind, creatively in relation to all men, but spiritually only in relation to those who have been saved by His grace from their sin and come to Him through Jesus Christ. (James 1:17)

   - The Son – Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on the cross, bodily rose from the dead to provide justification for every believer, ascended to the right hand of God where He presently intercedes for all believers, and will again, in the fullness of the Father's time, return in visible, triumphant, personal form to overthrow sin, judge the world, and establish His Kingdom on earth. (John 1:14)

   - The Spirit – The Holy Spirit is sent from God to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment and to regenerate, cleanse, and secure from sin. He lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer a spiritual gift(s) when they are saved. As Christians we seek to live under His control daily. (John 14:16, 17; 16:8, 13)

3. About Man, Sin, and Satan
   Man's condition is one of sin and separation from God. Man was created in innocence directly and immediately by God in His spiritual image for the purpose of fellowship with God and glory for God. Man was tempted by Satan and sinned; because of this, all men have been born in sin since that time. All are marred by a nature of rebellion and disobedience toward God which the Bible calls sin. Sin separates us from God, others, and all good things and ultimately causes eternity in hell. All persons need to be saved from their sin. (Genesis 1:26; 2:17; Romans 6:23)

4. About Salvation
   God has acted in Jesus Christ to deliver us from sin. Jesus Christ is the only Savior from sin. He provided forgiveness and atonement for our sins by shedding His blood on the cross and bodily rose again to provide life and justification. Apart from Christ, there is no salvation. All men are under condemnation through personal sin, and deliverance from condemnation comes only by the righteousness of Christ and not human merit. This righteousness is credited to the believer by grace through faith. The Holy Spirit regenerates, or gives new life, to one who commits his life to Jesus, and he is kept by God's power forever, never to be lost. (Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8–9; John 3:16–19; 5:24; 6:47; 10:28–30; 1 John 3:2–3)

5. About the Church
   Jesus established the church to continue His mission and ministry on earth. A New Testament church is a voluntary association of baptized believers in Christ who have covenanted together to follow the teachings of the New Testament in doctrine, worship, and practice. We believe that the church is a self-governed organization served by the Elder Team. (Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:19–20; Hebrews 13:7, 17; Ephesians 4:7–12)

6. About Last Things

APPENDIX P

STANDARD OF OPERATION COASTAL CHURCH

Standardized
ADMINISTRATION • Database Systems • Calendar Planning and event approval • Website Management • HR – staff handbook, communications and meetings

ADULT MINISTRIES
• SMALL GROUPS
  • Small Group Seasons standard with no events during Small Group Seasons
• LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
  • Deacon/Elder selection and training
• BAPTISM
  • Calendar
  • Model and curriculum
• RESIDENCY

CORPORATE WORSHIP/COMMUNICATIONS • Preaching Calendar (which includes Lord's Supper and Baptism dates) • Order of Service and Holiday Services (separate document) • Digital and Print Communications (separate document) • Nights of Prayer – calendar and order of service • First Impressions (separate document) • Prayer Team must be identified and trained • Music Team Guidelines (separate document)
COUNSELING • Training Process • Intake Process and Scheduling • CARE Groups
ENGAGEMENT • Connect Card Process • Mission and vision • We Are Coastal • Membership and follow up processes
FACILITIES • Facility look, décor and branding • Facility capital expenses
FAMILY MINISTRIES • Security – cameras & nametags (separate document) • Background Checks Required • Curriculum for Coastal Kids • Check In – Ministry Platform • Family Dedication doctrine and calendar • Incident Reports Process • Wave Camp - Participation Required – hosting is optional • Student camp - participation required • Internship
FINANCES • Offering and Count Team Processes • Budget Process
MISSIONS • One mission trip per year (minimum) promoted to each campus • One local mission partnership or sponsorship per campus

APPENDIX Q

CORE DATA OF COASTAL BATTERY PARK FELLOWSHIP

Statistical Summary
Coastal Church Battery Park Campus
2023-2024

Attendance

309% Attendance Growth since start
8% Attendance Growth over last year

- 45 Average Attendance May 2024
- 39 Average Attendance 2023
- 12 Starting Average Attendance

Membership

38% Membership Growth since start
-15% Membership Growth over last year

- 11 Membership May 2024
- 13 Membership 2023
- 8 Starting Membership

BATTERY PARK		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
ATTENDANCE	Average Attendance	12	25	27	34	35	36	34	35	37	37	37	39	
	Average In Person Attendance	12	25	27	34	35	36	34	35	37	37	37	39	
	Guest Last 365 Days	31	31	33	36	38	39	46	21	64	66	72	48	
	Adults Guests	31		2	3	2	0	7	3	14	2	2	4	70
	Child Guests			0					3			4		7
	Student Guests			0								0		0
	Total Guests	31	0	2	3	2	0	7	6	14	2	6	4	77
GUEST ENGAGEMENT	Guests to SG		0	6	6	6	6	5	6	15	15	15	14	9
	% Guests to SG		0	18%	17%	16%	15%	11%	29%	23%	23%	21%	29%	18%
	Guests Serving		0	0	0	0	0	0	7	4	6	6	7	3
	% Guests Serving		0	0	0	0	0	0	33%	6%	9%	8%	15%	7%
	Guests to Giving		11	11	14	14	14	13	14	13	11	12	8	12
	% Guests to Giving		35%	33%	39%	37%	36%	28%	67%	20%	17%	17%	17%	31%
MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT	Total Members		2	8	8	8	8	10	10	10	10	10	13	
	In Process to Member		0	0	0	0	2	1		1	1	2	1	
	New Members		0	0	0	0	0	1				0	1	3
	Members in SG		2	0	4	4	4	4	1	3	2	2	5	3
	% Members in SG		100%	0	50%	50%	50%	40%	10%	30%	0.2	20%	38%	37%
	Members Serving		2			0	8	10	18	8	8	8	2	7
	% Members Serving		100%	0	0	0	100%	100%	180%	80%	0.8	80%	15%	67%
	Total Member Households		1	4	4	4	4	6	9	7	7	7	8	6
	% Members Giving		100%	25%	100%	100%	100%	67%	56%	71%	86%	100%	75%	80%
	Member Giving Households		1	1	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	7	6	4
OTHER	We Are Coastal Attendance	0		0	3	0	0	0		2		2	0	7
	We Are Coastal Responses			0	0	0	4	0		4		0	0	8
	Leaders in Training					0		0				0	0	
	# of Small Groups			1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	
	People in Small Groups			10	10	0	0	10	7	18	10	10	10	9
	Small Group Attendance			0		0	0	0		10	10	0	0	3
	# of Baptisms			0	0	0	0	0		1		0	0	1
DONORS	Donation Amount	$ 3,585.00	$ 3,141.08	$ 5,067.08	$ 5,002.00	$ 4,283.00	$ 5,088.00	$ 5,944.63	$ 5,727.00	$ 5,996.00	$ 5,419.00	$4,552.00	$ 6,687.61	$ 60,492.40
	# of Giving Households	8	12	18	10	10	6	7	6	10	9	10	12	21
	Avg Gift per Household	$ 448.13	$ 261.76	$ 281.50	$ 500.20	$ 428.30	$ 848.00	$ 849.23	$ 954.50	$ 599.60	$ 602.11	$ 455.20	$ 557.30	$ 2,880.59

Battery Park	2024 GOAL	JAN	Jan LY	FEB	Feb LY	MAR	Mar LY	APR	Apr LY	MAY	May LY	Total	Last Year
CONNECT													
Attendance In Person	48	39	12	39	25	44	27	44	34	45	35	42	39
Attendance Website	0	0		0		0		181		175		71	
Guests Last 365		50	31	50	31	51	33	46	36	53	38	50	
Adults Guests	37	5	31			1	2	4	3	2	3	12	70
Child Guests	10											0	7
Student Guests	1											0	
Total Guests	48	5	31			1	2	4	3	2	3	12	
# of Baptisms	3					5						5	1
We Are Coastal Attendance	10								3			0	7
We Are Coastal Responses	8											0	
GROW													
# of Small Groups	2	1		1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
People in Small Groups	38	11		11		13	10	20	10	19		15	9
Small Group Attendance	35			8		9		6		6		9	3
Guests to SG	4	10		8		8	6	6	6	6	6	8	9
% Guests to SG	10%	20%		16%		16%	18%	13%	17%	11%	16%	15%	18%
Members in SG	12	2		6	2	6		12	4	10	4	7	3
% Members in SG	80%	15%		46%	100%	46%		92%	50%	91%	50%	65%	37%
SERVE													
Serving Ministry		16		17		18		21		18		18	
Serving Mission				5		6		6		2		5	
Total Volunteers	38	16		22		19		22		18		19	
Guests Serving	4	6		8		5		3		3		5	3
% Guests Serving	10%	12%		16%		10%		7%		6%		10%	7%
Members Serving	12	11		11		11		13		11		11	7
% Members Serving	80%	85%		85%		85%		100%		100%		104%	67%
MULTIPLY													
Total Members	15	13		13	2	13	8	13	8	11	8	11	13
In Process to Member		1		1		1		1				1	
New Members	5									1			2
Leaders In Training	2					1		1				1	
Donation Amount	$ 42,000.00	$ 6,597.32	$ 1,910.00	$ 6,933.89	$ 4,074.08	$ 7,202.43	$ 5,342.57	$ 6,060.00	$ 4,822.08	$ 6,944.32	$ 4,283.00	$ 33,737.96	$ 60,492.40
# of Giving Households	12	10	8	12	12	11	18	15	10	10	10	12	19
Avg Gift per Household	$ 3,500.00	$ 659.73	$ 448.13	$ 577.82	$ 261.76	$ 501.86	$ 281.50	$ 757.50	$ 500.20	$ 694.43	$ 428.30	$ 2,908.44	$ 3,183.81
Total Member Households	9	8		8		8	4	8	4	7		8	
% Giving from Members	80%	63%		100%		100%	25%	100%	100%	100%		92%	
Member Giving Households	7	5		8		8	1	8	4	7		7	
Guests to Giving	7	5		5	11	7	11	1	14	1		4	
% Guests to Giving	20%	10%		10%	35%	14%	33%	2%	39%	2%		8%	

APPENDIX R

INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Options:

- Sunday morning worship
- Small group
- Serve opportunities
    - o First impressions
    - o Band
    - o Kid's Ministry (Must be pre-approved through Coastal background check)
- Outreach opportunities
- Church mission trip
- Personal evangelism conversation

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 19, 2024

Michael Bard
Rodney Earls

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY23-24-1346 Church Adoption: Three Pronged Elements that Support the Revitalization of Coastal Church Battery Park location in Virginia

Dear Michael Bard and Rodney Earls,

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 study/project is not considered human subjects research because

(1) 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.

For a PDF of your IRB letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page.

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, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office