

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church:
The Most Effective Tool for Transforming the City**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

Kiersten A. Telzerow

Lynchburg, Virginia
October 2024

Copyright © 2024 by Kiersten A. Telzerow
All Rights Reserved

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Mentor's Name Typed below Signature Line
Mentor's Faculty Title

Reader's Name Typed below Signature Line
Reader's Faculty Title

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Kiersten Telzerow

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, October 2024

Mentor: Dr. Jason Mitchell

The formation of wholistic discipleship beckons a life fully surrendered. This thesis outlines wholistic discipleship encompassing small groups (discipleship), mission, and prayer revealing a formation deeper than conceptual knowledge in the life of a Christ-follower. Living in proximity to the presence of God and amongst others is a crucial expression of core DNA to grow in the Great Commandment expressed through the Great Commission. Wholistic discipleship is the tool that transforms incarnational witnessing and prayer evangelism in partnership with the Trinity. This thesis studies a personal faith matched with kingdom-oriented impact within urban contexts. It unpacks transformational mission-based prayer, seeking to impact metropolitan cities and infuse every aspect of discipleship within a community. The study involves small group leaders in Washington, D.C. who participated in a survey, questionnaire, interviews, a prayer course, and focus group responding with a conversation guide. The intended goal is to close the gap between conceptual knowledge and expressive witnessing with the pull thread of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Moving from a privatized faith into the praxis of a lifestyle oriented towards the things near to the heart of God: mission, discipleship, and prayer, as the lifeblood of the local church. The key findings of this study outline a transferrable plan for local churches in urban contexts creating environments that grow in awareness, alignment, and deep transformation. The integrated nature of this discipleship ecosystem thrives as a healthy convergence fueling relationships, missional lifestyles, and prayer evangelism influencing neighborhoods, cities, regions, and beyond.

Keywords: Wholistic discipleship, convergence, discipleship ecosystem, incarnational witnessing, conceptual knowledge, urban contexts, praxis, and missional lifestyle.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Introduction	2
Ministry Context	4
Historical Overview.....	5
Diversity.....	10
Discipleship.....	11
Ministry Model.....	13
Core Convictions.....	13
Problem Presented	14
Purpose Statement	15
Basic Assumptions	15
Definitions	17
Limitations	20
Delimitations	22
Thesis Statement	23
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework	24
Literature Review	25
Historical Support for Prayer, Mission, and Discipleship.....	26
Revival Prayer.....	28
Modern-Day Prayer Movements.....	29
Discipleship Classes.....	30
Missional Movements.....	32
Urban Contextualization.....	34
Ordinary Everyday Life.....	35
Marketplace Discipleship.....	36
Incarnational Witness.....	39
Missiology.....	41
Integrated Discipleship.....	43
Intercession as Evangelism.....	45
Formational Practices.....	48
Shalom as a Byproduct.....	49
Renewal.....	50
Theological Foundations	51
Deuteronomy.....	52
Jeremiah.....	53
Isaiah.....	54
Matthew.....	56
Luke.....	59
Acts.....	60

Theoretical Foundations	65
Methods.....	67
Post-Christian Contextualization.....	71
New Model.....	73
Conclusion	74
Chapter 3: Methodology	76
Intervention Design	80
Implementation of Intervention Design	89
Chapter 4: Results	96
Collective Results	96
General Survey Results.....	96
Questionnaire Results.....	106
Interview Results.....	117
Prayer Course Results.....	128
Focus Group with Conversation Guide Results.....	132
Data Analysis	135
Summary of Results	139
Chapter 5: Conclusion	145
Research Implications	145
Awareness.....	150
Alignment.....	152
Transformation.....	155
Research Applications	158
Minor Adjustments.....	160
Major Adjustments.....	162
Research Limitations	164
Further Research	166
Conclusion.....	167
Appendix A.....	171
Appendix B.....	172
Appendix C.....	174
Appendix D.....	175
Appendix E.....	177
Appendix F.....	178
Appendix G.....	180
Appendix H.....	183
Appendix I.....	187
Appendix J.....	188
Appendix K.....	190
Appendix L.....	191

Appendix M.....	192
Appendix N.....	212
Appendix O.....	213
Appendix P.....	230
Bibliography.....	220
IRB Approval Letter / Waiver Page.....	230

Tables

1.1	Curriculum Outline	85
1.2	Adjustment Solutions.....	160

Illustrations

Figures

1.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Concentric Circles,”	79
2.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Research Outline,”	82
3.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Text Message,”	90
4.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Percentage of Group Focus,”	98
5.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Focus on Scripture in Group Setting,”	100
6.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Frequency of Hearing Wholistic Discipleship,”	101
7.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Frequency in Prayer,”	102
8.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Missional Discipleship,”	104
9.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Intellectual Philosophy vs. Praxis as Lifestyle,”	104
10.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Priority of Serving,”	105
11.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Equipping,”	107
12.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Leader Preparedness,”	108
13.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Area of Growth Needed,”	109
14.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Engagement in Evangelistic Discipleship,”	110
15.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Wholistic Discipleship Experiences,”	112
16.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Mature Disciple Definition,”	113
17.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Mission and Prayer in Small Groups,”	114
18.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Great Commission and Great Commandment,”	118
19.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Areas Leaned into for Wholistic Discipleship,”	119
20.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Priority of Missional Prayer for 5+ Minutes,”	122
21.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Spiritual Disciplines for Growth,”	125
22.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Prayer Impact in the City,”	128
23.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Most Challenging,”	130
24.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Practical Takeaways,”	135
25.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Equipping Levels Post Prayer Course,”	136
26.	Kiersten Telzerow, “Change in Leanings,”	138

Abbreviations

AG	Assemblies of God
DMIN	Doctor of Ministry
NCC	National Community Church
NIV	New International Version

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the entirety of this project looking at how integrated discipleship directly impacts the sum of the whole. This ecosystem is interconnected and intertwined through three key areas: mission, prayer, and discipleship. It is through these three aspects that the life of each one impacts the other as the lifeblood of the local church is modeled through Christ likeness. This transformation not only impacts neighborhoods and surrounding environments, but also can contextualize the gospel in a way that brings it to life for others just by how one lives a life in proximity to Jesus and in proximity to others. This methodology is also described as one grows in proximity and presence. The culmination of living out the Great Commandment, the Shema of the Old Testament, remains a pull thread carried throughout the Great Commission. Living a life that is internally connected to the Trinity molds and breaks a heart for the community. Both in tandem keep the magnetic force equalized so that one aspect does not lose sight of the other. In its fullest expression, this lifestyle is incarnationally lived out through discipleship, prayer, and mission, not one without the other. This Thesis aims to provide an in-depth formal study of small group leaders in the heart of Washington, D.C., which is transferrable and applicable in urban contexts and beyond.

Introduction

Andrew Murray once said, “The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history.”¹ Murray connects the power of prayer directly to the mobilization of Christ followers all around the world. Prayer is the link between the empowerment and impartation from Christ and the sharing and spreading of the gospel. Prayer is the yeast that permeates.

Attentively being in tune with God through prayer shapes one’s gospel-centered influence and closes, as Richard Lovelace calls, “the transformational gap.”² The transformation that an individual encounters through the work of the cross directly impacts the lives around them. When one personally experiences a profound transformation, it becomes a challenge to imitate or replicate likewise. Thus, this challenge forms a gap between what may remain a conceptual philosophy versus a philosophy that is embodied as a lifestyle. In other words, prayer is a spiritual tool to help close the existing gap between knowledge and praxis. It is the difference between the belief of Christian philosophy without the missionally-oriented action behind it. Praxis and knowledge are essentials embedded within the Great Commission.

Discipleship, prayer, and mission are three components, with precedence, modeled by Jesus, as a way to live out the Great Commission effectively. Prayer is a formational and foundational tool that draws one into knowing the heart of the Father to live out a kingdom of God lifestyle through the Great Commission. Being in tune with the voice of God intricately connects the heart of a disciple to the heart of the Father. Prayer is the fruit of the Great

¹ Don Hawkins, *Master Discipleship Today: Jesus's Prayer and Plan for Every Believer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2019), 86, ProQuest Ebook Central.

² Alan Andrews, ed., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2010), 103, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Commandment. A simple, everyday practice in the ordinary life of a Christ-follower is about drawing near to the Father to walk in obedience and flourishing, not only for oneself but also for surrounding neighbors. Through prayer, the Great Commission changes the history of nations and generations. Without prayer, the Great Commission can be misunderstood or diluted. Rowan Williams leverages the language of “contemplation and action” to state that one without the other leads to “sterile, and potentially even destructive, human living.”³ Combined, the two are enmeshed with “contemplation as an openness to the real roots of transforming action.”⁴ Christopher James Schoon “insists upon a holistic gospel that encompasses the reconciliation, restoration, and flourishing of all things in Jesus Christ.”⁵

Biblical mission is directly tied to prayer; apart from prayer, mission is merely rooted in humanism. With prayer, all of the resources from heaven can create an impact beyond measure. It is the process of bringing heaven to earth. Discipleship, apart from prayer and mission, is lifeless. Discipleship is about tuning into the frequency of the Holy Spirit to be empowered and embracing a fresh way of living that is different from one’s natural gravitation. It is working in partnership with the Trinity to only “do and say what the Father does and says” (John 5:19, New International Version). Combine all three aspects: prayer, mission, and discipleship together, and a pattern of concentric circles form a lifestyle in tune with the voice of God, infused with the Holy Spirit, and embodying the lifestyle of Jesus. Apart from the intertwined connection as an ongoing lifestyle with Him, one “can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV). In one sense, prayer is a

³ Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 17-18.

⁴ Williams, *Being Disciples*, 18.

⁵ Christopher James Schoon, *Cultivating an Evangelistic Character: Integrating Worship and Discipleship in the Missional Church Movement* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), 29.

model of the glue that holds this lifestyle together, or put in another way, it is that yeast that activates the recipe.

This thesis connects the dots between mission, discipleship, and prayer as an offering for biblical alignment. It is broken down into three working definitions as follows. Prayer is at the core of one's discipleship pathway of growth, intimately learning more about the heart of God for His people. Mission is the activation, requiring one to live it out in the context of everyday life. Discipleship is an external and internal process where one becomes more Christlike and models an example for others to do the same in the community. While recognized both broadly and conceptually, few existing pieces of literature study all three aspects working simultaneously, thus potentially forming gaps in the life of a follower of Christ. These gaps can, over time, hinder the fullest extent of flourishing in the life of a believer in the context of both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

Ministry Context

The research of this ministry context is based at NCC,⁶ which resides in Washington, D.C. The church began twenty-eight years ago and has grown over time in the nation's capital from a small crowd to a few thousand in congregation size. Around forty-five people serve on the NCC staff at three different locations. The church resides in a highly transient city where many people are at a stage in life that is in flux, most only residing in Washington, D.C., for a few years or less, depending on job locations, military assignments, or educational ambitions. This directly impacts the lifestyle of the church because of the transient nature of the city. This

⁶ National Community Church, last modified 2024, <https://national.cc>.

also directly correlates to the impact of D.C. being named “the loneliest city in America.”⁷ City-wide networks and longevity all directly affect the depth of relationships and community. The faith of a believer who lives in a city most often matches the urban lifestyle. In an urban environment, the greatest need becomes more focused on setting up a structure for small groups and integrating discipleship to grow against the grain of the transient nature of the city.

The District of Columbia is a melting pot with very few natives, but that does not stop many from putting roots down, even if they move away or return later. NCC is a beautiful tapestry made up of those who have been a part of the church for decades, while others are new and just moved into the city a few weeks ago. Some are families with young children, while others are young professionals seeking to make a mark on the Hill through lobbying and passing legislation. This same demographic is reflected in every ministry, including small groups. Small groups have been a consistent umbrella model used at NCC from the beginning. The primary model of discipleship used from a young age to adult ministry is small groups. This model is utilized across all different demographics and life stages.

Historical Overview

This research has been approved by the leadership team at National Community Church to further grow in the knowledge and application of wholistic discipleship. The goal of this historical overview is to provide an explanation of a model that has been valuable for a transient city like D.C. in hopes that it is valuable for other transient locations. While there are different

⁷ “Media Tip Sheet: Chamber of Commerce Data: Washington, D.C. is the ‘Loneliest City’ in America,” GW Media Relations, George Washington University, last modified February 22, 2024, <https://mediarelations.gwu.edu/media-tip-sheet-chamber-commerce-data-washington-dc-loneliest-city-america>.

models of missions, discipleship, and prayer within a church context, small groups help connect the dots amongst all three at NCC.

Transient, mobilizing, and fast-paced are some of the core markers of the makeup of a city. Each of these items allows churches within cities to either embrace that same DNA or to disciple in a different manner. What does discipling look like in a transient city when people come for jobs and leave the next year? How does one live a slower-paced lifestyle than the environment of the individual without feeling the natural gravitation to strive toward achievement? Inherent within a city are common threads that beg for replication, whether that is right, wrong, or indifferent. While this may not be true of every city, this is true of Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. is a city on a hill in more ways than one. It is a city that can feel less metropolitan but no less geopolitical. While the central aspects of Washington D.C. rooted in politics, education, and military bases may not be the center nucleus of the church, in a metro area, it certainly feeds into the role and function of the church within care and proximity. One challenge in the city is influencing what one is not proximate to. This is an invitation for urban churches to deepen their roots consistently over time through tone-setting, serving the poor, and through reconciliation and recovery. NCC frequently prays Jeremiah 29:5-7 (NIV) over the congregation that if the Lord would call them to put down roots, the people of God would not shy away from a counter-culture lifestyle in a large city. Petra Kuppinger defines impact and influence, stating, “Urban transformations often start in small spaces, where ordinary people

conduct their daily activities and act based on their values, traditions, and needs.”⁸ Kuppinger furthers the understanding of the benefits of a community creating “micro” and macro change.⁹

As stated previously, there are a few different discipleship small group models that currently exist, such as the sermon discussion model at North Coast¹⁰ or the semester-based free market model at National Community Church. Discipleship is about being interwoven in lives while remaining rooted in relationship. The difficulty is not necessarily deciphering if urban contexts need relationships or discipleship. This is hardly a question asked. Rather, Sanders states, “We’ve made church more complicated than it needs to be” in the process of developing a healthy body of believers.¹¹ Instead, the focus can be more on unpacking the basics in a way that can be contextualized, such as, “What if an investment in months of discipleship and relationship results in moving away due to job relocation or life stage reasons?” For the urban church, Sanders reminds readers in these scenarios, “any disappointment is worth the risk.”¹²

The transient nature of urban city churches automatically opens the door for there to be set time frames and easy on and off-ramps in order to cater to the natural rhythms of the city. For example, at National Community Church, there are easy connections for semester-based groups. This provides an opportunity for people to jump into a small group based on their schedule and availability. In addition, NCC offers pop-up groups that are short-term, three-to-four-week

⁸ Petra Kuppinger, ed., *Emergent Spaces: Change and Innovation in Small Urban Spaces* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84379-3>.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰ “Sermon Messages,” Sermon Messages, North Coast Church, last modified 2024, <https://www.northcoastchurch.com/sermons/>.

¹¹ Alvin Sanders, *Uncommon Church: Community Transformation for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 74, ProQuest Ebrary.

¹² *Ibid.*, 76.

endeavors to help give people a taste of what small groups feel like in community. Ultimately, this creates accessibility for the unconnected to get connected. This semester-based small group model is used at National Community Church, though not unique from other churches. Small groups and discipleship are not new strategies. Atkinson and Rose highlight:

The use of small groups for Christian formation and leadership development can be traced from New Testament times (Jesus and the Twelve), to the Reformation (the early Anabaptists), to the post-reformation Pietistic movement (led by Philip Spener), and to John Wesley's eighteenth-century system of disciple-making groups.¹³

Atkinson and Rose share a historical precedence of small groups, mentioning a well-known advocate of small groups, Lawrence Richards, stating that small groups are “the building block of the local church and critical to church renewal.”¹⁴ The question is not necessarily whether churches should have small groups or not, but rather, what does an integrated small group model with prayer and mission look like in a fast-moving environment? What does a counter-cultural discipleship model look like amidst the hardships of a city? Over time, small groups have naturally taken on a form to cater to these environments.

Simultaneously, these models work in tandem with the theology of the local church. If the church adheres to “belong before one believes,” this will be in alignment. If it is the reverse, the model will work against the local church theology. However, fast-paced environments do not leave much room to allow catalytic and long-term discipleship to occupy the same space. Models that work alongside the theology of the church and counter the negatives of an urban lifestyle can form a deeply rooted, steady lifestyle that remains flourishing. The same is true of mission.

¹³ Harley Atkinson and Joshua Rose, “The Small-Group Ministry Movement of the Last Four Decades,” *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 3 (2020): 547, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320942932>.

¹⁴ Atkinson and Rose, “The Small-Group Ministry Movement of the Last Four Decades,” 550.

While not limiting the mission of God, mission in a local church should, according to Niebauer, “expand the confines of practical theology.”¹⁵

Moreover, the types of groups matter within the context of urban discipleship. No type is the same. While North Coast may offer only sermon discussion-based groups that build off the weekend services, free-market groups cater to the nature that God is at work everywhere, including at the gym, in neighborhoods, at coffee shops, etc. Suzan Folkerts once said, studying religious connectivity in urban communities, “‘Sacred’ (or ‘religious’) and ‘secular’ (or ‘profane’) should not be understood as opposite(s), but rather as a continuum.”¹⁶ In addition, she continues to articulate the necessity of having religion as a core part of “politics, culture, economics, and so on.”¹⁷ Folkerts believes anything less would merely be a “post-Reformation, western approach.”¹⁸ Expounding upon this, there has historically been a shift, even within the United States, towards the privacy of faith, including discipleship and mission.¹⁹ However, it is important to note that looking at a wholistic approach is more in line with an integrated approach than a sum of all things combined. It is not to be viewed as formulaic, such as mission plus prayer plus small groups equals wholistic discipleship, but rather, missional lifestyles rooted in prayer within a community should create an overflowing lifestyle that cannot be disintegrated. Folkerts clearly outlines it, saying,

¹⁵ Michael Niebauer, *Virtuous Persuasion: A Theology of Christian Mission* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022), 18.

¹⁶ Suzan Folkerts, *Religious Connectivity in Urban Communities (1400-1550): Reading, Worshipping, and Connecting Through the Continuum of Sacred and Secular* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2021), 12, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁷ Folkerts, *Religious Connectivity in Urban Communities (1400-1550)*, 12-14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

If religion cannot be understood as a separate domain, and sacred and secular are no opposites, but have their place in a single continuum, how should we approach our subjects? Should we consider a holistic approach instead of an analytical domain-oriented approach? A holistic approach goes beyond all categories. The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘holism’ as ‘a theory that parts of a whole are in intimate interconnection, such that they cannot exist independently of the whole, or cannot be understood without reference to the whole.’ I use the term holistic in the title of this contribution, because I want to make clear we should avoid thinking in domains and dichotomies.²⁰

The closer a church gets to an integrated lifestyle, the more elements of mission, discipleship, and prayer will overlap. Regardless of the model or types of small groups offered in an urban environment, the formational practices and overarching umbrellas remain the same. A description of wholistic formation, as originally described in *Leading Formation for Mission*, is “Imaginative, creative and honours adult learning principles [. . .] It engages the ‘intellect’ and is nurtured by appropriate theological content and it engages the ‘Spirit’ and is characterised by contemplation and action for mission’ (2022).”²¹

Diversity

An additional contextual characteristic at NCC is diversity. As announced on January 20, 2024, at an NCC weekend service, “There are almost 100 nations represented at National Community Church.”²² The church is denominationally ordained Assemblies of God (AG), though not all of the staff are ordained AG. This also resembles the diversity of the congregation as much as the diversity of the staff. The demographics are diverse in age, race, and church

²⁰ Folkerts, *Religious Connectivity in Urban Communities (1400-1550)*, 13.

²¹ John Topliss, Thomas V. Gourlay, and Reginald Mary Chua, "In Altum—'Put Out into the Deep: A Formation Program for Missionary Discipleship for Students at the University of Notre Dame Australia,' *Religions* 15, no. 2 (2024): 147, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15020147>.

²² Mark Batterson, “Like Those Who Dream,” National Community Church, January 20, 2024, 21:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aov0LoOGbKk>.

background experience, with some being raised in the church while others attending church for the first time.

It is not uncommon to have small groups form around commonalities and discussions based on profession such as a Hill Staffer's small group or a military small group. Over time, this has opened the door for many group offerings to be listed based on different interests. Offerings consist of outdoor groups, book study groups, activity groups, etc. Any type of group that one may be interested in, one will likely find as an offering. This has formed one of the driving core beliefs of NCC, which is that people can feel like they belong before they believe. As a result, the small groups in and of themselves are bent towards a focus of both Christians and non-Christians socially gathering over common interests.

Discipleship

Small groups at NCC are the lifeblood of the church that have existed since the beginning operating with a free-market-based semester system allowing for people to join at any time. The groups kick off three times a year and are ten to twelve weeks long. In other words, it caters to the nature of the city, working with fast-paced transitions. By majority, the groups offer a high-connection, low-commitment environment. While not all of the groups operate this way, with some desiring to continue for two to three semesters a year, this type is not as dominant. Overall, the system is fashioned for catalytic discipleship experiences to help foster environments for newcomers to best serve those in a transient city. Out of that semester-based small group rhythm, the inherent desire is that others will also be a part of ministry teams for weekend services and/or local and global opportunities to invest in mission. This forms robust opportunities to get involved in ongoing growth. However, it is essential to note that missions and ministry teams presently operate as separate teams outside of small groups.

This semester-based framework has existed for almost twenty years and is the foundation for small group ministry at NCC. It has shaped both culture and practice. Small group culture is also infused into each ministry at NCC as each staff member would agree that the ministry as a whole church utilizes the small group model. Each ministry does not have its own separate model. If it does not fit the small group model in the context of community, it is not pursued.

Over the last four years, an identifiable pattern was discovered on the staff. Discussions around the isolation of departments were becoming more apparent. While this is a natural phenomenon in churches, more staff members were communicating the feeling of being on an island without high collaboration. This also came up in a professional assessment that was done by a third-party consultant who was invited to assess maintaining great health within the organization. In addition, this was during the year of the 2020 pandemic that thrust churches into a space of the unknown, and there was a greater need for remodeling current systems, including small groups.

To better understand contextually, using the same central ministry model as the *modus operandi* for more than two decades, it highlighted the areas that needed overlap and cross-collaboration within a growing church. This also is not uncommon for churches in general. However, groups were not exempt from this feeling of isolation. For example, prior to the shift, family groups were offered, but the small group staff may not have partnered with the family ministries for resourcing and support. There was also a great desire and hope for all groups that were offered to live out on mission, go on mission trips together, and serve together, but that number was not as highly engaged as the staff had hoped. It was a learning curve. Quite possibly, the larger the church grew, the more there was a mix of seasoned longevity leaders and brand-new leaders portraying a greater need for overlap in new ways.

Ministry Model

While this history is not unique to NCC, it caused a significant transition moment for the church.²³ Two years ago, towards the end of 2021, NCC moved away from a central model to a location-based, decentralized model. In other words, everything was based on departments at each location. Each department had a head, regardless of campus location. Currently, there are separate locations, each with multiple teams. In addition, there are three small group points of contact instead of one single person overseeing a department. For example, the D.C. Groups Pastor has a great opportunity to cross-pollinate and collaborate with other departments during D.C. campus ministry meetings now instead of only reporting to a single department head. This has been a recent shift.

Before the 2020 pandemic, NCC had eight locations. During the pandemic, many of the locations shifted as rented facilities within the city or the space was no longer feasible. As a result, the eight locations merged into three, including online. Simultaneously, there was the expansion of the new ministry model. NCC currently operates multiple weekend service locations with a permanently owned building, a rented venue, and an online space. The current and historical ministry contexts have shaped the trajectory for much of what is in this study. In addition, this research is scalable and workable for models in both urban contexts, like the D.C. location, and suburban contexts, like the Northern Virginia location.

Core Convictions

Four core convictions make up the DNA of NCC. “First, the church ought to be the most creative place on the planet. Second, the church ought to be the most diverse place on the planet.

²³ Schoon, *Cultivating an Evangelistic Character*, 6.

Third, the church belongs in the middle of the marketplace. Fourth, God will bless our church in proportion to how we give to missions and care for the poor in our city.”²⁴ While there are four convictions explicitly stated, prayer is an unspoken conviction that has always been foundational to National Community Church since day one. Every piece of property that NCC has owned over the years started with prayer. Every ministry birthed started with prayer. Staff has had a weekly prayer time set aside for more than twenty years.

There is no compromising prayer at NCC, but in the last year, there has been a change of increasing awareness to grow more in prayer culture and practices. Coming out of the 2020 pandemic, a weekly prayer service was started, which turned into the central component of the weekly ministries of NCC. From that, an additional prayer environment consisting of a fully dedicated prayer room called the “Upper Room” opened and became available to the public. All of this has created a greater opportunity for prayer to grow in every area of ministry, as well as for those who attend NCC. The stage has been set for many opportunities for engagement and impact for the congregation, the community, the neighborhoods, and the entire city. Prayer is the foundation on which the ministry structures of NCC are built and even though the stage has been set for numerous prayer opportunities, it leaves the door open for continual expansion.

Problem Presented

Group leaders who faithfully serve in small group ministry at National Community Church are an integral part of the church and love to serve God, giving back to the local church through weekly gatherings. However, one of the greatest challenges is visibly identifying the measurable fruit of replicable impact and multiplication in each of the disciple-maker lives. In

²⁴ “Core Convictions,” Core Convictions, National Community Church, last modified 2024, <https://national.cc/about/core-convictions>.

other words, there is great socialization and biblical knowledge gained through study, forming familiar relational growth, but it has the potential to remain underdeveloped.

This research studies the impact beyond the immediate weekly circle, leveraging prayer as a solution to impact schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and the community at large. The problem is the disconnect between seasoned NCC group leaders' knowledge of evangelistic discipleship and incarnational witnessing, which fulfills the Great Commission.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research is to empower leaders with a prayer course that illuminates evangelism, connecting personal faith to kingdom-oriented city impact. As a result, a prayer course proposal will be designed to effectively study how evangelism and discipleship both have a common denominator of prayer. This will allow for group activity and research in order to grow with others and to be stretched beyond one's worldview. It will expand one's understanding of how prayer can be directly connected to evangelism.

In addition, the intention of this course is to spur one another toward living out wholistic discipleship in a community right where God has planted one to remain faithful. Just as a Sequoia tree grows roots far and wide, so too does this prayer course seek to enable group leaders to view discipleship comprehensively, fully integrating into a lifestyle collectively with God and others.

Basic Assumptions

There is a general understanding that the audience of this research will read with the hopes of application for the here and now as well as for the future. In addition, there is a

common recognition of a general risk associated with preconceived notions. Generally speaking, there is a basic assumption that the outcome of this study will result in an experience of the convergence of belief and action in a lifestyle that operates out of the overflow from a personal relationship with Christ.

There is a great assumption within this research that believers in the context of a small group will develop life-giving, biblical practices and postures that are paramount to the Christian journey within community. The expectation is that believers will be more actively engaged in three aspects of everyday life: missional evangelization, personal and corporate prayer, and discipleship as an ongoing lifestyle.

Simultaneously, it is assumed that all participants have an underlying understanding of the Great Commission as defined in Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV). With the focal point of the Great Commission lived out by the Great Commandment, it is assumed that there will be a comprehensive understanding that this is not just theoretical knowledge but an outward application in regards to both self and neighbor. More easily than not, the two can be viewed conceptually as two separate commands lived out incongruently.

This research assumes the juxtaposition that one cannot live out the Great Commission without a transfusion of the Great Commandment. One cannot experience an enriched prayer life as an individual without it enriching the life of a neighbor. It is assumed there is also an understanding of transformational impact based on the influence of a lifestyle through “social contagion.”²⁵ In addition, there is an understanding that missional discipleship would appear

²⁵ Daniel Eisenberg, et al., “Social contagion of mental health: evidence from college roommates,” *Health economics* 22, no. 8 (2013): 965-86, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.2873>.

anemic with operations stemming from the flesh instead of initiated from, by, and through the Spirit.

There is a basic assumption in the reading of this thesis that one may not have a clear understanding of the distinctions and connecting points between discipleship, mission, and prayer. While they have great overlap, the distinction of each of the functions is great. As Dr. Cliff Jordan states in his thesis, there is a great misunderstanding of “missional discipleship as an activity of the church” instead of also being the “identity of the church.”²⁶ He outlines it as a “view that the church does mission when in reality the church is mission.”²⁷ This framework stems from Bosch’s study²⁸ of mission and how it is activated in the context of the body of Christ.

Lastly, there is also an understanding that this study is composed of a diverse group of people in the melting pot of Washington, D.C. Each one has a different faith walk with different exposures and understandings. Culturally, one will also have different understandings of what contextualization looks like, both within the church and outside the four walls of the church.

Definitions

Specific terminology is included within this thesis that is best addressed upfront in order to ensure clearer context. While many of these definitions may mean something else in various

²⁶ Cliff R. Jordan, “The Sent Life: Discovering The Mission of God and the Christian’s Place In It” (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 5, ProQuest, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/2717>.

²⁷ Jordan, “The Sent Life,” 5.

²⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016).

contexts and at different churches, the definitions below are specific to this research facilitated in Washington, D.C. at National Community Church.

Free-Market System. The current functional operation of small groups at National Community Church is rooted in this model. It is said this model “allows for a high degree of relational connection and creativity by allowing leaders to turn their existing relationships, gifts, interests, passions and hobbies into disciple-making small groups.”²⁹ In addition, this model is most often tied to a semester-based system that creates easy on-ramps and off-ramps for people to participate in transient cities.

Incarnational Witness. This is defined as living out the mission of our identity as “sent ones,” just as it is described in John 17:18 (NIV). J.R. Briggs describes it as “faithful followers who long to see this heaven-to-earth-right-now reality occur.”³⁰

Marketplace Discipleship. This is living out faith within the public square through everyday careers and entrepreneurship. Warrick Farah says, “Like Jesus, Paul and the early church did not train their disciples to establish a structure separate from the communities and contexts in which they lived and worked.”³¹

Mission. This is a concerted joint effort to partner with God who is at work and join Him in the participation of the Great Commission. The prayer walk curriculum from KC Underground Network uses this question to robustly define mission, “Where is God already at work in the

²⁹ Heather Zempel, *Community is Messy: The Perils and Promise of Small Group Ministry* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 52.

³⁰ J.R. Briggs, *The Sacred Overlap: Learning to Live Faithfully in the Space Between* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2020), 88.

³¹ Warrick Farah (ed.), *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations* (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2021), 86.

community, and how can we join with God?”³² National Community Church has communicated similarly.³³

Prayer Evangelism. In the most basic form, this is the sharing of communion with God, or the Good News, with someone through prayer. Prayer can be indirect and direct through intercession, prophetic words, contemplation, or spiritual direction. It can be an encounter with an individual or a group and through the evidence of miracles, signs, wonders, or the prophetic. It is however when the Holy Spirit chooses to use our words prayed in secret or in person to soften the heart of both believers and unbelievers. Defined by and credited to, Thomas Carruth defines it as the hinge that opens the door to “world revival.”³⁴ Walter Brueggemann defines it as the prophetic voice that cuts through the heart to embolden change.³⁵

Shalom. In addition to the biblical understanding of shalom, restoring the “relationship with God, ourselves, others, and the creation itself,” can also be defined as “flourishing.”³⁶

Small Groups. Small groups are defined at National Community Church as places for growth amongst a small (8-15 adults), medium (15-30 adults) to large (30+ adults) number of people gathered around common interests. Discipleship in the context of small groups, as defined

³² “Exegetical Prayer Walk,” Live as Missionaries, KC Underground Network, last modified 2024, <https://kcunderground.org/resources-content/exegetical-walk>.

³³ “Intentional,” Media, National Community Church, last modified 2022, <https://national.cc/sermon-series/intentional/>.

³⁴ Thomas Carruth, “Prayer Evangelism,” *The Asbury Seminarian* 12, no.1 (1958): 16, <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2131&context=asburyjournal>.

³⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989).

³⁶ Amy L. Sherman, *Agents of Flourishing: Pursuing Shalom in Every Corner of Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 14.

generically speaking at National Community Church, refers to a “[non]linear” growth while being formed in the likeness of Christ.³⁷

Wholistic Discipleship. It is understood from an internal point of conviction as living out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment in Scripture. J.T. English defines wholistic discipleship as “incarnational.”³⁸ In addition, English continues to state that “holistic disciples are formed in the presence of God more than a ministry philosophy.”³⁹

Limitations

Each limitation within this research, though out of tangible control, may prevent the fullest extent of this research. Thus, it is important to note upfront that the first limitation is theoretical in concept with a different wholistic view of discipleship amongst the staff (i.e., programs and events versus a missional lifestyle). The staff has great oversight of the direction, guidance, and care of small groups, thus the need for alignment regarding differing understandings. While everyone may understand the terminology, the life application at a campus level may vary from place to place.

In addition to staff, it is a noteworthy limitation that each group leader and member will automatically have a different understanding of wholistic discipleship based on various experiences and backgrounds. Some may not even theologically agree with how prayer, mission, and discipleship are defined in the constructs of this research. By nature, people will define each aspect of this thesis based on a personal interpretation and study of Scripture. Just as there is a

³⁷ Zempel, *Community is Messy*, 107.

³⁸ J.T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), xxxv, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁹ English, *Deep Discipleship*, xlv.

compartmentalization of mission, prayer, and discipleship in the broader global research around this subject, the same would be true in a smaller, more structured cohort of people. Each person will understand each topic from a different vantage point based on culture and context.

Inherently, each person will automatically have a gap between theology and life application due to fallen nature. The goal is to continually minimize the breadth of that gap.

Also, in a free-market system, there is little to no control over the depth of study. This is a limitation because of the varying degrees of exposure. While some group leaders may be at a ten-foot below the surface of the water understanding of prayer, others may be operating at a growth rate fifty-feet below the surface. Each journey has differing depths.

There is also a general expectation that people will operate within the natural confines of human bias. Both within the context of spiritual authority as well as group settings, people tend to be more positive. This can also take place in the context of meeting one-on-one with a pastor who is seen as a spiritual authority. There is an expectation that one limitation may be individuals unintentionally elevating responses due to inherent bias, human nature, and group behavior in a church setting.

Finally, one key aspect of this study that is important to note is that in the free-market system of small groups, each group has different goals and focuses. Some groups may gravitate towards a focus primarily on mission and evangelism, whereas others may only study and equip group members solely with a prayer focus. In a free-market-based system, there is a challenge to ensure a three-fold approach consisting of discipleship, mission, and prayer components within each group. This opens the door for the possibility of, but not a guarantee of, a direct overlap of all three.

Delimitations

This study is intentionally limited to people who are actively engaged within a small group at National Community Church, not a collective joint effort of multiple churches. The study is rooted in and based on research that is found in urban contexts, thus limiting the setting to inner cities instead of rural areas. Certainly, the principles behind can be transferred; however, the ultimate goal and focus resides within the urban landscape.

The current structure of leadership and staff at NCC also provides a great opportunity for care and oversight across all locations, not just one campus. The control variable would be at any location, with the primary efforts focusing on the D.C. campus. In addition, a large portion of this study only pertains to seasoned small group leaders, not all leaders. It also does not include every level of volunteers nor those within other ministerial operations within the local church, just small groups that operate under the umbrella of discipleship.

More specifically, it is contained to leaders who have been serving for two or more years. The individuals would fall under the parameters of this research if they are presently active, connected, and are leading a small group at National Community Church. While it is important to focus on those who are new to small groups or who have been a member of a small group for years, the primary focus of this research is on merely the leaders who are modeling and facilitating in a communal context.

In conclusion, this research specifically will be open to both men and women over eighteen years old as a natural reflection of the small groups that operate at NCC. Though there are just men or just women types of small groups, this will be a healthy balance of both, instead

of a single gender focus. This will allow for greater depth and breadth in responses and perspectives.

Thesis Statement

The ultimate goal of every disciple that Jesus outlined in Scripture is that discipleship is replicated and multiplied, influencing beyond one's personal life. Discipleship was not designed to remain static or independent. Out of the Great Commission, there is a model of how to impact a city through the way in which one prays and lives it out. Prayer is the root of impact. Prayer is the bridge between evangelism and discipleship to live out the Great Commission effectively. However, prayer can be one of the most paralyzing, challenging aspects of the Christian walk. The ultimate goal of this research is to better equip group leaders by normalizing prayer in everyday life. Through the model of prayer, there is no ceiling in discipleship to the ends of the earth. If group leaders are more equipped in prayer evangelism, then lifestyles of integrated discipleship will impact the city and partner in the Great Commission.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

While there are many discussions around missiology in the 21st century in both post-modern and post-Christian contexts across the globe, this research will primarily focus on prayer evangelism's impact in urban environments.¹ Sometimes, evangelism has dwindled down to “a set of practices” as opposed to side-by-side parallel tracks joined with prayer and intimacy with the Lord.² John Stott articulates the vitality of full “integration.”³ Both are essential components, not removed from each other. Prayer evangelism is about the convergence of prayer and missional discipleship as a “missional ecclesiology [emerging] from a missional hermeneutic.”⁴

J.R. Briggs defines these components of prayer and evangelism with a necessary overlap with a “both/and” perspective and not a juxtaposition of the faith.⁵ This review process is designed to highlight the overlaps and gaps that exist in current literature as well as assess historical threads that have withstood the test of time. This integrated framework will show several scholars who have studied and published extensive research expounding upon formative prayer as a disciple-making tool that remains intentional in both impact and investment.⁶ The

¹ Thomas Carruth, “Prayer Evangelism,” *The Asbury Seminarian* 12, no.1 (1958): 15-18, <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2131&context=asburyjournal>.

² John McGinley, *Mission Shaped Living Leader's Guide* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2020), 16-18, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³ John Stott and Tim Chester, *The World* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 50-60.

⁴ Schoon, *Cultivating an Evangelistic Character*, 23.

⁵ Briggs, *The Sacred Overlap*, 41.

⁶ Don Hawkins, *Master Discipleship Today: Jesus's Prayer and Plan for Every Believer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2019), 84-87, ProQuest Ebook Central.

outcome of this review will also provide historical context, expanding the current modern-day framework to better understand foundations and precedence within prayer, mission, and discipleship.

As stated previously, most present-day literature falls into two categories without showing the breadth of all three overlapping. There is an emphasis on discipleship formation regarding the spiritual discipline of prayer. Though few are on the shelf, one can find books on how prayer can influence the life of an evangelist in the context of missionary work. There are even fewer books and research based on mission in the context of community that is birthed out of prayer, similar to how Acts 2 defines the Upper Room. The moment each of the disciples was filled with the Holy Spirit, the infilling began to overflow and spill out of their mouths “as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4, NIV). The Lord enlarged the ability of the disciples to be sent by giving a greater revelation to understand different nations and languages. From there, we see an even greater outpouring of visions, dreams, prophecy, salvations, and great devotion (Acts 2:17-47, NIV). Each person is devoted to the lifestyle of communing with each other and with God in the form of small groups, prayer, and resources to an entire community in need. This happened every day, modeling an example of an integrated life for all people.

Literature Review

Many have studied the theology of mission reflecting “a missionary God” and the compassionate “heart of the Father.”⁷ However, the gap in modern-day literature shows the need for the praxis of prayer to shape both mission and discipleship and to better understand mission

⁷ Stott and Chester, *The World*, 10.

as a prayerful act of worship.⁸ Mission and discipleship are a part of the lifeblood of the church, and prayer is the connector.⁹ Each of these books affirms the obvious, which is what most churches and ministry areas are already aware of. Still, it highlights the necessity for all three components to be studied together comprehensively.

If the literature focuses on one or two key aspects, the replication will result the same in local churches. If the literature boils down to isolated structures, it will result in greater islands in practical application. If it is compartmentalized in the local church within the organizational structure, it will produce the same replication in the life of a disciple, even those engaging outside of the four walls of a church. Compartmentalized faith produces compartmentalized faith. On the other hand, wholistic discipleship is formed by pursuing the wholeness of Christ. This literature review focuses on prayer as an expression of mission to coalesce discipleship within and outside the local church. The intention is not to focus solely on either aspect in the local church or in the marketplace but rather to equip all disciples who operate freely and live out a discipleship lifestyle marked by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Historical Support for Prayer, Mission, and Discipleship

In order to best understand cities, as Matthew Hale Smith once coined, “centers of light and darkness” that are “holding within themselves the highest talent for good and evil,”¹⁰ one must also understand the bridge that brings each element of prayer, mission, and discipleship

⁸ Willie Van der Merwe, "Nurturing a Missional Spirituality: Any Lessons to Learn from the Ministry of Andrew Murray Jr (1828-1917)," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 8, no. 3 (2022): 110, <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2022.v8n3.a5>.

⁹ Stott and Chester, *The World*, 44.

¹⁰ Leopoldo A. Sanchez M., “Who is the City? Theological Approaches to the City,” *Concordia Journal* 48 (1): 48, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAIREM220507000236&site=ehost-live>.

together. Historically, the convergence of all three is found during periods of revivals that have been known to mark a community. Revivals involve renewed hearts, minds, souls and the reprioritizing of one's faith and relationship with Christ. There are many different types of revivals through which awakenings have also been birthed. While there is a frequent derogatory narrative of cities,¹¹ historically, there has been incredible precedence for moves of God, originating in urban contexts.

In addition, history has shown revivals that have swept across communities, not as ones isolated for personal growth but instead growing collectively as entire households, neighborhoods, and cities at large. History has also shown that the work done in the hearts of those experiencing revival has an external expression that moves them to compassion. C.E. Autrey once said that revivals and evangelism go hand in hand.¹² John V. Taylor was once quoted saying, "The chief actor in the historic mission of the Christian church is the Holy Spirit. He is the director of the whole enterprise."¹³ Simultaneously, no revival has ever happened without prayer, seeking, and communing with God. As a result, catalytic movements and events have periodically shaped local church contexts and cities periodically. This historical overview portrays what each element would look like if all three were operating ongoing and simultaneously as if a revival were to never end. This next section will begin to unpack the impact of historical movements rooted in discipleship, prayer, and mission in order to provide support that this is not a new concept but has originated long before this present modern-day context.

¹¹ Ray Bakke, *A Theology As Big As the City* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 20-22.

¹² Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 7.

¹³ John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015), 3, Google Books.

Revival Prayer

Prayer is not a new tool for Christ followers but has been around since the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, when Eve and Adam communed and dialogued with God. Prayer has been at the epicenter of awakenings and revivals recorded throughout history. More well-known between prayer and missions was the Moravian movement, which influenced many, including John Wesley and William Carey, “The Father of Modern Missions.”¹⁴ Some even say the Moravians were a “catalyst towards the development of Protestant global missions.”¹⁵ The Moravians are most well known for their “missionary zeal” that was birthed in awakening prayer that utterly transformed the spiritual lives of those around them.¹⁶ The Moravians eventually moved to the United States, where they came in contact with John Wesley.¹⁷ Before the Moravians became a sending people, for the expansion of the Gospel, they organized 24/7 prayer.¹⁸ In addition to the Moravian movement connecting with prayer, embedded within was a “missionary vision” full of purposeful evangelism.¹⁹ The Moravians set up “small groups or ‘bands’ ... Zinzendorf insisted that such community life was ‘apostolic’- patterned after the early church.”²⁰ It was profoundly stated, “Communal spirituality and mission were inextricably linked.”²¹

¹⁴ Randall L. Downs, "The Influence of the Moravian Missions Movement on Baptist Global Missions" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 1, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/influence-moravian-missions-movement-on-baptist/docview/2090034334/se-2>.

¹⁵ Downs, "The Influence of the Moravian Missions Movement on Baptist Global Missions," 1.

¹⁶ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁷ Jonathan Yeager, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 157, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁸ Ian Randall, “Early Moravian Spirituality and Missionary Vision,” *Wesley and Methodist Studies* 9, no. 2 (2017): 126, <https://doi.org/10.5325/weslmethstud.9.2.0123>.

¹⁹ Ibid., 128.

²⁰ Ibid., 126.

²¹ Ibid.

Leonard Ravenhill once said, “Prayer is the language of heaven...In Spirit-born prayer, we pray God’s burden into and through our hearts...”²² Revivals are bathed in prayer. Revivals are rooted in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. “Of what use is my prayer if the Holy Spirit does not pray with me?”²³ Societal revivals are encountered in an ongoing, committed community. This is portrayed in Acts 2, that after the “revival on the day of Pentecost,” there was still a desire to travel to the “temple daily [to pray] (Acts 2:46; 3:1).”²⁴ Prayer shapes lifestyles that spread like wildfire. That is found throughout history since the birth of the church, and the power of prayer continues to shape and mold in one’s generational lifetime and beyond.

Modern-Day Prayer Movements

Prayer rooms shift atmospheres in cities. This has occurred with the beginnings of the International House of Prayer in Kansas City²⁵ to the Upper Room of Dallas,²⁶ or the prayer movements outlined in the book *City of Prayer*.²⁷ 24/7 Prayer is a global prayer room non-profit organization currently operating in 78 countries.²⁸ All are about transforming a city through the power of intercession. Prayer has played a central role in both missional and revival movements. In the most recent century, a myriad of revivalists have paved the way. The Welsh revival began

²² Leonard Ravenhill, *Revival Praying: An Urgent and Powerful Message for the Family of Christ* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2005), 46.

²³ Ravenhill, *Revival Praying*, 52.

²⁴ David Bradshaw, *Awaken the Dawn: An Adventure in Hosting Jesus' Presence and Discovering Your Part in the Story* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2021), 8.

²⁵ “About the International House of Prayer,” About IHOPKC, International House of Prayer Kansas City, last modified 2024, <https://ihopkc.org>.

²⁶ “Upper Room,” Upper Room Dallas, accessed on August 10th, 2024, <https://upperroom.co/prayer-room/>.

²⁷ Trey Kent and Kie Bowman, *City of Prayer: Transform Your Community through Praying Churches* (Terre Haute, IN: PrayerShop Publishing), 2019.

²⁸ “About 24/7 Prayer,” 24/7 Prayer, accessed May 10th, 2024, https://www.24-7prayer.com/about/about-us/who-we-are/?_gl=1*1aowyrq*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTQ1MjIyMzUwNS4xNzE1MzkwOTc5*_ga_EP7TTC0T8Z*MTcxNTM5MDk3OS4xLjEuMTcxNTM5MTEwMi4wLjAuMA.

with Evan Roberts praying, “Bend us, bend us, oh Lord.”²⁹ The Azusa Street was rooted in intercession and “soul travail” or prayers of deep groanings.³⁰ The revival that took place around the same time in India, known as the Mukti Revival, was led by women who “forgot to eat and sleep” because they were fixated on intercession.³¹ The Hebrides Revival impacted an entire community as “God seemed to be everywhere,” which people still talk about today.³² There is a current resurgence of collective prayer being instilled as a lifestyle of “prayer without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17, English Standard Version) within the body of Christ, pointing back to the historical roots of how prayer paved the way for revival.

Discipleship Classes

The Great Awakening was one of the longest-lasting awakenings that existed within the United States.³³ This Great Awakening is most recognizable by the history of John Wesley, who came from the United Kingdom and began to form classes within the United States that were well-known for inherent accountability in the context of a small group of people.³⁴ These classes have become the most foundational representation of small groups in modern-day local church environments. This began the formation of “bands... as a nod to the Moravian communal piety”

²⁹ Billy Humphrey and Corey Russell, *Reclaiming Revival: Calling a Generation to Contend for Historic Awakening* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers Inc, 2022), 86.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

³² Duncan Campbell, *Revival in the Hebrides* (N.p.: Kraus House, 2015), loc 3, Barnes and Noble Nook.

³³ Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 18.

³⁴ Roger Graham Jr. Clayton, "The Modern Wesley Class Meeting - Bringing Accountability, Practical Faith, and Personal Connection into Established Local Congregations" (PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 2022) https://scholar.smu.edu/theology_ministry_etds/12.

that would meet together around a common unified goal to grow in holiness that would also “serve the needs that existed within the community.”³⁵

In addition, there were offerings of “classes and society meetings,”³⁶ all based on differing needs and varying depths of the walk of an individual. Prayer gatherings were also incorporated as a part of the collective meetings.³⁷ These great undertakings worked towards the deepening of discipleship through John Wesley’s rich focus on sanctification.

From there, discipleship has formed into modern-day pathways, small groups, or formational opportunities that open the way to deepen a lifestyle of faith alongside others. Simultaneously, discipleship has become a tool of evangelism to help grow alongside people who may want a place of belonging before they believe. Varying depths of discipleship allow infinite opportunities to become more Christ-like in Christ-centered environments. Regardless of whether one believes that a Christian is automatically a disciple or not, the premise of discipleship remains the same.³⁸ It is an ongoing opportunity for development and accountability in community. Some scholars say the form of missional discipleship takes it one step further, articulating, “Missional discipleship provides a platform to expand the concept of Christlikeness as holiness from the personal dimension to the public dimension to overcome the privatisation of discipleship and Christian religious dualism polarising things into the categories of the sacred and secular.”³⁹ He continues to state that mission and discipleship cannot be compartmentalized

³⁵ Clayton, “The Modern Wesley Class Meeting,” 32.

³⁶ Philip Fellows, “Discipleship in Three Dimensions: A Critical Examination of John Wesley’s Doctrine of Holiness and Its Implications for Contemporary Small Group Discipleship,” *Ecclesiology* 17, no. 1 (2021): 34-37, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455316-bja10006>.

³⁷ Fellows, “Discipleship in Three Dimensions,” 38.

³⁸ Guichun Jun, “Missional Discipleship in the Public Sphere: With Special Reference to Lordship, Followership and Christlikeness in the Concept of Public Discipleship,” *Transformation: An International Evangelical Dialogue on Mission and Ethics* 39, no. 2 (2022): 112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02653788211062462>.

³⁹ Jun, “Missional Discipleship in the Public Sphere,” 111.

as separate “entities” without experiencing a diminishment to the original intent.⁴⁰ Jun communicates a great understanding of missional discipleship, even though a large component of prayer is missing, as that is true in several literature studies.⁴¹

Missional Movements

Historically, we have seen the greatest examples of mission form our discipleship framework through missionaries like Hudson Taylor. Hudson Taylor’s example of his missionary efforts far surpasses many other missionaries as he sought the call of being a missionary to China.⁴² Taylor referred to all of the missionaries who helped him spread the gospel throughout each territory as “prayer evangelists.”⁴³ Over time, he continued to grow in “God-consciousness”⁴⁴ in his prayerful ministry and, at one point, grew the evangelist team to “seven hundred.”⁴⁵ How Hudson lived and his sharing of the Good News impacted another gentleman named Jonathan Goforth, who also went to China and was known as a “missionary revivalist.”⁴⁶ The famous dialogue between the two is recorded in *Heroes of the Holy Life*, with Hudson saying to Goforth’s vision, “Brother, if you would enter that province, you must go forward on your knees.”⁴⁷ Goforth said when reflecting over the years of his lifetime,

We are convinced too that all movements of the Spirit in China which have come within our own experience may be traced to prayer. One missionary remarked to him, ‘Since

⁴⁰ Jun, “Missional Discipleship in the Public Sphere,” 112.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission: The Growth of a Work of God* (Independent, MI, 2023).

⁴³ Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission*, 36.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 564.

⁴⁶ John Robb, “Review of Prayer as a Strategic Weapon in Frontier Missions,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 1, no.8 (1991): 26, https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/08_1_PDFs/8_1Robb.pdf.

⁴⁷ Wesley L. Duewel, *Heroes of the Holy Life: Biographies of Fully Devoted Followers of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 54, Google Books.

the Lord did so much with our small amount of praying, what might He not have done if we had prayed as we ought?”⁴⁸

Looking at the life of John Hyde, also a missionary known as “the apostle of prayer,” one is able to see the correlation between mission and prayer as inseparable.⁴⁹

A.B. Simpson, most notably known for his work in modern evangelicalism in the late 1800s, famously said, “Are thou doing what the Master expects to spread the Fourfold Gospel, or art thou wasting much strength on worldly or lifeless methods of Christian work?”⁵⁰ Apart from the debates about Keswick theology, his ministry work in New York was nothing shy of a move of God that resulted in a holistic focus on prayer, engagement, evangelism, and revival services.⁵¹ It continued to grow to the point of a sense of revivalism spread across North America, “eventually challeng[ing] Simpson’s own parameters of ministry, and test[ing] the very boundaries of evangelicalism itself.”⁵²

Mary Ho, when studying the pivotal moment of missionary capacity currently in China, said,

Missions in America was fueled by the Methodist and Baptist growth westward, which prompted frontier revivals and the beginning of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, characterized by spiritual renewal, fervent prayer... Pierson posits that the beginning of most missions movements, including the Moravians, the Wesleyan movement, and American missions, all stem from renewal movements.⁵³

⁴⁸ Robb, “Review of Prayer as a Strategic Weapon in Frontier Missions,” 27.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ James Daryn Henry, *A.B. Simpson and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 207, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁵¹ Henry, *A.B. Simpson and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism*, 214.

⁵² Ibid., 238.

⁵³ Mary Ho and Rudolf Mak, “The Uniqueness of the Chinese Mission Movement—Past, Present, and Future,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 46, no. 1 (2022): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23969393211026444>.

Zooming out, it is likely that this will take place all over the Global South as the growth rate of Christianity has far surpassed both “Europe and North America as of 2020.”⁵⁴ This begs the question of what some of the driving distinctions are, forming in a post-Christian context versus the great renewal that is shaping the rest of the continents of the world. A similar study from the Mission Mobilization Index was done in China to show how present-day China is “ripe for mobilization” of missionaries because of the growth that has been exploding across the country.⁵⁵ As a result, it can be concluded that missional movements, or rather, “missional momentum,” are birthed out of “spiritual renewal.”⁵⁶

Urban Contextualization

Readers, as they digest this thesis, may be thinking about why there is such an emphasis on cities instead of suburban areas. While the title of this research is focused on tools for urban transformation, it is not merely a good thought or a recommendation. The statistics of urbanization are moving at a faster rate than many people are anticipating. This directly impacts equipping and preparation within the local church because it has a direct correlation to the impact of socialization, economics, infrastructure, etc. “By 2050, more than 25 cities will have populations in excess of 16 million. Four of the top five will be mega-giant cities of 40 million or more. Four of those five are likely to be hostile to Christianity.”⁵⁷ Wholistic ministry could be more important now than it ever has been in this current generation.

⁵⁴ Ho and Mak, “The Uniqueness of the Chinese Mission Movement, 60-61.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁵⁷ Al Barth, “A Vision for Our Cities,” Redeemer City to City, January 1, 2009, <https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/a-vision-for-our-cities>.

The thread of cities is found throughout the Old Testament to the New Testament. Scholars say much of the narrative of “urban revitalization”⁵⁸ hinges on the book of Zechariah, both in the rebuilding historically and in the preparation of what is to come in the New Jerusalem.⁵⁹ It is about a beautiful city that is restored and flourishing for all people from every tribe, nation, and tongue.

Al Barth, one of the founders of Redeemer City to City, states that he believes one of the primary responsibilities given to Adam could have been “city building.”⁶⁰ More specifically, that thread carries throughout Scripture up to “Revelation 21 our future is pictured as life in a city, or at least revolving around a city... Hebrews 11:10 describes Abraham as ‘looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder as God.’”⁶¹ The vision of mission, discipleship, and prayer reflects not only the early church but also points to something greater to come.

Ordinary Everyday Life

While prayer, mission, and discipleship are the main ingredients in the Christian walk, living out of these aspects in everyday life is nothing new. These aspects are also expressed within the church calendar. There is precedence for living out the most sacred in ordinary times. Tammie Marie Grimm states, “The ordinary and everyday constitutes the bulk of our

⁵⁸R. Reed Lessing, “Zechariah 8: God’s Vision for the City,” *Concordia Journal* 48, no. 1: 33, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAIREM220507000235&site=ehost-live>.

⁵⁹ “Introduction to Zachariah: Discover the Basics of the Book of Zechariah,” The Gospel Coalition, last modified, 2024, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/zechariah/#overview>.

⁶⁰ Barth, “A Vision for Our Cities.”

⁶¹ Ibid.

discipleship. ‘Ordinariness,’ Paula Gooder notes, ‘is the very essence of existence’ (2012, p. 4).”⁶²

In the same way, in the New Testament, there was a great understanding that this was the identity and actions related to a Christ-follower.⁶³ Their being was intricately wired to their doing that did not result in separate compartments during the week versus the weekend. J.D. Payne refers to this as an “apostolic imagination” defined as “a Spirit-transformed mindset that helped facilitate urgent and widespread gospel proclamation, disciple making, church planting, and leadership development.”⁶⁴

Marketplace Discipleship

Upon assessing the themes of the literature, it is important to note that there has been a divide in scholarly studies between traditional discipleship in the United States, through the form of small groups, and non-traditional discipleship that expands beyond the borders of the local church. The ultimate outcome is neither to pigeonhole prayer and discipleship as a private, individual matter nor to focus solely on social activism rooted in humanistic efforts. While there is a time and place for each, the primary focus is on the convergence of the inside and outside of the walls. Seung Hah agrees that it is about a kingdom lifestyle that forms deep roots, paving the

⁶² Tammie Marie Grimm, “Ordinary, Everyday Discipleship: Banding Together for Faithful Living at Home, Work, and in the World,” *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 2 (2020): 348, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320919418>.

⁶³ J.D. Payne, *Apostolic Imagination: Recovering a Biblical Vision for the Church’s Mission Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 4.

⁶⁴ Payne, *Apostolic Imagination*, 12.

way for city impact to be inside the church walls and outside of the church walls in the marketplace simultaneously.⁶⁵

Samuel Lee emphasizes this great need for “holistic mission of entrepreneurship” to be grasped and understood in the local church, stating,

Theologically, in relation to the trinity, personhood implies God’s inner life and God’s missional movement in the world; in-between-ness reflects the work of the Son’s Great Commission; entrepreneurship mirrors the work of God the Father in the Creation Commission; and *oikonomia* intersects with the work of the Spirit in the Great Commandment. These four factors serve as identity markers for holistic ministry success and positive agents for both individuals and communities on the path to becoming what God wants them to be.⁶⁶

While many non-traditional discipleship scholars have asserted a stance in this field stating missional discipleship happens in communities outside the local church to create a larger expression of the body of Christ,⁶⁷ there is still great room for growth in commitment to the local church fostering “cultural engagement for the sake of the gospel [as] a central characteristic.”⁶⁸ Depending on the theological application one adheres to may have direct implications for impact outside the four walls of the church. Warrick Farah⁶⁹ and Andrew Scott⁷⁰ agree with Williams that marketplace discipleship, or discipleship that is lived out in the everyday common space, or

⁶⁵ Seung M. Hah, "Intercultural Missional Leadership: Theological Foundation and Biblical Narratives," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 75, no. 1 (2019): 2, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5211>.

⁶⁶ Samuel Lee, "Faith in the Marketplace: Measuring the Impact of Church Based Entrepreneurial Approaches to Holistic Mission" (PhD diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2019), 2, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/faith-marketplace-measuring-impact-church-based/docview/2242477956/se-2>.

⁶⁷ Andrew Scott, *Scatter: Go Therefore and Take Your Job With You* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2016).

⁶⁸ P. Adam McClendon and Jared E. Lockhart, *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 97, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶⁹ Warrick Farah, ed., *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nation* (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2021).

⁷⁰ Andrew Scott, *Scatter: Go Therefore and Take Your Job With You*.

“public sphere,” is fundamental to missional impact.⁷¹ Praxis and experience are lived out multi-dimensionally and not confined to a single aspect.⁷² The workplace is not separate from the home nor is it separate from the church when it comes to carrying the missional identity in Christ. The marketplace is defined as a holy intersection between everyday faith and everyday works, where the two are integrated and inseparable.

In other words, where one spends the most time has the greatest ability for influence. While Warrick may define a missional way of living as granted “access” points,⁷³ Hirsch defines marketplace discipleship as a key strategy to developing the body of Christ as a “centraliz[ed] hub and decentralization of households.”⁷⁴ Marketplace discipleship does not occur through happenstance but rather through a great strategy.

Marketplaces are images that point toward a larger picture of where people live, dwell, eat, and play. It portrays ministry as a grand gesture of God activating the church “moving toward God’s true longing - a city reborn.”⁷⁵ David Bradshaw quotes Pete Greig, the founder of the 24/7 prayer movement, saying that all of these “great works” in the marketplace point to an “all-consuming motivation [as] a desire for the presence of God.”⁷⁶ Just as marketplaces are not removed from societal impact, they are not removed from seeking the very presence of God to

⁷¹ Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 73.

⁷² Warrick Farah, ed., *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nation* (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2021), 86.

⁷³ Warrick, *Motus Dei*, 81.

⁷⁴ Lance Ford, Rob Wegner, and Alan Hirsch, *The Starfish and the Spirit: Unleashing the Leadership Potential of Churches and Organizations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 49.

⁷⁵ Tyler Staton, *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools: An Invitation to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2022), 152-153.

⁷⁶ Bradshaw, *Awaken the Dawn*, 9.

dwell and move. They tend to be central to urban contexts and thus are an optimal opportunity for great influence and impact.

Incarnational Witness

J.R. Briggs defines the posture of a witness as living incarnationally outside the church as one does inside the church.⁷⁷ This activation is anchored in a compassionate concern for cities and neighborhoods with a deep desire that people who are far from Christ would encounter the “gospel incarnate, and so the people walking the block...walked right into Jesus.”⁷⁸ Both marketplace discipleship and incarnational witnessing are about providing encounters with the living God on every street corner so that the people of God feel the companionship of the life-giving breath through Jesus.

Witnessing is love embodied. Eric Mason says, “We can’t provide a defense for the faith if we aren’t lovingly committed to and invested in the people of our cities.”⁷⁹ Barbara Brown Taylor says it is less about knowing God intellectually and more about experiencing God.⁸⁰ Mark Mittelberg and Lee Strobel defend that prayer is what activates one to be more intentional with God and others.⁸¹ Without prayer, the focus can become lost.

⁷⁷ Briggs, *The Sacred Overlap*, 45.

⁷⁸ Eric Mason, *Urban Ministry: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 214.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁸⁰ Briggs, *The Sacred Overlap*, 1.

⁸¹ Mark Mittelberg and Lee Strobel, *Contagious Faith: Discover Your Natural Style for Sharing Jesus with Others* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 11, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Niemandt⁸² and Van de Merwe⁸³ both reference incarnational living as “missional spirituality.” While this encompasses both individual and internal relationships, it also speaks to external relationships with God and others. It speaks to the encounters of humanity on this side of heaven. Juxtapose that with Hah, who says incarnational living has less to do with respective people and more about the followership to “God’s missional leadership” on display through “Jesus’ incarnation.”⁸⁴ John Stott describes “authentic Christianity as a centrifugal force” that leads us into the world bearing witness.⁸⁵ Witnessing cannot be boiled down to tracts or one-off conversations, though this has historically been a part of it. Instead, it is an ongoing lifestyle that is an outward expression of who we are in Christ. It is a lifestyle of transformation that spills out into our spheres of influence. Albert Wolters says, “Witness and mission have been reduced to sending out missionaries and evangelists, or evangelistic encounters with our neighbors and co-workers...witness cannot be reduced to verbal articulation of the gospel or to certain kinds of service activity....all of life is witness.”⁸⁶

This idea of evangelism being more than proclamation is not something that should be distilled or boiled down but rather a “city set on a hill” that lives outwardly expressed as a light to the world in some of the darkest places (Matt. 5:14). Grenz agrees along the same lines as Wolters⁸⁷ stating that another form can be defined as “a prophetic dimension” defining

⁸² Doret Niemandt and Nelus C. Niemandt, "Missional Metanoia: Missional Spirituality in Holistic Theological Education," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6506>.

⁸³ Willie Van der Merwe, "Nurturing a Missional Spirituality: Any Lessons to Learn from the Ministry of Andrew Murray Jr (1828-1917)" *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 8, no. 3 (2022): 110, <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2022.v8n3.a5>.

⁸⁴ Seung M. Hah, "Intercultural Missional Leadership: Theological Foundation and Biblical Narratives," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 75, no. 1 (2019): 3-4, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5211>.

⁸⁵ Stott and Chester, *The World*, 48.

⁸⁶ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 130.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

“evangelism [as] presence.”⁸⁸ This furthers the imitation of Christ through an outward expression and shows how one serves under the rule and reign of Christ.

Missiology

If “mission is the vehicle of which discipleship happens,” as Chris Pepler, pastor of FourSquare Church, eloquently coined, then it would be of equal importance to gain a full understanding of what mission in partnership with prayer looks like, communing with God and with others as neighbors simultaneously.⁸⁹ Though it is never enough to merely maintain a missiology of the city, according to Ray Bakke, it must always be directly tied to the theology of the city as well.⁹⁰ In other words, what we believe about God should be fully integrated with how we view our neighbors and their life circumstances. Ian Adams references mission in the context of flourishing as a “dynamic dance of love and life - the *missio Dei* (the mission of God, the mission is God’s) - flowing in and around all that exists.”⁹¹ He goes on to say that there are deep roots in the monastic tradition of contemplative action inseparable, as seen in the life of Jesus. Adams takes the monastic practices one step further with organizing principles around the “practice of refectory.”⁹² Rooted in “presence, prayerful engagement, and activity on behalf of

⁸⁸ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 503.

⁸⁹ Angel Meeks, “A Call for Revolution of Global Ministry through the Short-Term Mission Movement: A Book Proposal for Creative Solutions to the Problems Surrounding the STM Phenomenon,” (Master’s thesis, Northwest University, 2020), 59, https://archives.northwestu.edu/bitstream/handle/nu/54994/meeks_angel_icd_2020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁹⁰ Ray Bakke, *A Theology As Big As the City* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 83.

⁹¹ Ian Adams, *Cave Refectory Road: Monastic Rhythms for Contemporary Living* (London, UK: Canterbury Press, 2010), 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 11.

the world - and specifically on behalf of the most needy” is a rare resource depicting wholistic imagery with kindred spirits.⁹³

Understanding mission through the framework of worship, as Goheen states, is the “ultimate goal of the church.”⁹⁴ It is now more about understanding mission through the awareness of the presence of God as “worship is the fuel of missions.”⁹⁵ Evangelism is not merely tied to just “words or deeds” but is rooted in a presence that is aware of and mobilized by the active omnipresence of God all over the world.⁹⁶ Christopher J. Wright, a well-known missiologist, has articulated well the necessity of prayer inherent within mission modeled by Jesus.⁹⁷ In other words, one cannot understand mission without understanding prayer.⁹⁸ Everything from “the Lord’s Prayer to the church in Acts, and of Paul’s instructions to the churches... prayer [is] the saturating medium.”⁹⁹

Similar to St. John of the Cross, Wayne Teasdale once said, “Socially engaged spirituality is the inner life awakened to responsibility and love.”¹⁰⁰ Martin Luther King Jr. lived his life the same way, empowering others to operate out of a framework of “love [growing] out of a consistent and total surrender to God” simultaneously.¹⁰¹ Thomas Merton would also be the

⁹³ Adams, *Cave Refectory Road: Monastic Rhythms for Contemporary Living*, 25.

⁹⁴ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 46.

⁹⁵ Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*, 46.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹⁷ Christopher J. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2010), ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Cristobal Serrán-Pagán y Fuentes, "The Active Life and the Contemplative Life in St. John of the Cross: The Mixed Life in the Teresian Carmelite Tradition," *Religions* 11, no. 10 (2020): 10, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11100509>.

¹⁰¹ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *A Gift of Love: Sermons from Strength to Love and Other Preachings* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), 46, Google Books.

first to communicate that while contemplation and action are two parallel tracks, any off-balance can immediately derail, causing “sterile activity” or “isolat[ion].”¹⁰² Contemplation and action combined are what allow a deep well of the Christian walk to bubble to the surface that is “nourished by an interior spirit of prayer,” says Merton.¹⁰³

Integrated Discipleship

While integrated discipleship is far more interwoven than a single focal point, it leans on the great understanding that the “whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” referencing it as “holism.”¹⁰⁴ Every single source that has been included in this review thus far states the centrality and the need for integrated discipleship, which is a total sum, not disintegrated, that leads towards compartmentalized, privatized faith. Rowan Williams goes as far as saying that it cannot be anything less because discipleship is a “state of being,” not a passive act or dutiful obligation.¹⁰⁵ As “whole persons [with] interconnected” lifestyles in every other sphere of life, even outside of faith, there is a need for normalizing what mission, prayer, and discipleship look like as a combined effort.¹⁰⁶ Sherman, leading the field in the impact of wholistic restoration, defines the impact of shalom as working towards “wholeness and flourishing.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Fuentes, "The Active Life and the Contemplative Life in St. John of the Cross," 11, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11100509>.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁴ Stott and Chester, *The World*, 50.

¹⁰⁵ Williams, *Being Disciples*, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Kyle David Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017), 167.

¹⁰⁷ Amy L. Sherman, *Agents of Flourishing: Pursuing Shalom in Every Corner of Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 14-16.

John Stott¹⁰⁸ and Christopher James Schoon emphasize the basis for mission stemming from Scripture and Scripture alone.¹⁰⁹ Each source pertaining to non-traditional aspects of discipleship has stated the need for wholistic discipleship, in which they have also affirmed that this is the best example of Christ dwelling among, this side of heaven. The only difference on Earth is God's people get to live it out modeled after Christ as a part of a unified body of Christ.¹¹⁰

Even when articulating mission or discipleship, they have to be used in conjunction. There has to be a combined formation that ebbs and flows with each other fully integrated instead of remaining as static compartments. Compartmentalized faith will produce a compartmentalized faith in people. Jun says,

There is a danger when we see mission and discipleship as two separate entities. Mission and discipleship are organically connected by nature. Mission devoid of discipleship is an empty slogan for the expansion of God's kingdom, and discipleship devoid of mission is a bottomless trap called religious self-satisfaction. Therefore, missional discipleship is the appropriate term to include both engaging in mission and being intentional about faithful discipleship (Maddix, 2015).¹¹¹

David Docusen, in his book *Neighborliness*, highlights John Perkins, who once said, "Living the gospel means desiring for your neighbor and your neighbor's family that which you desire for yourself and your family."¹¹² Integrating discipleship is seeing that out of the Christian gospel, an orientation of one's life has a direct impact on the life of a neighbor. How one lives

¹⁰⁸ Stott and Chester, *The World*.

¹⁰⁹ Christopher James Schoon, *Cultivating an Evangelistic Character*, 23.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Jun, "Missional Discipleship in the Public Sphere," 112.

¹¹² David Docusen, *Neighborliness: Love Like Jesus. Cross Dividing Lines. Transform Your Community* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2022), 23.

and loves has direct ripple effects on the lives of those around. The flourishing of one contributes to the flourishing of another, just as the brokenness of one impacts another.

One important aspect to note is that some scholars refer to “holistic mission...[as] also synonymous to integral mission” to depict the synergy between “evangelism and social action.”¹¹³ While this is certainly a core aspect of the triformity, it is still only a component and not its entirety. Similarly, Bevins adds a statement from an Ecuadorian missiologist, C. Rene Padilla, that it is holistic because the “mission of the church is multifaceted [dependent] on the mission of God, which includes the whole of creation and the totality of human life.”¹¹⁴

Intercession as Evangelism

While prayer is just one expression of mission, it has been one that lives most under the radar. Less commonly studied is the shared overlap of prayer and mission. Prayer is most commonly represented as an individualistic practice that enriches the Christian faith, but by very nature, has a built-in capacity to become an outward-facing focused way of life.¹¹⁵ Prayer as mission can be on display in various forms, such as walking in the prophetic enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit or standing in the gap through intercession. Kaiser, in his book on revival, recalls that Andrew Murray states,

Christ actually meant prayer to be the great power by which His Church should do its work....Ministers of His gospel complain...that their duties do not allow them to find time for this, which He counts their first, their highest, their most delightful, their alone effective work.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Winfield Bevins, *Liturgical Mission: The Work of the People for the Life of the World* (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2022), 125.

¹¹⁴ Bevins, *Liturgical Mission*, 125.

¹¹⁵ Bennett, *Practices of Love*, 17-24.

¹¹⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Revive Us Again: Biblical Principles for Revival Today* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2001), 236-37.

While some may say that prayer is inward facing, Kyle Bennett believes disciplines like prayer that undergo a “reformation of habits” lead to the “transformation of our shared world with our neighbor.”¹¹⁷ Justo Gonzalez advocates that prayer in and of itself “is a ministry” to people.¹¹⁸ Prayer is the guiding light to where one lives, works, plays, and eats. It has identity properties that shape and mold more into the image of Christ through integrated discipleship. It is not just individualized prayer but also ties to corporate prayer amongst the body of Christ. Corey Russell and Billy Humphrey, two leading revivalists of today, even state, “Christianity was birthed in a corporate prayer meeting.”¹¹⁹

John Stott and Tim Chester state, “Prayer [is for both] the renewal of the church and the evangelization of the world.”¹²⁰ Prayer is not just for the enrichment of an individual life. Missionally rooted prayer is about engaging with “word and deed.”¹²¹ It is “an indissoluble bond.”¹²² Prayer is a bond between “action and contemplation” while fostering an intimate relationship with God and a restored relationship with man, partnering with God in the renewal of the world.¹²³

While prayer can be a component of mission, the intricacy in the details of the narrative of Scripture is that if prayer and mission both operate as lifestyles, they cannot be compartmentalized functions. Wolters states that in both “Luke-Acts: ‘The kingdom comes as

¹¹⁷ Bennett, *Practices of Love*, 170.

¹¹⁸ Justo L. González, *Teach Us to Pray: The Lord's Prayer in the Early Church and Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 1, *ProQuest Ebook Central*.

¹¹⁹ Humphrey and Russell, *Reclaiming Revival*, 53.

¹²⁰ Stott and Chester, *The World*, 81.

¹²¹ David M. Gustafson, *Gospel Witness: Evangelism in Word and Deed* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 30-35, *ProQuest Ebook Central*.

¹²² Stott and Chester, *The World*, 57.

¹²³ Williams, *Being Disciples*, 17.

the Spirit works in response to prayer,” producing the fruit of being “faithful to [the church’s] missionary encounter.”¹²⁴ Additionally, intercessory prayer opens the door for “mission to the nations.”¹²⁵ It postures the heart vertically to respond horizontally. Simultaneously, intercession cuts through the layers to become more aware of a living, moving, and active God in the present day.

Grenz believes that evangelism begins with intercession.¹²⁶ In travailing prayer, one begins to see the needs in the city and the love that God has for the city. Intercession births a new paradigm from which one can operate in humility and service back to the city. However, this requires one to remain in a seat of humble prayer and not give into a savior complex or feelings of superiority. Sanchez argues it is less about the “what” of a city and more about the “who.”¹²⁷ He aligns with Robert Lupton who said that the operations in a city should be anchored in a viewpoint that is built off of “mutual exchanges...[not as seeing] the poor merely as ‘weak ones waiting to be rescued,’ but as ‘bearers of divine treasure.’”¹²⁸ Prayer reminds the church of the divine image of God in every individual who makes up the city. How one views the city and views prayer with and for a city is pivotal. Prayer is also about shaping the hearts of the intercessors who lead within the city. Sanchez references Dale Irvin, who once communicated,

Cities are not only places of pure joy and freedom, but also places of great suffering and oppression...They amplify the imago dei in all of its ambiguities. They are places of great terror as well as great beauty. By their very logic they intensify the negative tendencies of human experience towards inequalities in wealth and power alongside the positive tendencies towards equality and compassion.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 140-41.

¹²⁵ Christopher J. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 237.

¹²⁶ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 504.

¹²⁷ Sanchez, “Who is the City?,” 39.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

It is a privilege to pray and a call to embrace what the Holy Spirit is already doing while He is at work in the cities. Prayer before practice is essential for better understanding the tapestry behind the makeup of a city.

Formational Practices

Formational practices are practiced corporately and individually. Sherman states reconciliation and renewal cannot happen apart from prayer as it “commits people to a vertical orientation in the midst of seeking horizontal shalom.”¹³⁰ While many aspects of prayer are most often forming and shaping disciples into deeper walks of the Christian faith that make one more in tune with the Holy Spirit, great unity happens when a community is interwoven together through prayer. Modern-day evangelical churches in the United States highlight opportunities to grow through several formational practices such as generosity, biblical literacy, etc.¹³¹ However, formational practices do not necessitate individualization; instead, they necessitate quite the contrary. As quoted at the beginning of this thesis, Andrew Murray states, “The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history.”¹³² In other words, a church fostering collective growth has a global impact outside of one’s daily sphere and routine. The heartbeat behind missional discipleship is to impact the surrounding communities.

While not every resource highlights missional evangelism as a formational practice, prayer cannot be disconnected from mission as it was a crucial part of the model and life of

¹³⁰ Sherman, *Agent of Flourishing*, 183.

¹³¹ Bennett, *Practices of Love*, 17-38.

¹³² Hawkins, *Master Discipleship Today*, 86.

Jesus.¹³³ “Missionary William Carey says, ‘Prayer is my real business, cobbling shoes is just a sideline to pay expenses,’” marking a spiritual discipline but moreover highlighting the contribution prayer has to everyday work.¹³⁴ Rowan Williams says the grand outcome is not even the fruit of the formational practices, but rather, the end goal is proximity with the Father.¹³⁵ Millie Van der Merwe chimes in, suggesting that followership must be formational.¹³⁶ However, McGinley warns of practices being the end goal in and of themselves, apart from Christ.¹³⁷ Formational practices that are rooted in Christ allow for a deepened lifestyle of continuous prayer and mission.

Shalom as a Byproduct

Similar to formational practices that invade every part of life, shalom permeates society, too. Shalom is an idealistic picture of the renewal that God beckons, both as a glimpse into the here and now and the perfect restoration of what is to come. Shalom, minus the destruction of sin, impacts every sphere of influence and relationship, such as workplaces, neighborhoods, educational endeavors, and politics. Sherman continues to advocate, quoting Andrew Mead, who says, “All things matter and that salvation is about the redemption and renewal of all creation.”¹³⁸ She goes on to say that flourishing can happen because if God is in and over all, why would there not be a restoration of all things?¹³⁹ Partnership and participation in discipleship

¹³³ Hawkins, *Master Discipleship Today*, 85.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹³⁵ Williams, *Being Disciples*, 13.

¹³⁶ Van der Merwe, "Nurturing a Missional Spirituality," 110.

¹³⁷ McGinley, *Mission Shaped Living Leader's Guide*, 18.

¹³⁸ Sherman, *Agents of Flourishing*, 158.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

and mission forming an integrated lifestyle is just one of the ways that disciples can partner with Jesus on mission. In *Contagious Faith*, readers are reminded it is a continuous adventure, as Henry Blackaby once said, to “watch and see where God is working and join Him in His work.”¹⁴⁰ Just as it is true of formational practices like prayer, shalom has multiplication effects beyond the individual. Shalom impacts families, communities, cities, and nations. It is the grace of God taking its rightful place in the world and overcoming what may have been marred, wrong, or broken in this world, transforming it into that which is “whole and beautiful.”¹⁴¹

Renewal

Whether it is an individual being renewed daily in the Christian faith or a corporate renewal being marked by and embarking on a metamorphosis journey as a church, renewal is a requirement in the missional process. From the heart to the mind to worldviews, everything touched by the Spirit experiences continual growth and transformational impact as one is led by the “missional leadership” of the Father.¹⁴² Whether embodied discipleship in the marketplace or prayer as a tool, the impact is far and wide, expansively permeating various contexts and not remaining within individual lifestyles.

As a result, Seung Hah says that a great renewal comes about, specifically this “re-orientation of theology must serve the renewal of churches.”¹⁴³ Transformation in the area of prayer and missional discipleship will be marked by renewal, impacting the body of Christ and the community at large. Fully alive in the metamorphosis of Christ, no part of a life remains

¹⁴⁰ Mittelberg and Lee, *Contagious Faith*, 6.

¹⁴¹ Sherman, *Agents of Flourishing*, 103-123.

¹⁴² Niemandt and Niemandt, "Missional Metanoia: Missional Spirituality in Holistic Theological Education," 8.

¹⁴³ Hah, "Intercultural Missional Leadership," 2.

untouched by the Spirit but rather becomes a witness to all that was once fractured to now being fully integrated.¹⁴⁴

Theological Foundations

Throughout Scripture, there are specific examples encompassing discipleship, mission, and prayer, even though those exact words do not all appear frequently in Scripture. Even in the context of spiritual formation, some things are indirectly expressed within Scripture without using modern-day terminology to describe them. This theological foundation will primarily focus on the convergence of all three dynamics, leveraging biblical precedence more so than modern-day language. Principles can be defined and articulately expressed, but biblical foundations can only come from the words of God. This is a deep dive discerning how wholistic discipleship has been laid out for all believers that withstand the test of time.

Frequently referenced verses listed regarding intercession as mission and missional discipleship are found in the New Testament. While this is not an exhaustive list, it is more widely understood in the context of the passages included below. This section addresses foundations outlined both in the Old and New Testament, while also addressing what is required to create wholistic paradigms that are transferrable in various contexts in addition to National Community Church, an urban environment.

¹⁴⁴ Bennett, *Practices of Love*, 174.

Deuteronomy

One of the larger foundational threads found in the Old Testament is the Shema that is outlined in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV). The biblical text outlines a glimpse of discipleship, beginning with repetitive meditation and the impartation of the commands of God. Moses says,

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deut 6:4-9, NIV).

Specifically, the Shema addresses the oneness of affection and attention that the Lord desires from His children. This is to be carried out generationally, affecting every area of a life and influencing cross-sectional spheres and places. It is a prayer and a proclamation. This is to be externally shared and internally processed amidst communal lifestyles as one goes deeper and matures over time. The Shema is two-fold, with individually based practices that are to be taught and shared within a community. It would be “once in the morning and again in the evening,” where it is recorded that the pronunciation “pervades the daily routine of a devout Jew...”¹⁴⁵ This continues throughout the New Testament as Jesus references it again in Mark and Matthew.¹⁴⁶ The Shema is lived out as a common thread not just within the Jewish tradition of the Old Testament, though it originates in the book of Deuteronomy, of which that origin is referenced “eighty times in the New Testament.”¹⁴⁷ Simpson goes on to say that Paul likely even

¹⁴⁵ Matthew Christopher Simpson, "A Case for the Traditional Translation of the Shema, Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God the LORD is One" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 3, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/case-traditional-translation-i-shema-hear-o/docview/883386983/se-2>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 3-24.

¹⁴⁷ Herbert Wolf, *Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 218, ProQuest Ebook Central.

wove it in “First Corinthians.”¹⁴⁸ These are reminders every day that influence the coming and going of every aspect of life. This resembles the core of discipleship, where who one is becoming in Christ automatically impacts and influences a family and neighbor, just as it says in Acts that entire households came to faith (Acts 16:31-34, NIV). The reciting of prayer is a common thread amongst Christ-followers as a marker within everyday life.

The Shema is a covenant resulting in an overflow that one is not able to keep to themselves. Andrew Byers writes an entire commentary connecting the Gospel of John to the Shema of the Old Testament.¹⁴⁹ In it, he states, “the prayer in John 17 ‘that they may be one’, is also a call to corporate participation within the divine interrelation of Father and Son, setting up the discussion of ‘Johannine theosis.’”¹⁵⁰ In other words, the outline set for us to grow in oneness with the Father in the Old Testament is a thread for discipleship and mission birthed through “divine interrelation,” or prayer, as a way of living this out under the New Covenant.¹⁵¹

Jeremiah

While Shalom is a beautiful picture of all things restored and reconciled, it can be hard to catch a glimpse of it at times amidst the challenges of urban contexts. Similarly, Jeremiah was a prophet proclaiming a sense of purpose amidst a seventy-year exile.¹⁵² It was still a promise amidst turmoil, pointing towards a shalom that can exist within cities, reminding one of the sovereignty and love of the Lord for His people. Sanchez quotes that Eldin “Villanfan offers a

¹⁴⁸ Simpson, “A Case for the Traditional Translation of the Shema,” 25.

¹⁴⁹ Andrew J. Byers, “The Shema as the Foundation For John’s Theological Use of ‘One’: Identifying and Addressing Reservations” in *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 105-28, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 106.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² “Seventy Years of Exile,” Ligonier Ministries, last modified July 24, 2013, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/seventy-years-exile_

‘Jeremiah paradigm’ for urban ministry that envisions the church’s formation in the practices of ‘presence, peace, and prayer’ in and for the sake of the city.”¹⁵³ Thus, this signifies that the church represents a true body that bears witness to the God of peace and presence.

Profoundly, one commentator states that Jeremiah, the prophet, was specifically anointed with the words of God to be proclaimed to the nations.¹⁵⁴ As a result, his prayers as a prophet were actually the words of what God was praying for His own people.¹⁵⁵ The intercession of Jeremiah made the words of God clear to the people, and his intercession sought to help the people better understand who God was. Andrew Shead says uniquely the call of Jeremiah is a form of “prophetic mediation in reverse: Jeremiah is forbidden from presenting the people’s pain to God, but he is here being commanded to present God’s pain to the people.”¹⁵⁶ He was a prophet who was given a voice to make disciples of a nation through the words of God and to intercede on behalf of the people. The proclamation of God’s Word(s) is a form of mission, prayer, and discipleship in and of itself.

Isaiah

To begin, the biblical text outlines a significant marking of a prophetic encounter for Isaiah. He became marked for mission as he received a stark commissioning to go where God sends (Isa 6). Ray Ortlund argues that while readers may view mission, discipleship, and prayer as aspects of a normal part of the Christian walk and what one may call ordinary, is far from it, if

¹⁵³ Sanchez, “Who is the City?,” 45.

¹⁵⁴ Shead, Andrew G., *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 60-65, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁵⁵ Shead, *A Mouth Full of Fire*, 63-65, 139.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

one truly understands a call similar to Isaiah's call to be sent out as a witness.¹⁵⁷ He said when commentating on the book of Isaiah, "We are not just ordinary. Nothing is just ordinary...Created reality is a continuous explosion of the glory of God."¹⁵⁸ Otto Kaiser agrees these marking moments are anything but ordinary but rather, "changes the prophet from being a witness to being a participant in the heavenly council."¹⁵⁹ A call as a disciple has a missional distinction backed by all of Heaven's resources.

In addition, in Isaiah 56:7 (NIV), the prophet depicts a "house of prayer for all nations," with the understanding that all believers are a part of the global church. This same understanding is that the anointing is from the Spirit directly, and it is strengthened as an expression outwardly shown within the body, not apart from the body of Christ. It happens within the context of community gatherings "where two or more are gathered" (Matt 18:20, NIV); more specifically, Isaiah says, "in the house of prayer" (Isa 56:7, NIV).

John Oswalt says, "The prophet is... reminding us that the redeemed servants of the Lord have a mission, to draw all the world to the 'holy mountain' (56:7; cf. 2:2-3), but also telling us that being a member of the covenant community is not a matter of inheritance but obedience."¹⁶⁰ It is a conglomeration of mission to all nations, prayer as a lifestyle, and discipleship in the body of believers, all in one. In addition, it captures the essence of mission in the context of community, both within the local church gatherings and in the body of believers

¹⁵⁷ Ray Ortlund, *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 90-94, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵⁹ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1983), 122, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁶⁰ John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah: The NIV Application Commentary From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 518, ProQuest Ebook Central.

wherever they are anchored. Isaiah reminds us that while marketplace discipleship is essential for the spreading of the gospel, it is not separate from the local church operations. Instead, the viewpoint is not juxtaposed as an either-or mission outside the church or mission from within the church, but rather, it is a synergy of both working together in both contexts simultaneously for the strengthening of the bride of Christ.

Later, Isaiah 61:1-6 outlines what life as a Christ-follower could resemble. After already communicating the “Anointed One” is coming in Isaiah 45:1 (NIV), now is the expression of an anointing that will be carried out by the followers of the Anointed One. This is an anointing of freedom, living out the life of the Spirit, and a prayer lifestyle that gets at the root of breaking off chains to impact nations and generations. It unfolds discipleship in the context of communicating the good news and missional engagement through the breaking of bondage.

Matthew

Matthew 22:36-40 outlines Jesus stating the “Great Commandment and the Shema” all at once articulating “loving God and loving neighbor as equal importance.”¹⁶¹ In essence, Jesus outlines the priority of intimately knowing and being connected in relationship to the Father first and foremost in order to equally love one’s neighbor out of that same direct flow of love. In short, the two become inseparable. If one side has more weight added to it, either in love with the Father or deed to one’s neighbor, it still does not fall under the wholistic embrace that Jesus commands His followers.

One way that has been helpful in framing to better understand wholistic discipleship is envisioning the opposite. Wholistic discipleship is a counter approach that exists to prevent

¹⁶¹ Rodney Reeves, *Matthew*, ed. by Tremper Longman and Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 442, ProQuest Ebook Central.

“fragmented... non-missional and atomistic disciples who are ill equipped to fulfil the great commission”¹⁶² in a Post-Christian context similar to studies in the UK. Authenticity and integration are the antidotes to furthering divisions in various contexts, just as Jesus equips His followers to more closely follow the Great Commandment in order to be better aligned with the heart of the Father.

In Matthew 28:16-20, most notably known for the Great Commission, evangelism and discipleship are outwardly expressed again with a direct command from Jesus for his disciples. Like Isaiah, Jesus references this must reach the ends of the earth and be for “all nations” (28:19, NIV). Matthew Henry says, “Christ stirs up his disciples, to disperse themselves over all the world.”¹⁶³ It is also evident within this section of the Great Commission, that it is expected of all believers, not reserved only for certain types of people. It is the evidence and manifestation through catechism and mission, or more simply put, through the baptism and teaching¹⁶⁴ of the “priesthood of all believers” (1 Pet 2:9, NIV).

Frederick Bruner references this entire chapter, which is key to the writing of Matthew as the “resurrection mission.”¹⁶⁵ Bruner goes on to dissect the Great Commission with clear markings and evaluation of fruit, stating that there is a strong correlation within the context of discipleship to both “live and talk with people,” being invested in relationships in addition to “teach and educate.”¹⁶⁶ It is not just about receiving but also imparting. He goes on to say, “This,

¹⁶² Henry, Desmond and Max F. Swart, "Beyond Post-Christendom Discipleship of the Evangelical Church in the United Kingdom: A Study of the Gospel of Matthew in the Transformissional and Holistic Perspective," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42i1.2229>.

¹⁶³ Matthew Henry, “Chapter 28, The Gospel According to Saint Matthew,” in *Zondervan NIV Matthew Henry Commentary in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub House, 2010), ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*, vol. 2, (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 213, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 235-236.

in short, is the Christian education that keeps people in discipleship. Disciples who live in obedience to Jesus' mission command to evangelize and to educate- they (and here they only!) are the persons promised the constantly empowering presence..."¹⁶⁷

This was set by the example of Mary and Mary, who were the first to visit the empty tomb as the "first evangelists commissioned by Jesus"¹⁶⁸ to "go and tell" (Matt 28:7, NIV). Rodney Reeves states to understand the truest translation of the Great Commission in Matthew, one needs to understand it is an "aorist passive principle...More literally, then, the Great Commission should read: 'Therefore, after you go, make disciples of all nations.'" ¹⁶⁹ The Great Commission is a great emboldening of His people. After one is full of the Holy Spirit, allow the Spirit to lead in order to teach and move in power. After one begins to move in their neighborhoods, workplaces, or across countries, one better understands missional discipleship at its core. Jun says it is more about an "identity rather than [an] activity."¹⁷⁰ "Missional Discipleship is more than the transmission of the gospel but also the transformation of individuals and societies by demonstrating true fellowship of believers whose values are transformed."¹⁷¹ Jun also states to understand Matthew 28, one needs to understand the woven nature inherent already within the Great Commission.¹⁷² Discipleship cannot be expressed or lived out without the mission and vice versa.¹⁷³ The integration of wholistic discipleship, including prayer, produces transformation.

¹⁶⁷ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary.*, 236.

¹⁶⁸ Reeves, *Matthew*, 564.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 566.

¹⁷⁰ Jun, "Missional Discipleship in the Public Sphere," 112.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

One distinction a scholar quotes by Lohmeyer directly correlates the thread of “the Great Commission of the New Testament to the Shema (‘Hear, O Israel’) of the Old Testament.”¹⁷⁴ Therefore, the premise is that discipleship, prayer, and mission are not replaced or segregated under the New Covenant but are continued from the Old Testament and are now strengthened by the infilling power of the Spirit.

Luke

Jesus clearly teaches the disciples how to pray in Luke 11. Jesus articulates that prayer is not optional for His followers. It is the glue that binds the heart of a follower of Jesus to the Father. It is the focus of the core being of an individual, communing with the Lord. Luke outlines many different forms of prayer, such as intercession, petition, or deliverance prayers, in the way Jesus outlines. Duguid and others share that an entire life should be instilled with the “persistent prayer,” as outlined in Luke 11.¹⁷⁵

The book of Luke has all three components of communal discipleship, missional lifestyle, and the integration of prayer as the source of everything. Osborne says, “Luke 9:51—10:42 [is] on discipleship...and chapter 11:1-54 focuses on prayer.”¹⁷⁶ Luke chapter 12 discusses the “ministry of proclamation” and “proclaiming boldly God’s truths in this atmosphere of hostility (vv. 1-12).”¹⁷⁷ While simultaneously upholding prayer as a core nucleus, stating, “Discipleship must take place in the midst of prayer...”¹⁷⁸ As a result, within three short chapters, Luke gives

¹⁷⁴ Bruner, *Matthew*, 236.

¹⁷⁵ Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton, Jay Sklar, Dan Doriani, Hans F. Bayer, and Thomas R. Schreiner, ed., *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 8): Matthew-Luke* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 1222-1224, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁷⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse* (Ashland: Faithlife Corporation, 2018), 196-210, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 212-213.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

the readers an account of the necessity of all three overlapping as invitations from Jesus to follow and become more like Him. Highlighting Luke 11 as the crux of the prayer model that Jesus asks all of His followers to imitate. Osborne later says, “This is a trinitarian section, for prayer involves all three members of the Godhead. Jesus provides the model for prayer, the Father is the recipient of our prayers, and the Spirit is a gift from the Father to enhance our prayer life. In my opinion, this is the deepest single passage on prayer in all the New Testament.”¹⁷⁹

Acts

Acts 1:8 reads, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (NIV). Jennings defines this mantle as a “witness of divine presence...The disciples will be formed by the Spirit as witnesses.”¹⁸⁰ Similarly, today, there is an ongoing relationship with the Spirit that forms, enriches, and pours out from the life of a believer as one “carries out Jesus’ commission.”¹⁸¹ Jennings only cautions that what is birthed in receptivity to the Spirit equally should fan into flame an activation that pushes against the tendency to wait and “watch” that can lead towards “undermin[ing] movement and easily undermine the priority of the journey.”¹⁸² The filling of the Spirit is about an activation of one towards prayer, mission, and discipleship.

In *Awaken the Dawn*, David Bradshaw writes, “The Holy Spirit spoke in the midst of this ongoing worship expression and launched Paul and Barnabas out on a missionary journey that

¹⁷⁹ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 196.

¹⁸⁰ Willie James Jennings, *Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2017), 18.

¹⁸¹ Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., Jay Sklar, and Biran Vickers, ed., *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 9): John-Acts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 463, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁸² Jennings, *Acts*, 19.

was unlike anything the world had ever seen.”¹⁸³ The repetition of prayer incubated the journeys as one was sent out. Pete Greig, in *The Dirty Glory*, wrote, “The pursuit of the presence of God has been, without exception or exaggeration, the prevailing passion and common purpose of all the saints in every generation since the time of Christ.”¹⁸⁴

Acts 2:38-47, possibly one of the more familiar verses depicting the early church, ties all three components together in the context of both homes and the local church gatherings. At a later point, it is also highlighted that “they worshipped God in public and in private, as they devote themselves to the teachings...as they have fellowship with one another in their homes, and as they sacrificially alleviate the needs of fellow believers.”¹⁸⁵ Willie Jennings calls “Pentecost, the revolution of the intimate.”¹⁸⁶ Christlike witness to the world is internal and external. External commands are only truly reciprocal from an internal metamorphosis. John Robb says only after prayer were the people then enabled to truly minister.¹⁸⁷ Had it been in reverse order of the plans first and the power second, it begs one to wonder what the outcome may have looked like that day. The same would be true today. Prayer precedes a move of God.

It is in the context of these homes Acts 8:4-5 states, “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there” (NIV). Walter Kaiser defines this moment as when “the scattered church

¹⁸³ David Bradshaw, *Awaken the Dawn: An Adventure in Hosting Jesus' Presence and Discovering Your Part in the Story* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2021), 8.

¹⁸⁴ Bradshaw, *Awaken the Dawn*, 9.

¹⁸⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 172, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁸⁶ Jennings, *Acts*, 27.

¹⁸⁷ John Robb, “Review of Prayer as a Strategic Weapon in Frontier Missions,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 1, no.8 (1991): 26-27, https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/08_1_PDFs/8_1Robb.pdf.

became the witnessing church.”¹⁸⁸ It says there were healings, deliverance, and the power of God showed up bringing “great joy in that city” (Acts 8:8, NIV). In particular, the Acts 8:4-8 passage also highlights the context of urban cities, referencing Samaria as a “city” or possibly even a “district.”¹⁸⁹ While the urban contexts have unique challenges, this passage displays the global context in which mission, prayer, and evangelism can take place.

Schnabel correlates one’s “identity” to one’s “witness” as a “Jesus follower” in the context of the early church that is on display from “Acts 1:15-2:47.”¹⁹⁰ He continues to state that the “scatter[ing]” or the missional activation of all that the disciples had learned and embodied did not happen by happenstance or coincidence.¹⁹¹ “It is incorrect from both a literary and a historical point of view to assume that it was the persecution after Stephen’s execution that forced the Jerusalem believers to leave the city and take the Gospel elsewhere.”¹⁹² In other words, this was an intentional decision to share the gospel in the community and intentionally ensure that the mission of God was not separate from the identity of the people of God. Like a door hinge, Rutt refers to Antioch as “ideally suited... for becoming the springboard for outreach to the Gentles [because of] the cultural situation.”¹⁹³ If being a witness is key to the identity of a disciple, then the same would be true, as found in the Old Testament, tying back to the Shema.

¹⁸⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Revive Us Again: Biblical Principles for Revival Today* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2001), 200.

¹⁸⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, 405.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 398.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 399.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Douglas L. Rutt, “The City of Antioch as Bridge Between Jerusalem and the World,” *Concordia Journal* 48, no. 1 (2022): 20, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAIiREM220507000234&site=ehost-live>.

The cycle continues through discipleship, missional evangelization, and prayer through the form of devotion.

Continuing through the books of Acts, it is understood that the marketplace is expanded through the power of the Holy Spirit in Acts 11:19-30 (NIV). Horton states that unnamed disciples were “undoubtedly led and prompted by the Holy Spirit at Antioch,” who had “the Lord’s hand with them.”¹⁹⁴ In other words, it was birthed in prayer and connection with the Holy Spirit that led them to live out a missional lifestyle to the point of uprooting from where they lived without ceasing the teaching. Prayer, mission, and discipleship converge throughout the book of Acts in the rawest form in the original Ekklesia. Jennings summarizes this, stating, “This is the model of faith for these new strange times—go with the flow of God and follow what the Spirit is doing in the world.”¹⁹⁵

As stated previously, each component is more frequently stated as a separate function of a disciple, such as prayer being separate from mission. However, several key verses are written directly within the context of Scripture to show the overlap. It is easy to compartmentalize discipleship into a category or prayer into a formula. However, Barnabas and Paul teach a great degree of entering a journey of living a radical lifestyle that is rooted in the Spirit, catalyzed by mission, and anchored in a city for generational discipleship impacting the children of children beyond modern-day in Acts 11. Jennings highlights,

We must never forget the order here. Barnabas invites Paul into the newness of this moment. Together Barnabas and Saul will spend a year teaching what they did not yet fully understand. Together in this cosmopolitan city far removed from the theological universe of Jerusalem, they will hammer out a song, a sound of their own that would become our own song and sound. Antioch is mixture and blessing- it is that place that

¹⁹⁴ Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2012), 214, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁹⁵ Jennings, *Acts*, 123.

God sometimes gives where cloaked in theologically inconsequential and ignored site, the Spirit builds a future.¹⁹⁶

Acts 17 marks a profound teaching of Paul on Mars Hill. This is a place central to culture where many other philosophers and gods were engaged or proclaimed. In the center of it all, Paul spoke about a God who was unlike any other gods who had been shared as a crux point of the Christian faith intersecting culture right in the middle of the marketplace. Osborne states this was not just a random place but strategically chosen as, “The Areopagus was not just the name of the district of the city (Mars Hill) but the name of the major administrative council of the city that met there and decided civil and civic issues as they arose.”¹⁹⁷

Concluding, it is apparent that Paul did not stop there. He continued to infuse his regular daily life living on mission and living out an integrated discipleship framework. This was expressed as a part of his everyday lifestyle, not reserved only for small group gatherings or weekend services. Osborne goes on to say in Acts 19, “Here [Paul] and his ‘disciples’ moved from the synagogue to a Gentile lecture hall owned by a Tyrannus. Such halls were equivalent to movie theaters today. They were places where people went during rest breaks from work, siesta, or free time...”¹⁹⁸

This is certainly not an exhaustive list found within Scripture outlining key aspects and details of the trifacta, but it outlines starting points. Instead of merely a biblical overview, a continual study of Scripture in greater detail is needed. This is to better understand the current movement of today’s culture and practice of Christianity.

¹⁹⁶ Jennings, *Acts.*, 124.

¹⁹⁷ Osborne, Grant R., *Acts Verse by Verse* (Ashland: Faithlife Corporation, 2019), 284, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 307.

Theoretical Foundations

The goal of the theoretical framework is to articulate what wholistic discipleship looks like in modern-day contexts, specifically urban environments. While there is a temptation to create something new outside of local urban churches as a first resort, i.e., the focus of mission and marketplaces, sometimes there is a great need to improve upon what already exists within the frameworks of churches in order to widen the aperture of wholistic discipleship in the life of everyday ministry. In other words, wholistic discipleship is about balancing the beauty of both ministry inside and outside the four walls without negating or leveraging one over the other.

For much of Western church culture, especially within the United States, small groups or local gatherings of a smaller size around a common interest have existed for decades. Many of these groups are centered around growing in spiritual disciplines and biblical knowledge. Networks have been formed, developing small groups to strengthen the health of the attendance of the overall local church.¹⁹⁹ While this small group model has existed for quite some time, the primary focus has had less impact in the area of mission and prayer. Instead, it has operated more insulated and confined to particular areas than one may think after reading the spread of the church in Antioch (Acts 11) or the missionary travels on which Paul embarked (Acts 13). Paul even sets the example for Christ-followers when he began this “great missionary movement to the Gentile world... as they were ‘worshipping the Lord and fasting’ (Acts 13:2).”²⁰⁰ It is not that discipleship apart from mission or deep abiding is inherently wrong, it just becomes half-baked over time.

¹⁹⁹ Small Group Network, last modified in 2024, <https://smallgroupnetwork.com/>.

²⁰⁰ Bradshaw, *Awaken the Dawn*, 8.

Michael Wilkinson, a post-revival researcher in Canada, does not consider this to be a new phenomenon.²⁰¹ He references that both “Methodists and Anglicans” had a similar order between prayer and gatherings that were all uniquely “supervised by the missionaries.”²⁰² It is unique because, regarding the “Roman Catholic and Protestant missions, opportunities were limited or never granted.”²⁰³ The purpose of highlighting this is to show the historical precedence between small groups, prayer, and missions to the extent that “regular evangelistic meetings were conducted alongside a tightly scheduled life in the mission post.”²⁰⁴

In other words, the overlap between the life discussions and life application within the community rarely had the capacity for the conversations simultaneously happening amongst both prayer evangelism and discipleship. This is not far off from what is seen in the evangelical churches today in North America. It requires an incredible amount of diligence to seek collaboration from multiple departments and ministries. How does one in church today engage in all three areas and not merely default to viewing each area as a task to produce or accomplish? One way is through paradigm shifts that are slow awakenings resulting in greater understanding and application. Most often, this poses a challenge as one cannot rapidly shift overnight.

If taken into full consideration of Isaiah, Acts, and Matthew, there would be a resurgence of cross-pollination amongst all three areas: discipleship, mission, and prayer. If this were to be exercised across many urban contexts, each aspect has the potential to be fully integrated into each part of the church. Small groups have become the lifeblood of the local church as they are rooted in fellowship and are a spiritual family modeled after a birth family. Technically

²⁰¹ Michael Wilkinson and Linda McGuire Ambrose, *After the Revival: Pentecostalism and the Making of a Canadian Church* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 211, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁰² Wilkinson and Ambrose, *After the Revival*, 211.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 211.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

speaking, it would not be a removal of the current model of small groups, but it would be a greater breadth and expansion of cross-pollinating discipleship with mission while integrating with prayer, prayer with discipleship and intertwining with mission, and mission with discipleship and connecting with prayer. Tying back to the concentric circles, wholistic elements are all interconnected. The biblical functionalities of each would thrive to a greater degree, more fully integrated instead of remaining isolated.

Methods

While some of this data already exists within the context of missional discipleship like the frontrunner work of Alan Hirsch,²⁰⁵ Forge,²⁰⁶ etc., they are primarily centered on missional discipleship, not excluding prayer but lacking the prominent elevation at the same level. Scott Adams articulates a third way of understanding missional discipleship through the lens of “missional prayer,” specifically highlighted by the author of John in Scripture.²⁰⁷ He states, “In short, prayer in the name of Jesus produces the works of Jesus through believing disciples.”²⁰⁸

He argues that John is the one who dissects prayer as a form of better understanding mission and discipleship in the context of believers. This would apply both organizationally to the structure of a local church as well as the construct of gatherings with small groups. Specifically, this is mentioned: “In 3 John 2 and 7, the focus centers on prayer for those who ‘have gone out for the sake of the name’ (i.e., Jesus). As it goes well with Gaius in all things, he

²⁰⁵ “Welcome,” Alan Hirsch, <https://www.alanhirsch.org/>.

²⁰⁶ “Home,” Forge America, last modified 2024, <https://www.forgeamerica.com/>.

²⁰⁷ Scott Adams, *In Jesus’ Name: Johannine Prayers in Ethical, Missional, and Eschatological Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022), 44-61, Google Books.

²⁰⁸ Adams, *In Jesus’ Name*, 55.

is thus able to support these emissaries who will perform ‘greater works’ among the churches and carry forth the mission of God.”²⁰⁹

D.A. Carson takes it one step further to say that John utilizing the analogy of the vine in John 15 is articulating that “the ‘fruit’ in the vine imagery represents everything that is the product of effective prayer, including... love for one another (v.12) and witness to the world (vv. 16, 27).”²¹⁰ Quite possibly, prayer is the connector between mission and discipleship in the same way that Mark highlights that works and deeds could not bear witness to the freedom and deliverance of the boy who was bound by an “impure spirit” (Mark 9:24-29, NIV). Mission and discipleship, apart from prayer, remain only as works and deeds. Prayer, full of life and power, helps disciples remain in the identity of a disciple and the ongoing communication with the source.

To be fair, there are several models of missional discipleship. Butler states this in his study when addressing the reformation of discipleship in the UK.²¹¹ Oddly, though, even in his studies, he shows that your average Christian in the UK is not able to relate to the praxis of missional discipleship, quite possibly just the “theoretical” concept.²¹² He says, “Yet, this language of discipleship often seems to fail to connect with ‘ordinary Christians’ (Walton 2013, 179; Foster 2016, 2). This raises the question of why this discipleship discourse does not connect with ordinary Christians.”²¹³

²⁰⁹ Adams, *In Jesus’ Name*, 55.

²¹⁰ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1990), 464, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²¹¹ James Butler, “The ‘Long and Winding Road’ of Faith: Learning about the Christian Life and Discipleship from Two Methodist Congregations,” *Practical Theology* 13, no.3 (2020): 277-89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2019.1678859>.

²¹² Butler, “The ‘Long and Winding Road’ of Faith,” 277-286.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 277.

Wholistic discipleship is not a new concept but seeks to permeate bearing witness in an urban context. Butler continues to show in his studies that even though there are missional discipleship models, that did not prove to be a solution alone as “Walton’s research... showed small groups tend to be focused on support and pastoral care while neglecting Bible study and mission (Walton 2014, 113).”²¹⁴ Instead, what was missing was actually more than “praxis but the deep conversations needed” to help articulate the values and “‘living-out’ faith” lifestyles that are rooted in conviction.²¹⁵

Most recently in history, even Koshy states there has been an incredible wave of models between churches understanding mission as “evangelizing the whole world [such as in] the first World Missionary Conference of 1910”²¹⁶ to the newer concept of pursuing the “mission of God” articulated by “Bosch in 1994.”²¹⁷ Koshy states the continual need for “another paradigm shift in mission thinking.”²¹⁸ In an essay called *Church Dogmatics*, Barth studied the suggestions of Bonhoeffer on discipleship and claimed that the overlap of discipleship and mission cannot be boiled down to an “idea of Christ... or a Christocentric system of thought” for that alone will not have a grand external impact within a society or deep transformation.²¹⁹ Nor will a “social construction imparted and commended by Jesus” have a lasting impact.²²⁰ Instead, the only thing that will be deeply transformative is “discipleship as an act of obedience to Jesus.”²²¹ In other

²¹⁴ Butler, “The ‘Long and Winding Road’ of Faith,” 282.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 284-285.

²¹⁶ Sarosh Koshy, *Beyond Missio Dei: Contesting Mission, Rethinking Witness*, 1st ed. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), vi, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²¹⁷ Koshy, *Beyond Missio Dei*, vi.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vii.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 271.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 272.

words, without communion with the Trinity, recognizing communion is also a form of prayer, Barth concludes that missional discipleship will still be reduced to form compartmentalized faith that is lacking a wholistic picture.²²²

Discipleship at its finest, according to Dodson, is when discipleship is not separate from evangelism.²²³ When this happens, it validates that “[The gospel] is relevant only to making converts but not to maturing disciples.”²²⁴ He also chimes in when referencing the necessity of the maturing process as “gospel-centered” similar to wholistic discipleship.²²⁵ He would disagree with how historically wholistic discipleship has been outlined as a part of the Great Commission when he references that “Reformers Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli failed to see this as a missional text... interpreting it only to the apostles.”²²⁶ He debunks this by addressing the modern-day view of the Great Commission being for every follower of Christ, and more specifically draws upon Robert Coleman, who says that to understand more about transformational discipleship, one only has to look at how Jesus focused on the heart of man more than the “programs or methods.”²²⁷ “[Jesus’s] concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes but with men whom the multitudes would follow...”²²⁸

While prayer movements most often are tied to another movement, such as a missional, revival, or renewal movement, fewer prayer models have been implemented within the local church. It is understood through Scripture what prayer looks like in various contexts, and Jesus

²²² Koshy, *Beyond Missio Dei.*, 271-274.

²²³ Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 22. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

teaches how to pray, but prayer is still one of the less studied aspects of wholistic discipleship. For instance, one can study communication and preaching styles, but there are not as many studies or sources on diving more deeply into various types of prayer (i.e. intercession, meditation, consecration, etc.) over the centuries. John R. Mott once said, “Every undertaking [in the apostolic church] was begun, continued, and ended in prayer.”²²⁹ It is the center of discipleship.

Post-Christian Contextualization

The question becomes, what good is it for things to remain the same within ministry models and constructs if there are large societal changes taking place within the global church? This is particularly true for those who may be “spiritual but not religious,” says Andrea Campanale, the Lay Licensed Pioneer in the Southwark Diocese.²³⁰ Andrea Campanale commends “John V. Taylor who once described a portion of ‘mission as an adventure of the imagination.’”²³¹ A new imagination is required for a new time. Andrea “describes how theology has been challenged and better understood by practice, and how subsequently theology, in turn, reshapes practice.”²³² In other words, praxis and theology feed into wholistic discipleship, which will be needed for the coming years and decades.

²²⁹ Edward Allen, "The Form and Function of Prayer in the Student Volunteer Movement, 1886–1914," *Studies in World Christianity* 25, no. 2 (2019): 188, <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=d41d425e-e9aa-4a9b-9ceb-5437fd484d8%40redis>.

²³⁰ Andrea Campanale, St. Augustine’s College of Theology, <https://staugustinescollege.ac.uk/andrea-campanale/>.

²³¹ Andrea Campanale, “A Missional Journey to the Margins,” Archives at Search- A Church of Ireland Journal, 2023, <https://searchjournal.ireland.anglican.org/archives/2023/02/a-missional-journey-to-the-margins>.

²³² Campanale, “A Missional Journey to the Margins.”

As of 2018, Hardy and Yarnell explain “much of Western culture as ‘post-Christendom.’”²³³ Regardless of where a reader may fall on the spectrum of defending this, the premise remains the same: the influence on society that Christianity has as a form of belief ebbs and flows. There are periods throughout history where it was more pronounced on a regional level. Objectively, that does not change the influence of Christianity; it merely changes the methods over time. The convergence of the principles of discipleship, mission, and prayer remain steadfast, but how that is displayed in present-day society may look different from place to place or church to church.

Look at how missional influence has changed from the “Hellenistic paradigm... [to]... medieval... [to the] emerging ecumenical paradigm.”²³⁴ Historical periods change and alter the influence of a society. The same could be said of discipleship and prayer. There was a time when there were no semester-based or even year-long discipleship or new believer processes. Looking at the catechesis process, it was not an overnight entry into the communal body. It is recorded that the “[catechetical] could last years” as one was assessing “the vital thing [of] transformation... and ‘his conduct.’”²³⁵ This process, in particular, formed “‘liminal persons,’ persons, ‘on a journey from the centre of the city, so to speak, to its fringes.’”²³⁶ Catechesis formed “radical followers found in a community where risk, adventure, generosity, and mission were normal expressions.”²³⁷ The development of discipleship from John Wesley’s primary accountability then on to Bonhoeffer portrays “the renewal of the church will come from a new

²³³ Andrew R. Hardy and Dan Yarnell, *Missional Discipleship after Christendom* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), ii, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²³⁴ Hardy, *Missional Discipleship*, 4.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

type of monasticism which only has in common with the old an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount.”²³⁸ Similarly, the Sermon on the Mount portrays the trifacta all in one. While Hardy and Yarnell do not give a prescription into the future of a post-Christian context, they do provide a historical account to consider to better look ahead at better understanding integration and wholistic discipleship. They merely use the Sermon on the Mount as a potential model.

New Model

New models outside the local church are unnecessary for discipleship, mission, and prayer to be the most effective or integrated. Jesus has commanded His followers to be in a covenant relationship with His bride. In other words, all of the core aspects of wholistic discipleship operate both within the church and outside the church, locally and globally. The danger becomes when either end of the spectrum is taken to an extreme where things have to be forged outside of the church as somehow a punishment for the lack of reforming taking place within the church, or “when churches become institutions [where] they then often lose a sense of the pioneering Spirit’s call—‘come and follow me.’”²³⁹ Instead, Hardy, as a nod to Debra and Alan Hirsch, introduces a concept of focus for present-day churches to best equip in discipleship, mission, and prayer, calling it the “*missio Trinitatis* framework.”²⁴⁰ He continues to state “The Father, Son, and Spirit working in partnership and helping this new emerging ‘church’ made up

²³⁸ Hardy, *Missional Discipleship*, 19.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

of these new disciples to grow into such maturity that this becomes the hallmark of their life and witness.”²⁴¹

Especially in urban contexts, there may not be one single method that works as a formula; however, in the end, it may look more like what Walter Brueggemann once said: “‘What counts in the end is not a better understanding or a new idea; what counts [for Christian disciples] is a community of concrete engagement that takes up the gift of transformation and acts it out in the world’ (Roberts 2016, 12).”²⁴²

Conclusion

Many different voices were synthesized together for this review to better unpack the themes of prayer, mission, and discipleship. However, as a result, it still stands that the research for this thesis is extensive, even beyond what was expected. Thus, it required a narrowing process to identify subthemes that would help portray the grand landscape of what current literature scholars are actively implementing while also highlighting what others may not even be referencing. Some research is also practically engaged through first-hand experience at a local church level within urban contexts that has yet to be published and peer-reviewed. This also ties back to the initially intended goal of this review, which is to display what is directly stated but also indirectly implied, while including what is altogether missing within this field and area of ministry.

Throughout this research, it became clear in the cross-referencing of sources that many scholars advocate for the integration of two of the three parts, such as prayer and discipleship. However, it can still be missing a critical component such as mission or vice versa. For

²⁴¹ Hardy, *Missional Discipleship*, 34.

²⁴² Butler, “The ‘Long and Winding Road’ of Faith,” 279.

implementation purposes, the most fruitful engagement may not be an extensive overhaul of working with a new system but further exploring the current structures as a framework to engage in new ways. Wholistic discipleship is the full inclusive sum of the parts that Jesus modeled, including the three within this review. Each aspect represents the nucleus, or hub, with many different spokes. While they all have different offshoots, each one ultimately points back to the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the model of Jesus. Without all of them operating cohesively, the lifestyle of a disciple quickly becomes anemic.

In conclusion, from these core elements of prayer, mission, and discipleship, the organizing topics of this literature review have been synthesized into the subthemes as stated. In addition, there has been a close overview of discerning the relationship between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment as the foundation of the trifacta. While this review gives great depth and detail outlining the corresponding relationship to living out prayer as mission, there is a continued need for further research and development in the area of wholistic discipleship, more specifically within urban contexts.

Prayer, mission, and discipleship represent a large piece of this wholistic canopy of each disciple who is made in the image of God, emulating the ways and practices of Jesus. Whether each element is summarized as prayer evangelism, “missional prayer,”²⁴³ “missional spirituality,”²⁴⁴ or missional discipleship, each communicates the desirable overlap for ongoing development. In conclusion, this literature review emphasizes the importance of prayer as a formative discipline that is crucial to better understanding a more biblical application of discipleship and mission, co-laboring with Christ.

²⁴³ Adams, *In Jesus' Name*, 44-61.

²⁴⁴ Van der Merwe, "Nurturing a Missional Spirituality," 110.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Before diving deeper into the method of this project, it is essential to understand Christian formation and human development as it relates to shifts, changes, and the effect discipleship has on the life of an individual. One will find it hard to understand transformation apart from formation. In order to fully realize the Imago Dei, knowing the role of psychology and the make-up of cognitive reception and growth is paramount. Estep and Kim wrote a book titled *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*, which combines the two to discern better; according to Gregg R. Allison, “We are constructed holistically with a wholeness and completeness that does not allow us to be divided into this part or that part.”¹ To better understand development alongside theology is to discern the work of God in the life of each small group leader and those who participate alongside each of them. While each person grows at various paces and stages, ultimately, a faith journey moves in sync with the promptings of the Lord and the speed of obedience. Together, in community, it ultimately forms a robust ecosystem. In addition, while progress and development are not formulaic, automatic, or one-dimensional, some significant rhythms and patterns can form common phases of growth amongst people groups.

Knowing Human Development Theory can further propel one into action to partner in the Mission of God, working alongside Him as He renews, transforms, and restores in everyday life.

¹ James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 19.

Ultimately, these growth cycles impact spiritual development both internally and externally. It is the full flourishing of the Imago Dei, to recognize the image of God in self and to call it out in others. Wholistically, this then impacts each concentric circle. Ideally, the impact for growth and development would be individuals moving into a corporate-activated faith in every sphere of influence to steward the “sacredness of all of life.”² This begins a process of seeing the continual impact of wholistic discipleship being lived out, as James Loder highlights, “transformation through public declaration or testimony.”³ Wholistic discipleship necessitates a paradigm shift and requires one to push past the resistance that it takes to overcome the hurdles of growth. This happens best in community. This project is the summation of just one aspect of Christian formation and human development. To read more of this addendum, see Appendix O.

This research will unpack how the problem originally stated, as a disconnect between knowledge of evangelistic discipleship and incarnational witnessing, will be addressed and better understood within the context of National Community Church as well as amongst randomly selected participants. Specifically, it will dive deeper into the research of the lifestyles and content of the small group leaders and group gatherings. There is strong encouragement from the leadership team to continually work with ever-expansive and evolving discipleship methods while also pursuing growth, benefits, and opportunities for leaders through mediums similar to content development. This study will directly involve group leaders, which in turn could potentially and indirectly involve an individual lifestyle ultimately impacting the sphere of influence and surrounding relationships. How a leader leads impacts the church, their workplace, and neighborhoods. As stated before, this research will play a prominent role in discipleship as

² Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 188.

³ *Ibid.*, 165.

found in the Great Commission, ultimately impacting life inside and outside the four walls of a church, including the landscape of the city. In other words, this study will not merely focus on the privatized faith of an individual.

The research intends to better understand through narrative, story, and data gathering, the connection points of overlap or disconnect between the knowledge of and the action behind incarnational witnessing through mission and prayer. Knowing and doing are two different things in the current modern-day context, though the desire in the kingdom is for them to be the same in the lifestyle of a believer.⁴ The cross-section of personal faith with kingdom-oriented city impact overflows out of a life vertically and horizontally aligned in the context of community.

The ultimate goal of this study is to show the ongoing effects of a discipleship ecosystem rooted in prayer and mission. Prayer is the inner core. One way to visualize this would be with concentric circles with prayer at the center, mission in the immediate outer circle being fueled by prayer, and discipleship in the outermost circle being fueled by mission. The premise of the visualization of this study is to show the potential gaps in the life of a follower of Christ apart from prayer, mission, or discipleship. These gaps can reveal limitations. Ongoing discipleship continues to fuel both mission and prayer (see Figure 1). The largest circle represents significant impact through visible multiplication, whereas the innermost circle may represent more invisible interior elements.

⁴ Walter A. Elwell, "Know, Knowledge - Bible Meaning & Definition - Baker's Dictionary," *Bible Study Tools*, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/know-knowledge.html#:~:text=The%20%20Old%20Testament.,willing%2C%20%20performing%2C%20and%20%20experiencing.>



Figure 1. Concentric Circles

This image unpacks the concentric circles visually to better see all necessary components of wholistic discipleship. Each circle further shows what was initially stated. Wholistic discipleship is formed in the wholeness of Christ, and Christ models all three aspects as a foundation within these circles. It is important to highlight that each incorporation is of equal representation, but where it is located further shows the need for a degree of embeddedness inherent within each sphere. This image highlights prayer as the core or the nucleus of both discipleship and mission. Without prayer, mission would remain in the works of man. Without prayer, discipleship would remain in the construct of religion. With prayer, mission, and discipleship working together, the integration is greater than the sum of each part. Each part is fueling the other, maintaining equilibrium and accountability inherent within. Wholistic discipleship is seeing all three components activated. Without it, it can quickly decompose into compartments, trickling down to a compartmentalized faith. While this is just one graphic that

depicts a single model, it is an illustration of a value for NCC that likely holds value for other churches as well.

This section will cover each of the necessary steps to reveal current developments in the lives of small group leaders at NCC. Though, it will not include all of the small group leaders at every campus location. Instead, it will be a robust group that will be able to show beyond a preliminary account as it dissects the lifestyles, patterns, and routines of small groups and the efficacy of transformational mission-based prayer postures in the lives of NCC leaders. This study is broken down into two participant groups: general and selected. Both groups have criteria that are specific to those who are over eighteen years old.

In addition, it will only be for small group leaders who are considered active in the last twelve months, as defined by NCC. However, the selected group of people has one additional layer of criteria. They will be able to participate in additional steps in this research if they have been serving as a small group leader for two or more years. Due to the transient nature of the city, this will serve as a benchmark to distinguish leaders and data. The participant is ineligible for any step beyond the general survey if they are new to leadership. The participant is ineligible completely if they have not been active as a small group leader within the last twelve months.

Intervention Design

Approval from the IRB (see Appendix P) and the mentor has allowed the process and research to begin with the stated requirements. Appendix A contains a permission request letter written to Dr. Mark Batterson, Lead Pastor of National Community Church. In Appendix B, there is a pre-drafted permission response letter included. Each of these outlines specifies what this project entails and how the focal point will be research at a single urban church called

National Community Church, not a conglomeration of multiple churches. In addition, these letters also outline the focus group of who the project will involve.

To begin, there will be two participant groups within this research. The first will be a large subgroup of active small group leaders, and the second will be a selection of ten group leaders who meet the criteria for further study. There are currently 140 active small group leaders under the care of the Groups Pastor at the D.C. campus. All of these leaders remain active within small group leadership, which is defined by serving in the last twelve months.

While these 140 leaders have actively been leading in the last twelve months, they have not all been leading for two years or more. This is the next level of criteria that will need to be met as defined by the project. It is important to note that there is prior existing relational equity for many of the leaders based on nine years of history with consistent leadership from the Groups Pastor, building trust and accountability due to longevity and the inherent built-in organizational structure. According to the IRB review process, even though there is a voluntary relationship of spiritual authority within this work, there are no ethical issues within this project.

Of those 140 small group leaders, ten who have been leading for two years or more will be randomly selected to move forward in the next phase. While the general survey will have already eliminated participants who have served under two years, there will still be a need for random selection in order to ensure data integrity without bias. Additional steps regarding the survey methods are listed below. In addition to noting the participants of this research, it is important to outline a step-by-step process of the methodology. The visualization chart below in Figure 2 shows the core steps, providing two different pathways that ultimately lead to the end result of the research.

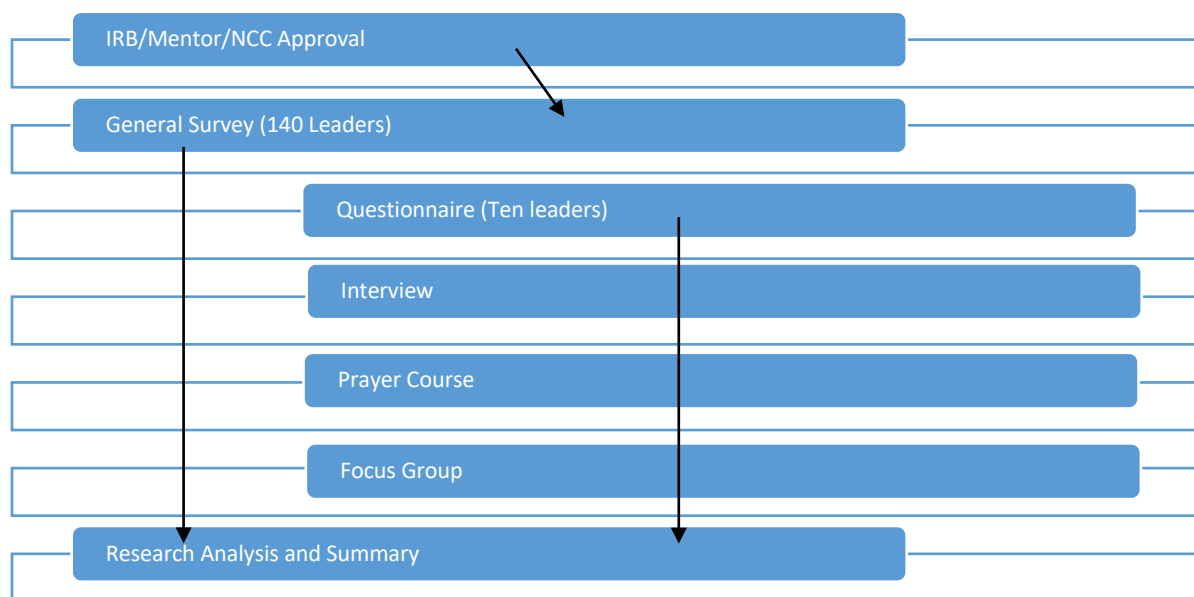


Figure 2. Research Outline

This research will be gathered through multiple forms of data gathering points. The data points will gather both quantitative and qualitative entries to have all-encompassing results. All leaders who have been leading for two years or longer at NCC will follow a multi-step process. This process will include a survey, questionnaire, interview, a prayer small group course, and a debrief focus group.

In this process, it is important to remember there are two separate participant groups. To begin, there will be a formal recruitment letter that will be sent out via email to the 140 leaders for the general survey (see Appendix C). For the ten who are the selected leaders based on the established criteria, there will be a separate formal recruitment letter that will be sent out via email (see Appendix D). This will then be followed up with a personal invitation via text or in person as well as an email follow-up to ensure maximum response recordings. For the general survey follow-up, see Appendix E. For the selected leader follow-up letter, see Appendix F.

In addition to the initial recruitment letter and the follow-up, for the 140 leaders who will be participating in only the general survey, there is a consent form included in Appendix G. This

does not require a signature in response but is informative as the data remains online and anonymous. The second consent form will be for the ten leaders who meet the criteria that will require a signature at the bottom once the leader has agreed to participate in the survey with the understanding that though the data will not be anonymous, the individual identity will be protected and not discoverable (see Appendix H). The difference to note in each form provided will be identified as “general” or “selected” to better understand the intended parties. Those who will not be able to move forward in participating due to a variety of reasons will receive a thank you note and a blessing for consideration (Appendix I).

Upon approval and moving forward with the consent forms, each participant who seeks to participate will complete an online survey (see Appendix J). Both participant groups will complete this online survey. This survey data will provide numerical data specific to demographics and statistical information around key components within mission, prayer, and discipleship. Completing the survey will provide an overview of data informing basic cultural assessments of the small groups and the lifestyle of the leader in greater detail. A key piece regarding the general survey is noting that the survey results do not determine who the ten leaders will be as a part of this study. As stated before, a random selection will be based on qualifying criteria.

After completing the survey, the general participants will no longer proceed. Those who meet the criteria will move into the next phase. Upon completing the survey, the ten randomly generated group leaders will receive an additional consent form via email from the researcher. The researcher will ensure the receipt of the signed consent document, which can be turned in as a hardcopy or electronically via email (See Appendix H). The researcher will remind the group leaders that from this stage forward, the data will not be anonymous; however, the identity of an

individual will not be discoverable or named within the research. These individuals will be listed as Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, Participant D, Participant E, Participant F, Participant G, Participant H, Participant I, and Participant J. This totals ten participants whose names and data will be stored on a protected device. To mitigate confusion, this list will not be shared with anyone else nor published other than the pseudonym.

After receiving consent, an email will be sent with an included questionnaire asking more specific questions in greater depth, focusing on the individual understanding of discipleship (see Appendix K). This questionnaire will be returned via email for analysis. This stage should generate qualitative and quantitative data that allows the researcher to identify key patterns found throughout the responses of the ten leaders.

Upon completing the questionnaire, the researcher will respond by coordinating a time that works for both parties to set up an interview. Three main questions will be asked of each group leader to ensure consistency (see Appendix L). If there is additional time or conversational moments that give way for further discussion, there are several optional questions listed. This interview will be audio-recorded with consent. The researcher will take comprehensive observational notes and upon the completion of the interview, the researcher will “member check” for the purpose of data triangulation.⁵ In essence, this process ensures that throughout the interviews, the researcher will repeat back information to ensure the data being received is understood correctly or in the way the interviewee intended to share. The interviews will be held in person at The Capital Turnaround building in Washington D.C., with an online option.

⁵ Ernest T., Stringer and Alfredo Ortiz Aragon, *Action Research*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication, 2020), 176, Liberty Online Vital Source.

Upon completion of the interview as well as the cross-checking (member checking) step for accuracy, the ten participants will enter the next phase of the Prayer Course. This will be a small group course designed as a pop-up group, that is already fitting within the regular rhythms of the current group format of NCC. In other words, it can be run at any time without constraints during a semester. It will begin as a pilot small group with the same ten leaders who participated in the interviews. As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this course is to empower leaders with a prayer course that illuminates evangelism, connecting a personal faith to kingdom-oriented city impact.

It will begin with a teaching each week, for four weeks, around a particular topic followed by group discussion. Throughout the group discussion, there will be opportunities to share moments of learning and practical application. The goal is for each group leader to participate in at least three of the four sessions in total. It will be offered in person and online. In addition, the duration for each group session will be one hour and thirty minutes. This course can be run at any time throughout the small group calendar year. The researcher will be the instructor. The curriculum outlined in more detail, walking through each week beyond the table below, is found in Appendix M.

Table 1.1 Curriculum Outline

	Content	Duration
Week 1	<i>Connecting Personal Faith to Kingdom-Oriented City Impact</i>	1.5 hrs of teaching + discussion (via video or in person)
Week 2	<i>Reimagining Evangelism</i>	1.5 hrs of teaching + discussion (via video or in person)
Week 3	<i>Prayer as the Core-Central Circle to Mission + Discipleship</i>	1.5 hrs of teaching + discussion (via video or in person)

Week 4	<i>The New Model</i>	1.5 hrs of teaching + discussion (via video or in person)
--------	----------------------	---

This course will talk through how to connect personal faith with kingdom-oriented city impact. What does faith look like lived out in real life in tangible ways where one lives, works, and plays? It will discuss reimagining evangelism in a way that helps contextualize evangelism in everyday life. What if prayer was at the root of all evangelism in a way that revives the negative connotations of the word evangelism, and how has it been defined over the years? The small group will teach about prayer as being the core-centric circle of both mission and discipleship. As a part of this small group, there will be books available to read as an optional resource to explore more.

The course outline is provided in Appendix M, which unpacks each of the Scriptural studies that correspond each week aligning with the topic, discussion questions, and PowerPoint slides. Week One will begin to study missional prayer through the Shema found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Matthew 22:36-40. The second week will be a deep dive, studying ecclesiology and unpacking Acts 1:8, 2:38-47, and 8:4-5. The third week will begin to wrestle with the concentric circles model leveraging the Great Commission from Matthew 28:16-20. The final week will conclude with an understanding of how this impacts the community beyond an individual level, with Acts 11, 13, and 16 being key study passages. The additional resources that will be optional for additional study each week are *Deep Discipleship*,⁶ *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*,⁷ *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the*

⁶ English, *Deep Discipleship*.

⁷ J. Gary Millar, *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016).

Dwelling Place of God,⁸ *Practicing the Way of Jesus Life Together in the Kingdom of Love*,⁹ and *Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community*.¹⁰

Upon completing the prayer course, each individual will be a part of a debrief focus group. This group will unpack the practical aspect of all that they have learned and processed since day one of their participation in the study. While the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality within a focus group, the researcher will remind the participants of the protective measures that are in place. This focus group will be geared towards a question-and-answer time where the leaders can walk away with tangible outcomes they received in the process. A conversation guide will be utilized during the discussion time, consisting of ten questions taken from both the questionnaire as well as already existing interview questions (see Appendix N). This will allow for follow-up research highlighting what was valuable as well as any development within the practical application of the small group of the leader. This is important to note that while not everything can be numerically measured, this will show more immediate outcomes with a pre-intervention survey and post-intervention survey as a follow-up.

The researcher will gather the ten participants in person at the Capital Turnaround in Washington, D.C., or via Zoom, to better discern what differences and outcomes the study and research have made, if any. The researcher will ask each individual specific questions such as, “In what ways do you feel better equipped as a small group leader?” Or, “What was the most

⁸ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

⁹ Mark Scandrette, *Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life Together in the Kingdom of Love* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Ruth Haley Barton, *Life Together In Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

valuable to you from the prayer course?” In addition to that, “What are two examples of how you grew in prayer, discipleship, and mission more throughout this course?”

From there, the researcher will compile and analyze the results. Beginning with the initial general survey, the researcher will look for data patterns and trends. In addition, discerning and assessing the majority of focal points, such as highlighting which groups focus more on prayer or social gatherings, etc., will be a large portion. Charts will be shown to verify quantitative data and discern how equipped group leaders may feel at this point. In addition, an assessment will be developed to determine how frequently wholistic discipleship language is heard and understood, both practically and philosophically. The researcher will also gather informative points, discern patterns, and analyze information throughout. Each of these data points will be telling to provide real-time data instead of assumptions about the spiritual health of NCC’s group leaders. The goal is to highlight and pinpoint realistic measures that provide leadership and leaders with a wholistic view of strengths and weaknesses instead of merely snapshots.

Regarding the interview process and the focus group process, the researcher will put together a full summary and analysis, including initial and developmental data, learning curves, as well as felt needs communicated by the leaders. The baseline for measuring change will be an outcome of the debrief discussion in the focus group. A hopeful outcome for each leader is establishing practical new skills to incorporate into their small group. In addition, the outcome of this study will be to assess the current leadership of the group leaders as well as the current group model utilized at National Community Church to look for continual process improvements and areas of growth. Ideally, this will be beneficial to both the leaders as well as NCC as a whole. Finally, a long-term intention of this project is that the influence of relationships and the revelations from the Lord will go well beyond the specific time frame of this study.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Once the IRB approved the process, the project began immediately with the initial email (language found in Appendix C) sent out to the broader range of small group leaders at the Capital Turnaround location in Washington, D.C. This was accompanied by a general consent form stating all data would remain anonymous (Appendix G). All follow-up communication utilized the template found in Appendix E. Text reminders and the availability to answer questions directly from leaders regarding the survey were also a part of the communication process. The survey was sent to a total of 129 participants.

It is important to note that a distinctive change was made at this point in the process. Before initial communication with group leaders, a data cleaning process removing all National Community Church Leaders at the Turnaround who were also staff or contractors from the comprehensive data set occurred. The data cleaning process was completed in order to mitigate a conflict of interest and ensure there was no bias, even if they were considered an active small group leader. The goal was to make this as transparent and honest for the group leaders while doing the pre-work of removing any extra barriers that could potentially alter the results to lean a certain way. As a result, the total sent out was not the originally projected number of 140 but rather, it was only 129 potential participants.

The general survey was offered utilizing Google Forms. The original goal was to have a 30-40% completion rate, knowing that not every leader would fill it out. The final total was a 40.6% success rate of completed surveys. As stated earlier, an initial email went out with a follow-up email. In addition, per the approval of the chair, a text message went out to less than ten leaders asking if they would like to participate by completing the survey. For the text message that was sent, see Figure 3 below.



Figure 3. Text Message

After the completion of this general survey by 53 participants of the 129 surveyed, a list of those who have been serving as a small group leader for two years or longer was also pulled. This showed that 42 leaders in total met the criteria to move to the next phase. An Excel spreadsheet was created with everyone who met the criteria for the next phase of the project, totaling 42 leaders of the 129 leaders who have been leading two or more years and are at least eighteen years of age. For reference, this comes out to 32.5% of all leaders who have led for two years or more at the DC location. This also informs the readers that at the present moment, 32.5% of group leaders have been leading for a considerable amount of time consistently within a highly transient city. Simultaneously, this tells the readers that 67.5% of group leadership operates out of high turnover along with other influential factors.

Thus, that data alone confirms the high percentage of turnover within the campus, which is a reflection of the inner-city region. Of those 42, an automated generator formula was set up in Excel to choose ten random potential participants in the next phase.¹¹ From that list, as stated

¹¹ "RAND Function," Microsoft, <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/rand-function-4cbfa695-8869-4788-8d90-021ea9f5be73>.

earlier, the new consent form was sent to all ten of the potential participants (see Appendix H). A follow-up email and a text message were sent directing the participant to review the message with information for the next phase of the study. For those who confirmed “yes,” there was an email exchange to receive a signed consent form. For those who declined, they were sent a thank you note (see Appendix I). For those who did not respond at all, a new name was generated using the random formula until all ten positions were filled. These ten were entered into the process of signing off on the new consent form, filling out the questionnaire, scheduling an interview, completing a four-week course, and participating in a thorough debrief focus group.

Once the randomized formula was entered into Excel, the generated list process repeatedly occurred nine times until all ten positions were filled. In total, thirty-two people were invited as potential participants in the next phase. The generated list continued to recycle with new numbers until ten people were confirmed. Two people additionally gave a delayed “yes” after some time had passed due to a variety of reasons. In addition, one additional potential participant said “yes,” communicating interest, but there was no additional communication and no follow-up on the individual’s end. Those who agreed to participate provided a consent form and were thanked for participating. Of the ten final participants, there are a few important demographics to note, even though they all meet the same criteria. While they are not diverse in terms of years of leadership per se, they are all diverse in various other aspects.

The consent form allowed the research to move forward with the next step. If someone just provided a verbal or written agreement but did not send in the consent form, they did not progress to the next step. Each individual was required to submit a signed consent form before participating in the next phase of the project. After receiving the consent form, they were sent the

questionnaire found in Appendix K. This questionnaire asked nine open-ended questions designed to assess thoughts and practices on prayer, mission, and discipleship. All questionnaires were received prior to the start of the prayer course.

In addition to the questionnaire that was sent out, a poll link was emailed asking for three suggested potential dates for the prayer course in order to determine availability. This was limited to Saturday mornings (July 6, 13, 20, and 27), Sunday afternoons (July 14, 21, 28, and Aug 4), or Monday nights (July 1, 15, 22, and 29). The majority confirmed that Sunday afternoons beginning July 14th were the most available time slot within each of their schedules. To try to accommodate everyone, Sundays were selected. For those who were not able to make it in person for a variety of reasons, online accommodations via Zoom were permitted. This was a viable and important option to have as the majority of this research is over the summer months resulting in many different travel schedules and vacations. In addition, at the same time the Google poll was sent out, an email also went out requesting a few potential times to set up an interview time. The participants were able to choose the interview times based on their availability.

The interview process took four weeks leading up to the start of the prayer course. The interviews worked out best, being remote and utilizing Zoom to help navigate each individual schedule. Each interview met at various times of the day. An audio function on the phone of the researcher recorded each interview unless the participant specified otherwise. The majority of interviews were around 30 minutes, which was under the allotted time of 45 minutes per participant. While extra time was permitted, not every question may have been asked if the participant answered in the form of a previous question. All but one interview was completed prior to the start of the prayer course. While that overlap occurred for interviews, there was a

specific request that every questionnaire be completed before the start of the course, and that was fulfilled. The final interview was completed three days after the first day of the prayer course.

Instructions regarding the course were sent out ahead of time to address expectations, the agenda, and all of the logistical details for the group meeting. This meeting was located in the staff office side of the church building. This room had no internal windows, only external, in order to protect the individual identities within the cohort. In addition, Zoom was offered to accommodate those who were not able to meet each week due to various schedules. Each participant was requested to attend three of the four weeks of the course in order to receive the greatest benefit from the material covered. This reminder was addressed weekly. Greater participation most often equates to greater opportunities for conversation. Each agenda for the week and an overarching vision of the course are listed in Appendix M.

During Week 1, eight participants attended, with two joining virtually through Zoom. During Week 2, six participants joined, with two joining virtually through Zoom. During Week 3, nine participants attended, with three joining virtually through Zoom. During Week 4, eight participants attended, with three joining virtually through Zoom. In addition, it is important to note that two individuals attended twice, and one individual attended once. Content notes were provided from the PowerPoint slides every week for ease of following along as well as for those who could not attend every single week.

Every week, light snacks were offered since the meeting occurred during the lunch hour and ran until 2 PM. In addition, the same setup was set for each week, where there was a short social time with an icebreaker or time to grab snacks. Then, there was a topic overview of the week as well as a recap from the week before, if applicable. There was content, slides, a time for silent prayer and listening to the Holy Spirit, and reflection questions. One thing, in particular, to

note about the weekly engagement is that the conversations were ongoing and deep, detailed conversations. While most of the questions asked were from the PowerPoint, many of the perspectives offered fed off of each other. Similar to playing a hot potato game, where one catches and tosses. The same was true of the conversation, whether the individuals were sharing personal experiences, biblical insights, or reminders. While a healthy average of small groups is suggested at NCC to be eight to twelve people, the ten people included in this course made it a packed 1.5 hours of dialogue.

During the course, a second Google poll was sent out to schedule a debrief date in early August. The offered times were every day, starting with Monday, Aug 5th through Sunday, August 11th conveniently offering various times to all participants. Sunday, August 11th, at the same time as the prayer course, won as the final vote. After the course, a debrief focus group was scheduled to meet for one hour on August 11th, 2024. There was one gap week between Week 3 and Week 4 of the prayer course because several participants were out of town or had an immediate need to attend to. As a result, Week 4 of the prayer course and the debrief were combined on the final week of August 11th, resulting in a 2.5 hour gathering to allow for maximum participation.

This debrief focus group followed the conversation guide provided in Appendix N. Follow-up questions to the initial interview questions were designed to demonstrate areas of improvement or greater depth. This debrief focus group again met in person, with the option of a Zoom call. There were five participants at the final debrief which met in person as the remaining step in this project. Additionally, five of the participants were out of town for the debrief, so they were offered debrief questions via email. Only one individual did not return the guide. This accommodation was approved by the chair.

After each of these stages, the results were analyzed. This was through the study of graphs and the assessment of patterns of data points. In addition, it was looking at each of the visuals displayed and the measures of growth as well as any noticeable gaps in the data. This next chapter will analyze and review the findings from each step of the methodology.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

These results provide extensive data from which concrete, significant evidence can be drawn. In addition, the results allow an opportunity to extend beyond with ongoing research. This data serves as a baseline for ongoing growth and development opportunities, specifically in the area of discipleship. Data has the capability of suggesting current and potential missing areas, and the research outcomes of this study helped identify both realized and unrealized gaps. This research also helped to better understand various viewpoints of discipleship and its relationship to prayer and mission, which is effective both within the small groups and within the local community. The goal is to provide unbiased data that strictly points towards practical, first-hand resolutions. Each of these resolutions will be formulated based on the data points outlined in this chapter. The analysis begins with the initial survey, then progresses to the interviews and questionnaires, and concludes with the focus group.

Collective Results

General Survey Results

While several of the survey results provide clear evidence of the role of mission, discipleship, and prayer, a secondary trend throughout the data suggests it is more challenging to measure invisible aspects. This research is a fixed cross-sectional approach that is reflective of a smaller population of leaders. Regardless of the stated challenge, these analyses will concentrate more on measuring the approach and application of mission, discipleship, and prayer in the life

of a leader. While this will be explained more later on, one identified challenge here is how one effectively and efficiently measures something, like attitude or life application, that appears immeasurable at first glance. While not everything is immediately measurable, this focus is on what is measurable within a short period, pointing towards long-term reward. In summary, there could be things that will be a noticeable change in the life of a group leader, and there could be things that will make an eternal or societal impact but may not be known in the timespan of this research. These results address more of the immediate metamorphosis within a one-month period of time than they do the eternal values inherent within this study. The data impact noted substantiates great influential potential in the future beyond the immediate data found in this study.

These current results depict internal and external vantage points in order to better learn culture and expression within the lifeblood of the church, known as small groups. Studies like this provide objective details surrounding routine rhythms and patterns of ongoing structures, allowing the researcher to gain a different vantage point. This research depicts what is happening on a localized level within the context of small groups at NCC and what is happening on an individual level of the leaders who make up the congregation at large beyond any categorization of a department. Without the simultaneous process of zooming in and zooming out, it can be challenging to get an accurate assessment of the overall health of a small group ministry.

This study also helps identify patterns regarding the types of groups that presently exist, in addition to the bulk of the priorities for each of these groups. In Figure 4 below, there is a clear analysis that 47.2% of the submitted responses focus on a biblically-based curriculum. Only 18.9% have a mission focus. This is not to say that each of these is separate, apart from, or distinct from each other, but rather, the leader submitted what the greatest focus is as a central

component of their small group. As a result of this, a deeper dive into the Word of God is a stronger presence in the current pool of small groups at NCC than prayer or mission combined. Biblical knowledge is an active part of current small group study. In addition, there are more mission or prayer groups than there are social gatherings. This both communicates interest as well as potential gaps. The interest means the leaders have chosen a discipleship focus (biblical curriculum). The gap is that if missional, prayer, and social gathering are the lowest shown results, then the gap could potentially be the least applied or least knowledgeable.

What does your small group have a greater focus on:

53 responses

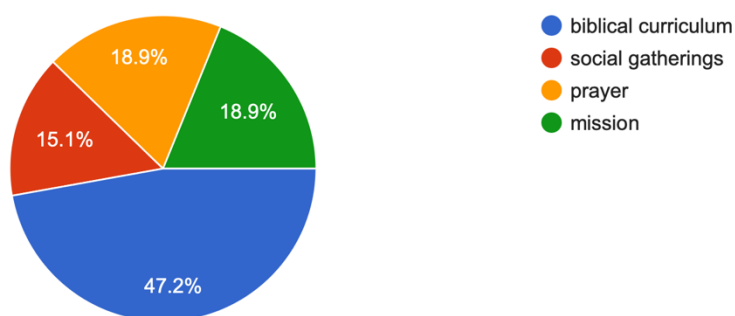


Figure 4. Percentage of Group Focus

To begin, it is important to understand the results of the pool of people who participated in the general survey. While 41% successfully completed the survey, that leaves fifty-three of the 129 who responded and seventy-six who have yet to complete the survey. Of those fifty-three responses, eleven questions were answered in total. However, not everyone answered two of the eleven questions. The frequency of hearing wholistic language was answered by fifty-two people instead of fifty-three. The missional discipleship question referencing those who have a gift of evangelism was answered by fifty-one participants. Each question was anonymous and selective. The questions were not mandatory for intentional measures in case anyone wanted to reserve the

right not to answer and abstain. While this does not drastically skew the numbers, it is important to know at the beginning of the result analysis.

Secondly, of those fifty-three responses, the demographics of leadership are defined as follows. The majority of the leaders who participated stated they have more than eight people in their small group on average. Also, 30.2% stated they have between eight and eleven participants, and 34% stated they have more than twelve group members. Given the average size of a small group, 64.2% said it includes or is more than eight people. In addition, 49% said that they have a solid core that does not change each semester or has never changed since the group began. Whereas, 50.9% stated that the group participants fully change out either semesterly or annually. Last but not least, to understand some of the following results better, it is imperative to understand the longevity of these group leaders. The majority of these results were completed by leaders who have been leading for six years or longer. The lowest result was leading between four and six years at 13.2%. The second highest were leaders who have been leading between two and four years at 28.3%, and the second lowest results were leaders who are under one year, which is 26.4%. These results determine that the majority of the leaders, 32.1%, who completed this survey have been at NCC for six or more years. It is important to note this in order to better understand the longevity of these leaders.

There is a large breadth of conclusive results demonstrating an expansive number of people engaged in studying a biblical curriculum do so in a small group setting. Simultaneously, closely tied to those results, it is also easily understood that a large number of small group content focuses on studying the Word. This is seen in Figure 5 below. In other words, it is not just biblical curriculum merely associated with or adjacent to a book of the Bible as a discussion topic but directly engaging with the Word of God. While 13.2% say they do not prominently

study the Word of God in community, 73.6% say that Scripture is studied frequently or consistently collectively with others, not just individually, in the life of the leader. This could also potentially lead to better understanding or gauging the level of biblical literacy within small groups. A large number of groups study Scripture in community on a regular basis.

How frequently do you study the Word in the context of community?

53 responses

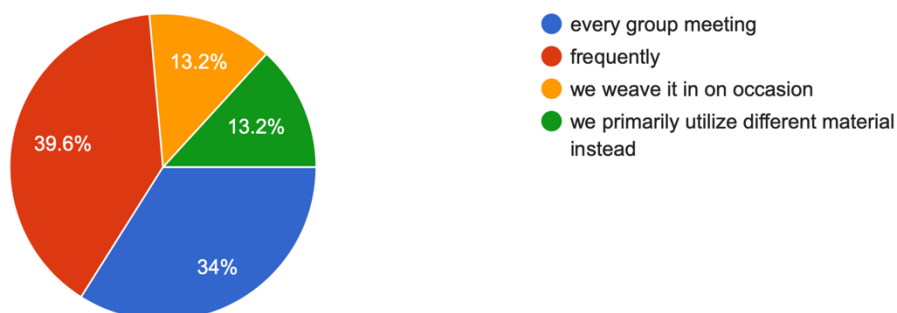


Figure 5. Focus on Scripture in a Group Setting

One of the questions asked in the survey also highlighted the frequency of hearing language around wholistic discipleship. How frequently are group leaders hearing language around wholistic discipleship? When they hear it, do they hear it in isolated sections, or is it discussed through the framework incorporating all aspects of mission, prayer, and small groups combined? The majority of participant group leaders confirmed they hear wholistic language in Figure 6, but 23% state that it is not frequent enough or never heard. While many factors are at play, such as when and where the leaders hear this language, their ability to recall to memory, or even how each leader self-interprets wholistic language, the data, nonetheless, provides a baseline of understanding. The majority acknowledge and are well aware of the phrases of mission, prayer, and small groups in regular communication at NCC.

How frequently do you hear discipleship referred to in context of wholistic discipleship at NCC? (i.e. incorporating all aspects such as mission, prayer, small groups?)

52 responses

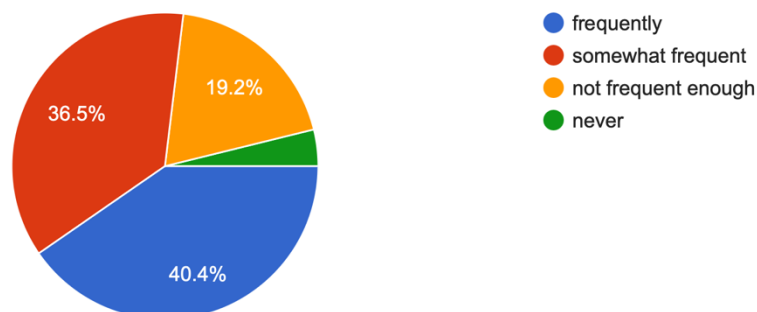


Figure 6. Frequency of Hearing Wholistic Discipleship

Much of the data serves as building blocks, showing examples that the data for one points to the data for another as each is interconnected. This data also depicts how equipped a group leader may feel to lead a small group at NCC in the area of wholistic discipleship. This also highlights the preparedness or readiness of each leader through a combined effort in all three: mission, prayer, and discipleship. In addition, it displays what areas may have a greater need for improvement. Overarchingly, it depicts the current strategic planning of discipleship at NCC. Based on what a leader hears the most can directly help a leader implement the most.

In Figure 6, the data shares that leaders may hear prayer as an active ingredient incorporated into the language of the church, weekend services, and community opportunities to grow in prayer, which are all good things, but the outcome may differ in praxis. In Figure 7, group leaders state the frequency of practice of missionally-oriented prayer in community, showing prayer for the community is not high as a consistent practice, nor is it fully integrated or applied in the small group. One caveat of this data may show that prayer exists, but it could be internally focused on the individuals in the group or the leaders themselves. Ultimately, this data

shows prayer oriented externally and having a missional focus, meaning extending outside of the group, comes up short by the majority. This could consist of prayer extended towards the local DC Dream Center, prayer for NCC partners and missionaries, prayer for other countries, or challenges that presently exist within the region of the small group. While this survey primarily focused on prayer more than five minutes, 71.7% still state that this type of prayer is either inconsistent within the group or not presently occurring at all. It is noteworthy to share, 13.2% answered that this level of prayer is a regular rhythm each time the small group gathers, with 15.1% saying it is a frequent habit. As seen in the figure below, missional prayer is an area that can remain a growth opportunity for many groups, including leaders and participants.

How frequently do you spend time focusing on external, missionally-oriented prayer (longer than five minutes) in your small group?

53 responses

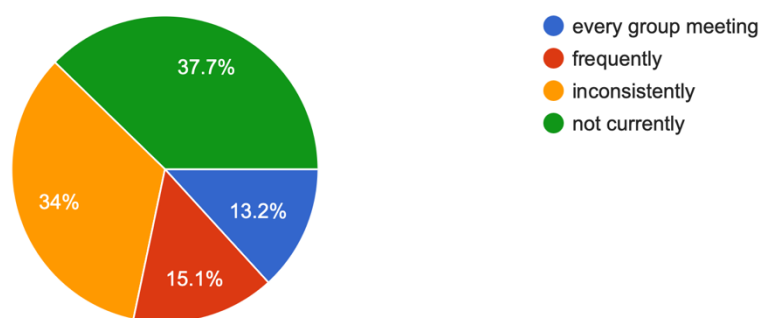


Figure 7. Frequency in Prayer

In addition, these results reveal intricate data that may be understood more in philosophy tied to a privatized faith but not necessarily in praxis. While it is just a snapshot, and the data is distributed through an electronic medium as opposed to face-to-face, it provides a glimpse into additional details worth exploring to better assess discipleship at National Community Church. Each survey, questionnaire, interview, prayer course participation, and focus group participation

should aid in discovering key aspects of the Great Commission and Great Commandment that may or may not be an active part of the small group of the leader or community. If the goal is an active lifestyle measuring practical integrated elements of the Great Commission and Great Commandment, then the work is to reverse engineer through data points. Data helps form the discipleship dietary needs, similar to what physical health data does for routines and diet, in order to help discipleship become more well-rounded. This is a part of knowing what is needed for formation. Key questions and component results are derived from better ascertaining the difference between philosophy and praxis or belief and lifestyle. What if one has a philosophy or belief but not a matching lifestyle? What is the key factor that helps move from belief to a way of living? A simple takeaway from the graph in Figure 7 begins to show the gaps, needs, or successes of current models that are producing a missional prayer focus of discipleship. The graphs on the next page aid in identifying patterns of intellectual philosophy, praxis lived out within the respective small groups, and praxis that extends borders into the community as a lifestyle.

As shown below in Figure 8, 70.6% believe that missional discipleship is for everyone, not just those with the gift of evangelism. Figure 9 shows less than half of the people live out a lifestyle of practical impact. Regarding missional discipleship, 52.8% of the responses communicate that their individual small group is not actively engaged in impacting the city or the entire D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area in Figure 9. More precisely, the leaders stated that participants are never actively engaged. Only 34% of the leaders said that they engage once per semester or monthly. Here, 13.2% stated they actively engage in impacting the city bi-weekly. Whereas only 13.2% of group leaders admitted to an active lifestyle of city impact. This

highlights a large gap in the majority of groups that are not fully aligned with kingdom impact right where the group is planted, regardless of whether it is Maryland, Virginia, or D.C..

Missional Discipleship (discipleship overlapping with an external focus on the community) is reserved for those who have the gift of evangelism:

51 responses

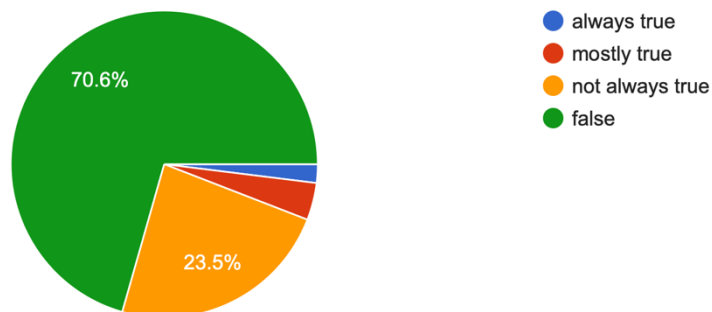


Figure 8. Missional Discipleship

To what degree is your small group actively engaged in impacting the city (Metro DMV area)?

53 responses

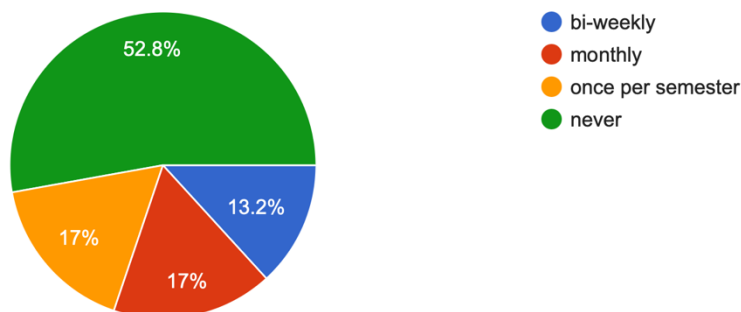


Figure 9. Intellectual Philosophy vs. Praxis as Lifestyle

Serving the community, impacting the city, and having a missionally-focused group is a top priority for your small group:

53 responses

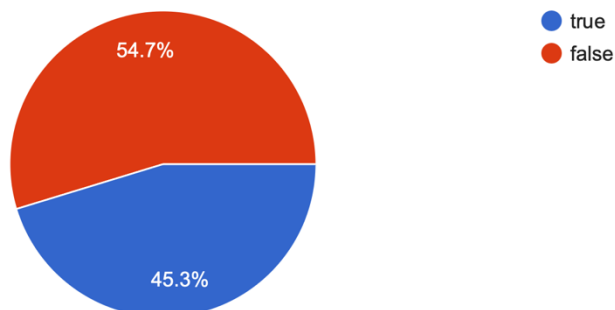


Figure 10. Priority of Serving

Uniquely, while 52.8% say their group is not involved in city impact in Figure 9, 45.3% say that having a missionally-focused group is a top priority in Figure 10. While this may not be conclusive data, as what defines priority or serving, it does lead to needing to better understand why there is almost a 50% agreement that serving the community is a priority in the group, but when asked if there is actual serving happening that makes an impact in the community, the majority of group leaders indicate it is not occurring. There is the possibility of an active awareness without a potential active lifestyle.

Even though every leader leads differently, there are specific common threads that occur in this research. Regardless of the starting point, each leader has a runway of opportunity. Measurable growth opportunities from an organizational vantage point will be inherent based on the practices put in place beyond the completion of this research. Measurable growth opportunities on an individual level will be determined within each of the quantitative and qualitative results that are provided as responses to this process. While each level of growth

differs based upon the individual, the overall data points will serve as research components to a system or necessary ingredients to a recipe to form the overarching summary. More specifically, each component should speak to the integrated or disintegrated nature of the discipleship ecosystem. These data points have the potential to equip and prepare NCC as a whole to better determine actualization and practical steps that can identify directional benchmarks that are either working as is or that necessitate changes coming out of this research.

Questionnaire Results

This section provides the results of the questionnaires from the ten qualified participants. To answer one of the most fundamental questions within the study about how equipped leaders feel, the response will be studied through the lens of how well NCC is equipping group leaders through modeling and communicating in the areas of discipleship, prayer, and mission. While the general survey only communicated general data points for a basic overview, the next phase will provide greater detail with results from the questionnaires. The pie chart in Figure 11 displays the first question visually. While these responses are seeking an objective perception from the outside looking in, the question asked was, “Of the three, where do you feel NCC is the strongest (in teaching, equipping, and modeling): discipleship, prayer, or mission?” Represented below in Figure 11, the answer with the strongest results was that leaders feel most equipped in prayer, second in mission, and least equipped in discipleship. While Figure 11 shows there is a close tie in equipping leaders more so in two particular areas, the breakdown comes down to five leaders stating prayer as the leading value, with mission right behind communicated by four

leaders. Only one individual said NCC is the strongest in discipleship.

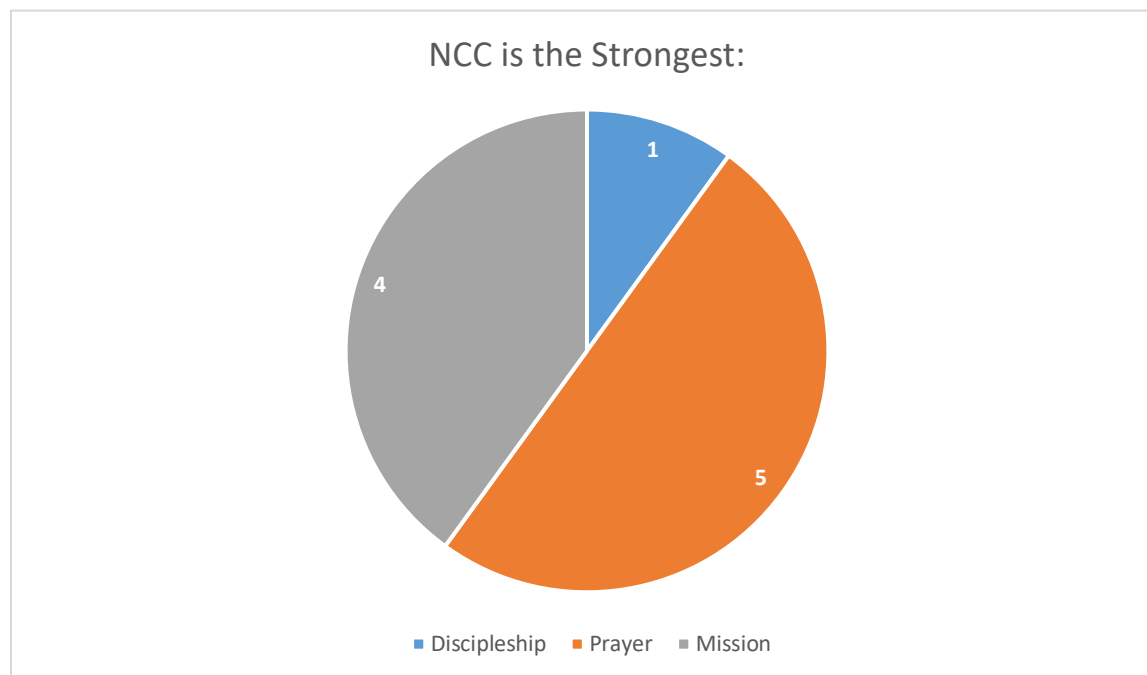


Figure 11. Equipping

The key to this question was not just to discern how NCC can better equip but rather, in multiple areas, to try to determine the perception of the area in which a leader feels the most equipped. This may or may not align with what staff individuals would suggest, so the goal was to understand from a different vantage point. This question reveals that in teaching, equipping, and modeling, leaders feel NCC portrays prayer as the strongest muscle or the greatest tool in the congregational tool belt. The results for mission demonstrate a close data correlation to prayer. Based on these results, mission is a well-communicated aspect of faith.

Simultaneously, it suggests in the teaching, modeling, and equipping, this is a gap that could be better addressed by identifying which areas are specifically needed for discipleship to gain greater strength. This necessitates additional studies to analyze the growth of discipleship in the church body than this preliminary question. The key distinction in the previous question was based on the perception of NCC as a whole. The next question is based on whether the leader

engages in these aspects and what their preparedness is? It is one thing for a staff member to determine preparedness based on what is taught, it is another for the leader to determine their preparedness and communicate that accordingly. The outcome of this question is to identify patterns. Leaders responded by stating a range of feeling equipped, either least or most equipped, based on the same factors of discipleship, prayer, and mission. This bar chart in Figure 12 shows a subjective perception from the inside looking out.

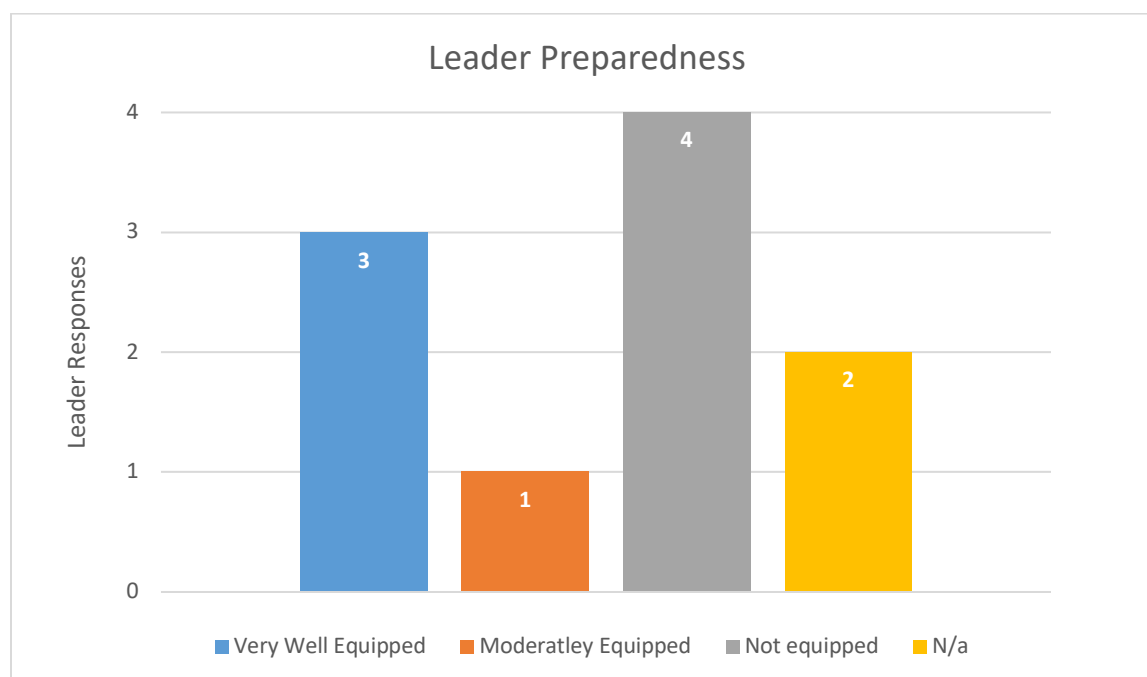


Figure 12. Leader Preparedness

Answering the question, “How equipped do you feel to teach, model, and represent an active lifestyle of evangelism through the form of prayer?” Ultimately, the majority ruled with the leader stating a level of unpreparedness or not feeling equipped. One leader stated they feel moderately equipped. Three leaders stated they feel very well equipped. Two leaders provided additional answers not specific with a result to this question.

Also, leaders were not just asked if they felt equipped or not. They were also asked, “In what area do you feel you need to grow the most as a leader?” The selections available were ongoing discipleship, prayer lifestyle, missional activation, and other. The responses returned are shown below in Figure 13.

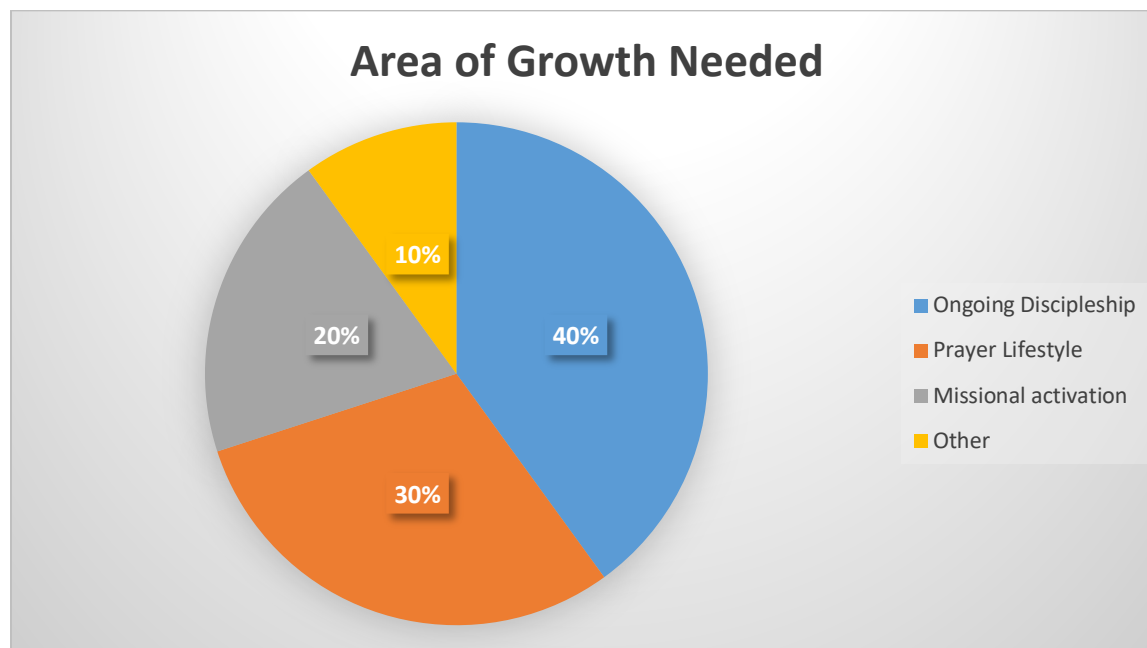


Figure 13. Area of Growth Needed

Ongoing Discipleship is the area of greatest need, which is on par with the additional data elements that have been communicated within this chapter. Based on the data analysis, a Prayer Lifestyle had the second highest indicator. The third area of growth that leaders request is Missional Activation. The data was separated into the additional category of “Other” for participants who did not choose one of the specified areas.

The following graphic in Figure 14 shows another layer of engagement in the area of evangelistic discipleship. This, however, shows what is happening within neighborhoods, communities, and workplaces that reside outside of the small group gathering.

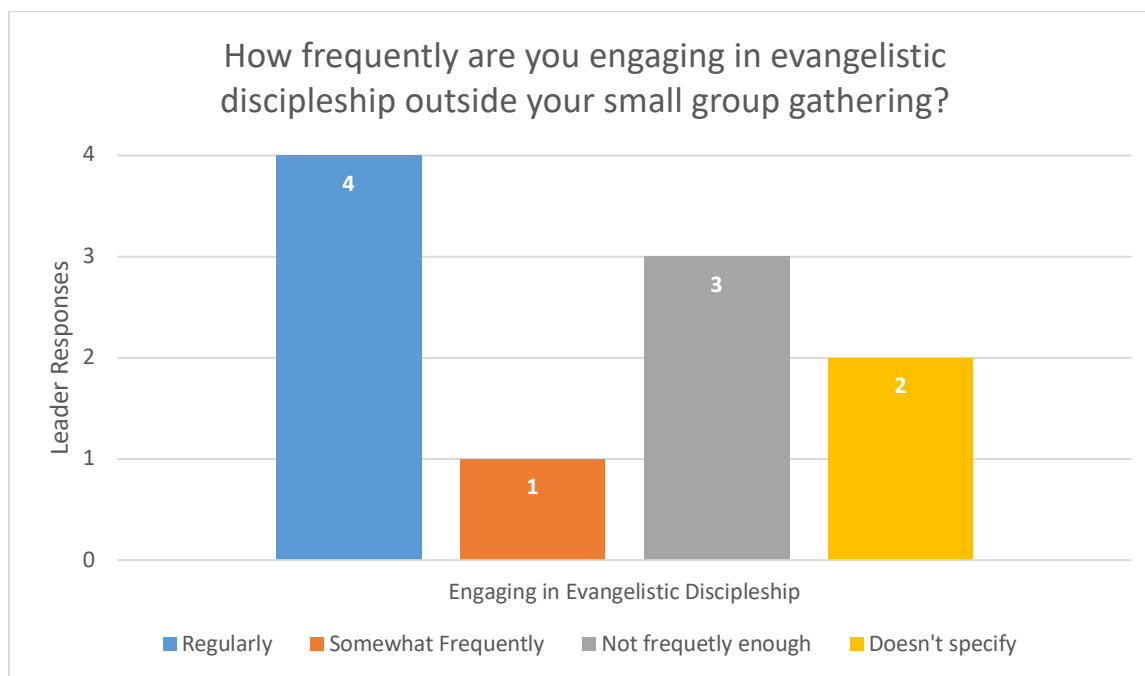


Figure 14. Engagement in Evangelistic Discipleship

A challenging area to interpret is the ability of the leader to recall to mind the frequency in which a leader participates in evangelistic discipleship or similarly identified areas. One may have a frame of reference; they may be able to categorize a rhythm or habit but still struggle with frequency. The provided options are listed above. However, in the written responses an additional classification of “seasonally” was translated as somewhat frequently. In addition, there was one additional outlying data point listed as “does not specify,” as it was not discernable within the written answer to determine which category it would fall under.

The remaining categories were listed to show similar responses that created a pattern. Again, this ultimately depends on an individual definition of evangelistic discipleship and how a participant interpreted the questionnaire. The results show that four of the ten participants are actively and regularly engaged. One of the participants is somewhat frequently engaged, and three of the participants have communicated it was either seasonal based on life circumstances, not applicable to their everyday preferences, or a recognition of needing to engage more. This

was categorized as not frequently enough based on their own definitions and standards. Two do not specify the actual frequency of engagement in the description. Instead, evangelistic discipleship was evident in the written responses, though it did not specify any reoccurrence. This communicates only 40%, four of the ten, are consistently active in initiating evangelism outside of the small group.

Taking a broader perspective to better learn where participants are seeing and sensing wholistic discipleship outside of their own lives, Figure 15 on the next page will show an additional layer in this study. While the question was asked in a short answer form, several patterns developed and were communicated throughout each of the responses. This figure is unique, with many data points that will result in a total of more than ten responses. With a short answer form, it allowed people to include several responses at a time. If the results were similar or overlapped, it then was listed as a category. Four categories in total are listed as follows: small groups and relationships, daily interactions, prayer environments, and ministry teams/serving. The top leading responses show that the participants saw wholistic discipleship experiences expressed the most within small group settings or relationships. Second, it is seen in daily interactions in life. Third, it is seen in prayer environments. This was tied with also seeing it play out in ministry teams or serving opportunities.

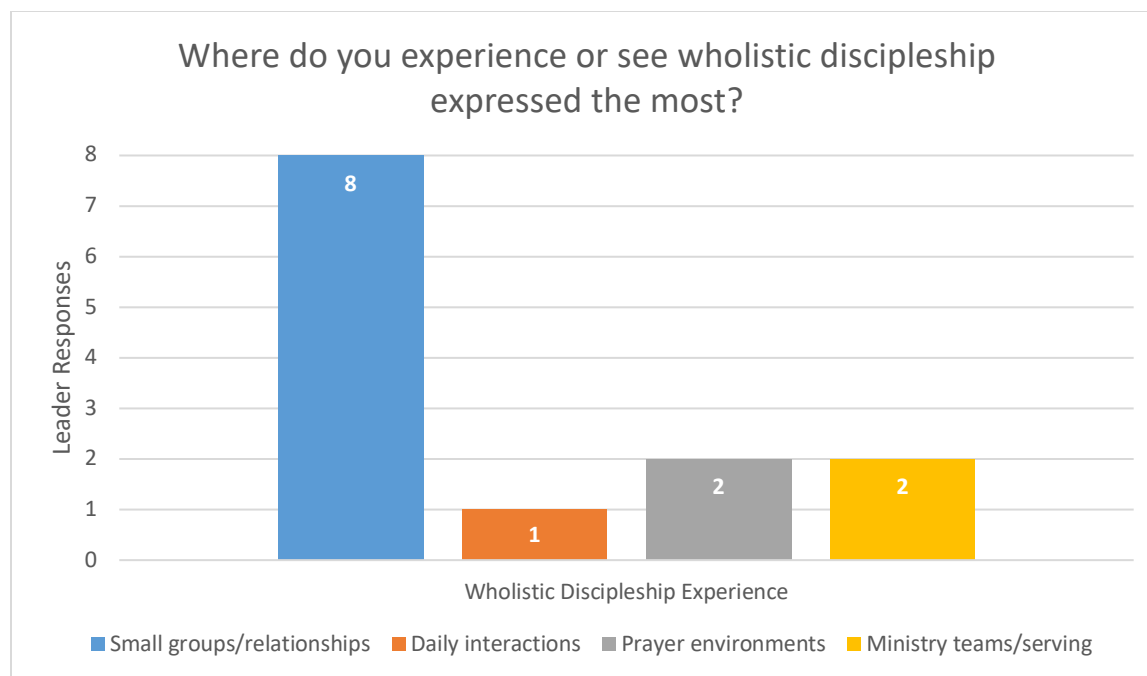


Figure 15. Wholistic Discipleship Experiences

In the questionnaire, there was also a short answer for how one would define a mature wholistic disciple. That question was categorized into seven themes in Figure 16. Due to the nature of the question being short answer, several of the answers overlapped again on the next page. The leading definition of a mature disciple was one who spends formational quiet time with God. This means that they partake in spiritual disciplines and spend time in the Word, prayer, etc. Participant A summed it up, saying, “spending time in God’s presence.”¹ It is also important to point out that only three leaders stated that disciple-making is what makes up a mature disciple.

¹ Per an email with researcher on June 27th, 2024.

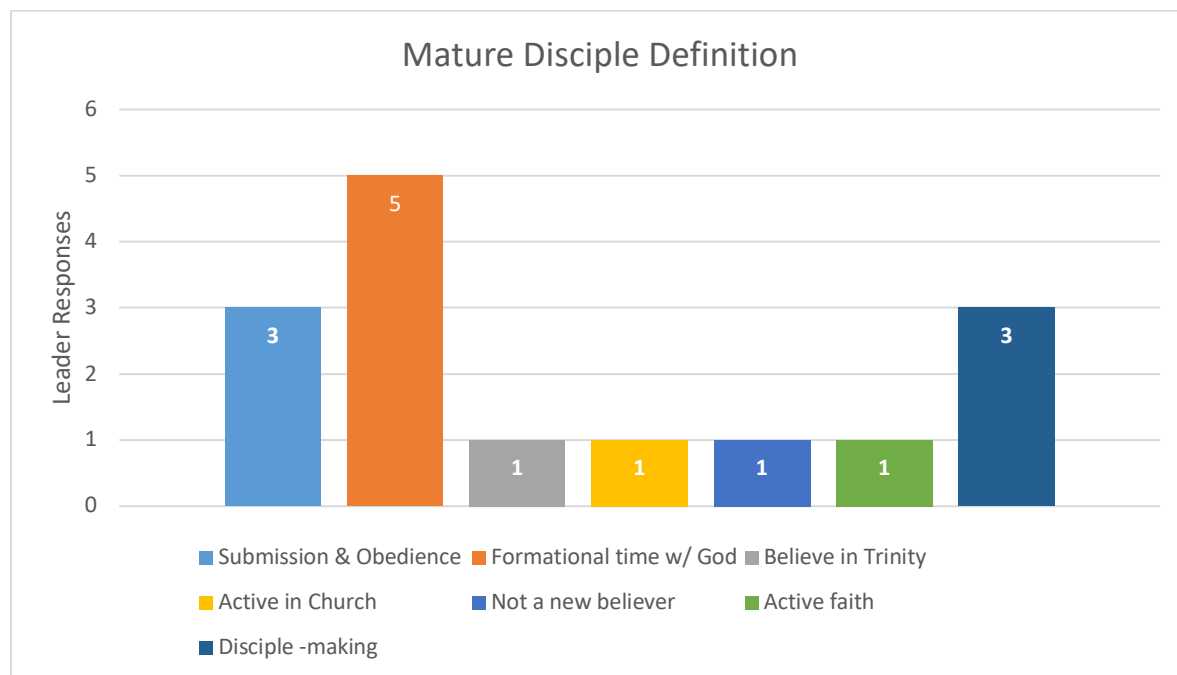


Figure 16. Mature Disciple Definition

Apart from the answers that were easily identifiable in immediate patterns that could be displayed with graphics through a pie chart or bar graph, it was important to study the short answers as many responses gave key insights pertinent to this study. While several others stated the vitality of having mission and prayer operate together or “overlap in the context of small groups,” Participant A went on to say that mission and prayer should be more about “seeking kingdom over social clubs.”² Participant B historically viewed mission as a “mission field that is far away,” only recently realizing it refers to “our backyard.”³

In summary, “Small groups should engage with local ministries, and prayer is an essential part of that.”⁴ Participant H plainly said, “Small groups grow closely by doing two

² Per an email with researcher on June 27th, 2024.

³ Per an email with researcher on June 15th, 2024.

⁴ Per an email with researcher on June 15th, 2024.

things: praying and serving.”⁵ An interesting data outcome depicted forty percent of group leaders polled suggest that prayer and mission do not need to overlap as components within a small group in Figure 17. This was described by Participant J, who stated, “Prayer is more critical...I think prayer should be in every small group, while mission may not be.”⁶ Given the Free Market semester system of small groups, it is quite possible that due to the nature of the system, “Some [groups] fill specific deeds without requiring injection of other facets...It is possible to over-saturate a missional initiative into groups that already have a clear and unique focus and possibly dilute its impact for some NCC’ers” says Participant I.⁷ Varying views were divided and almost created a fifty-fifty split.

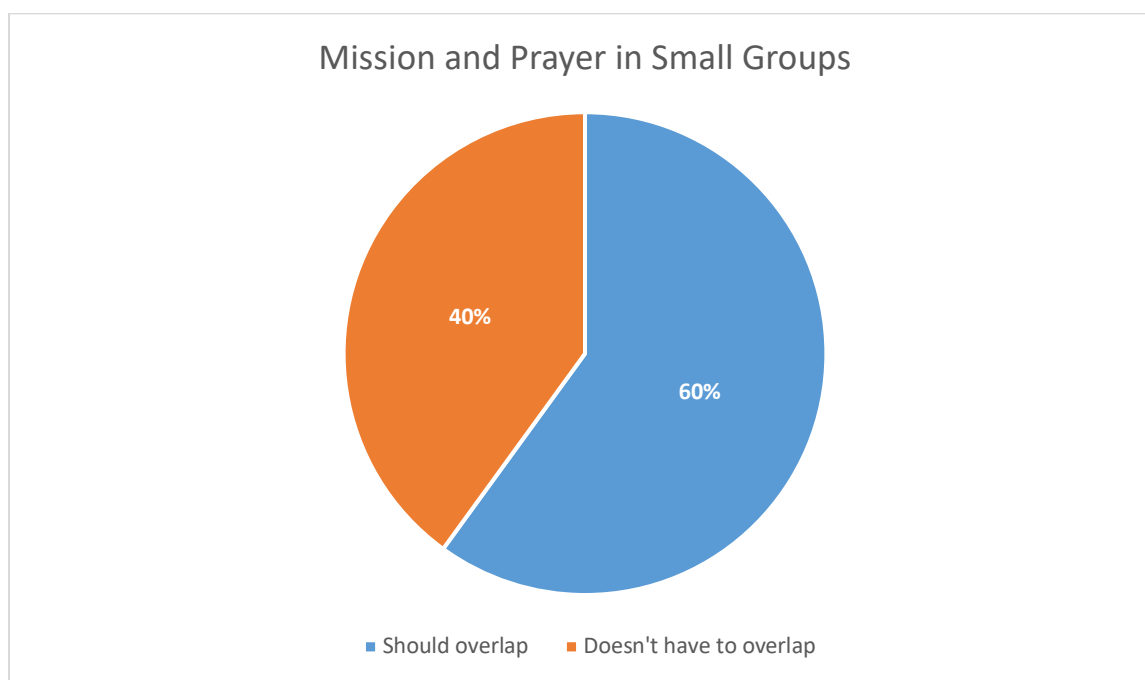


Figure 17. Mission and Prayer in Small Groups

⁵ Per an email with researcher on July 1st, 2024.

⁶ Per an email with researcher on June 28th, 2024.

⁷ Per an email with researcher on June 24th, 2024.

The next question was tied to what the “integration of mission and prayer as an active lifestyle within the current structure of discipleship and small groups look like.” While this was a broad question, it correlates to the readiness or preparedness the data pointed out earlier that a leader may or may not feel. Participant A said having more curriculum readily provided is a “blessing” to help aid with this area in particular provided by NCC.⁸ While Participant B says that the more groups there are, the more ample opportunity for there to be an integrated relationship,⁹ Participant C says it is really up to the “individual leader, group, or mission” to integrate.¹⁰ Participant D agreed it is completely up to the group to decide and may not be a fit.¹¹ One participant even described mission and prayer as so integrated they are “fluid.”¹² Another participant stated conclusively (while referencing NCC), “It is done very well. We are encouraged to be a part of a small group, to pray for one another, and to serve in each of our communities and as a group.”¹³ Participant H highlighted that the integration of mission and prayer is engrained in “NCC’s core conviction that the church belongs in the middle of the marketplace.”¹⁴ The participants are very aware of the integration specific to the models at NCC. One participant stated it is almost an automatic assumption for the group that they will teach prayer and that group in and of itself is a form of evangelism through teaching and invitation.¹⁵

⁸ Per an email with researcher on June 27th, 2024.

⁹ Per an email with researcher on June 15th, 2024.

¹⁰ Per an email with researcher on June 24th, 2024.

¹¹ Per an email with researcher on July 12th, 2024.

¹² Per an email with researcher on June 16th, 2024.

¹³ Per an email with researcher on June 24th, 2024.

¹⁴ Per an email with researcher on July 1st, 2024.

¹⁵ Per an email with researcher on June 28th, 2024.

One participant in particular wrote a noteworthy response as documented in the following section.

If NCC encourages mission as a lifestyle would groups multiply more than change-over at the end of a semester? From what I could tell, for some years, NCC equated ‘mission’ with 12-person trips, volunteering, compassionate ministries, and social causes. So, the term ‘mission’ is still subject to interpretation. ‘Prayer’ is also subjective. NCC groups are often semester-based relationships, with some exceptions which may not be a strategy for enduring multiplication.¹⁶

This summary was a helpful, honest perspective in learning more about the perception of structure as well as poses questions noteworthy of thinking through.

An additional question was asked in the survey that stated: “What comes to mind when you hear discipleship talked about as components of a life devoted to prayer and heart for missionally caring for those around us?” Participant A communicated that it is about the “life, words, and works of Jesus and the example he led.”¹⁷ Contrastingly, Participant C said, “Every person can live a life devoted to praying and caring for others and could also be a part of life not connected with religious appointment, specifically when it comes to discipleship.”¹⁸ On the other hand, Participant D said that it is more about “accountability.”¹⁹ Strongly emphasized, Participant E states, “The longer the disciple walks with the Lord, the more the Lord directs His disciple’s attention to the mission the Lord intends.”²⁰ Whereas Participant G describes both components of prayer and mission as the “overflow of an active faith in Jesus.”²¹ In conclusion,

¹⁶ Per an email with researcher on June 24th, 2024.

¹⁷ Per an email with researcher on June 27th, 2024.

¹⁸ Per an email with researcher on June 24th, 2024.

¹⁹ Per an email with researcher on July 12th, 2024.

²⁰ Per an email with researcher on June 16th, 2024.

²¹ Per an email with researcher on July 1st, 2024.

Participant J joins in saying, it is not just being “in proximity with the Father” but also “close proximity with those around us as Jesus did.”²²

The questionnaire results gave unique language and expression from each leader to better understand some of the needs. In addition, it demonstrated data that confirmed new vantage points highlighting key areas such as the area of growth that is needed is discipleship in Figure 13 as well as discipleship being identified as the area that NCC is reportedly the weakest (as seen in Figure 11). Certainly, it also cannot be ignored that 50% of leaders stated they feel equipped and prepared to lead in the areas of discipleship, mission, and prayer, and 50% said they are not equipped (see Figure 12). These results will be reviewed again further in the research to determine any noted changes specific to two questions regarding the strength(s) of NCC in Figure 11 and leader preparedness in Figure 12.

Interview Results

While all of the interviews were facilitated remotely, video capability was still available to give additional context and insights to the researcher. However, the interviews were not video-recorded. To begin, the first question in the interview phase ties the Great Commandment and Great Commission together in the life of a disciple. The intention of this question was to best comprehend how interviewees even understand the biblical definitions. Uniquely, at this point in the studies, there was a gap of awareness that was noticeable through participants either asking for definitions with each question or googling the definition on the spot.

²² Per an email with researcher on June 28th, 2024.

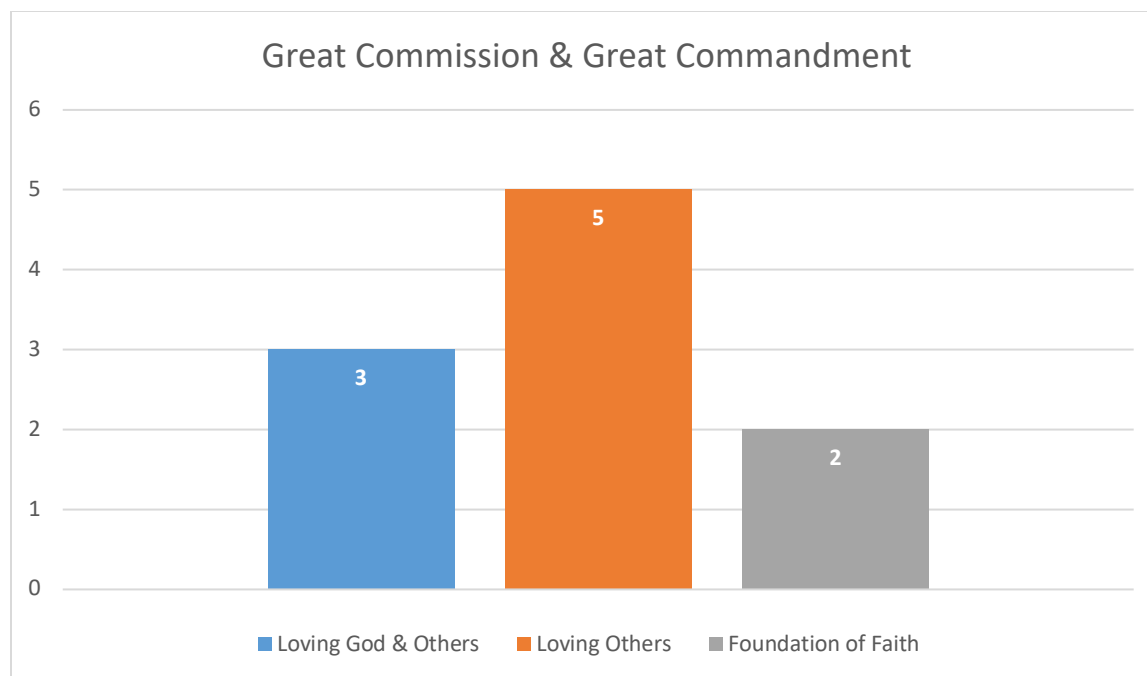


Figure 18. Great Commission and Great Commandment

In Figure 18, when answering the question, “What is the correlation between the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in the life of a disciple?” there were several distinctions. Three participants in the interviews stated both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment are about loving God and loving others simultaneously, similar to how Participant I says, “By loving Him and being loved by Him allows us to have a genuine motive to care for others.”²³ Highlighting this part, Participant A says, “Naturally, you’ll want to capture His heart to share with other people.”²⁴ However, five interviewees stated it was mostly about loving others, and they continued to outline in detail what it looks like to love the other without mention of the source first originating with God. For instance, Participant J stated, “[It is] about

²³ Per interview with researcher on July 1st, 2024.

²⁴ Per interview with researcher on July 1st, 2024.

living it out and not keep[ing] it to yourself.”²⁵ The final two expressed the Great Commission and Great Commandment more as a conceptual framework as the foundation of faith. Participant D stated, “[This] should be your foundation of how you live.”²⁶ This question was asked to better determine the level of leader awareness of how one defines the Great Commission and Great Commandment, as both are imperative to the faith with an understanding of how it is outlined for followers of Christ to live out in today’s world.

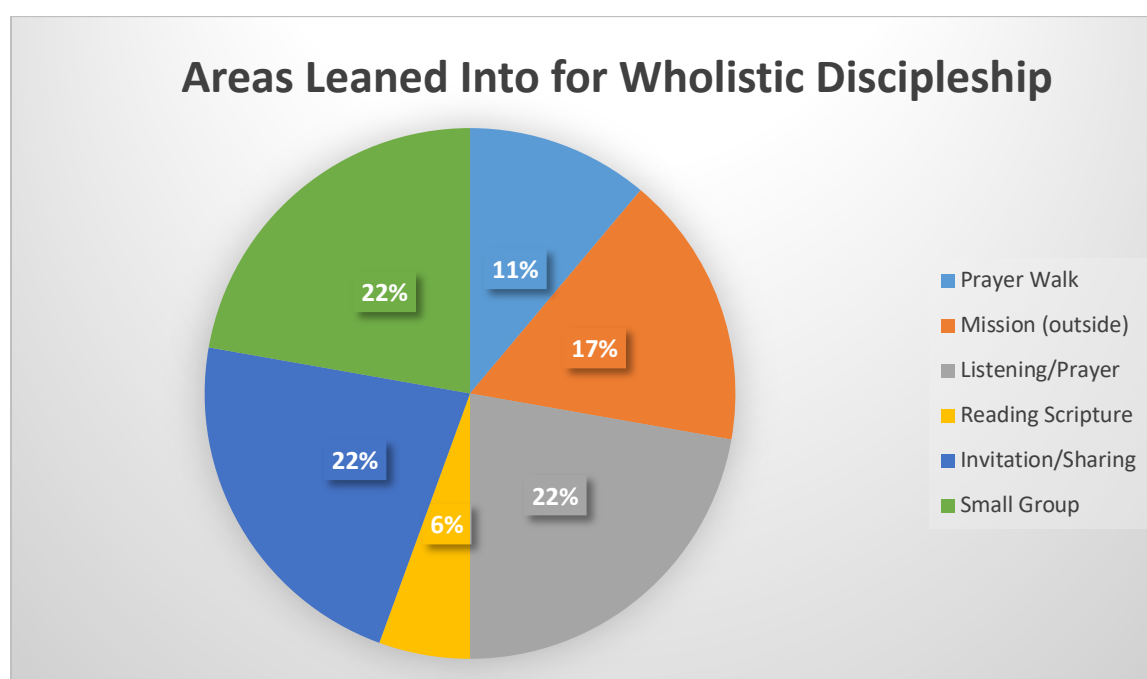


Figure 19. Areas Leaned Into for Wholistic Discipleship

Figure 19 is a more complex pie chart that shows multiple answers of the most commonly discussed ways or areas that participants personally lean into regarding wholistic discipleship in their neighborhood, career, family life, etc. The most commonly selected was a three-way tie depicting participants leveraging invitation and sharing, listening and prayer, and

²⁵ Per interview with researcher on July 3rd, 2024.

²⁶ Per interview with researcher on July 12th, 2024.

small group interactions as they lean into discipleship, mission, and prayer. The next response was mission. Note the distinction here is externally facing. This left the remaining two least communicated as prayer walks and reading Scripture. While everyone has a unique way of living out and growing in each of the areas of wholistic discipleship, it was helpful to see what some of the driving factors are that help people determine how to live out mission, prayer, and discipleship in their everyday life. This is an aspect of equipping. Even though it was statistically the same, it is important to state that most commonly, wholistic discipleship is lived out in a small group setting.

There was some initial disbelief when the group leaders heard the overwhelming statistics regarding 71% either do not at all or are inconsistent with spending five or more minutes of missional prayer in their group in Figure 7. This left the remaining stating that they do so frequently or at every group meeting. Unusually though, when asked what they do differently, it became apparent that many participants agreed they fit into these two qualifications. Participant I leads a group that incorporates missional prayer in their group but recommends they need to stretch themselves even more by “turning it up” to have a “greater saturation” of prayer.²⁷

Some of the participants listed they do not or cannot incorporate missional prayer for specific reasons that will remain anonymous in order to protect the identity of this group. Two participants stated that missional prayer requires one to be “intentional” with it in a group context. There is an awareness that the group was not “unintentional” but maybe could be more intentional.²⁸ Another person said general prayers are still a good part of the group, but not specific to missional prayers focusing on their external communities, neighborhoods, or global

²⁷ Per interview with researcher July 1st, 2024.

²⁸ Per interview with researcher on July 17th, 2024.

aspects unless it is tied to a “cultural event.”²⁹ One participant stated, “The numbers sound feasible,” and “It was never a focus” for their group.³⁰ Whereas another shared that they have “missionally minded people” in their group, but they “[infrequently] pray over neighborhoods and nations.”³¹ Below, in Figure 20 is a list of recorded responses collected from the interviews.

While this question was not meant to single out a group for their lack of incorporating missional prayer, it did bring about an awareness as each participant was walking through their responses, especially if they shared the need to be more strategic or intentional. As the researcher was interviewing, it was evident the participants expressed an immediate implementation that could be directly applied within the small group. For example, Participant J said, “Spending time [praying] for the neighborhood or broader city could be an area we improve upon.”³² Three of the participants even shared what they could be doing as great additions to their group that would bring about a more missional stance in prayer and or even “serving together.”³³

²⁹ Per interview with the researcher on, July 12th, 2024.

³⁰ Per interview with the researcher on June 26th, 2024.

³¹ Per interview with the researcher on July 2nd, 2024.

³² Per interview with the researcher on July 3rd, 2024.

³³ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

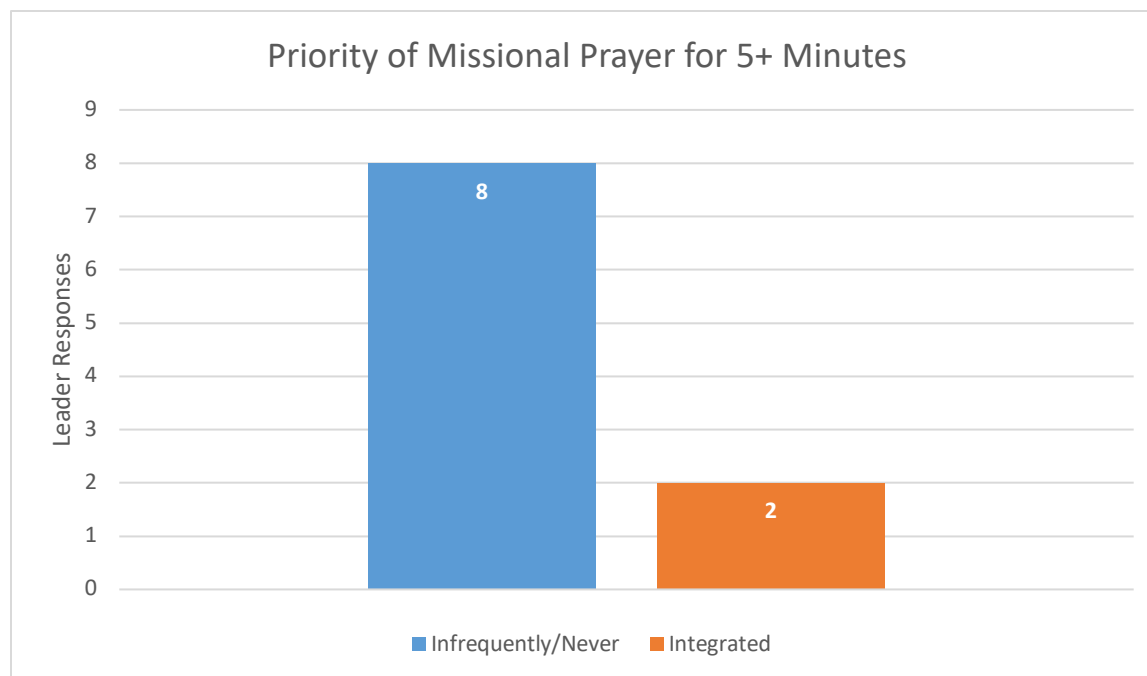


Figure 20. Priority of Missional Prayer for 5+ Minutes

This data set, found in Figure 20, documents the narrative conversation in statistical form. Missional prayer in this context was anything outside of the individual life of a small group participant. It could be anything from the neighborhood to the local Dream Center to the nation or nations. It was very clearly stated by the leaders themselves when asked the question that, as a group, they either are infrequently praying with a missional focus or they are integrating it in some fashion. The data outcome from this question denotes eight participants stating they infrequently or never pray with a missional focus, and two stating there is an integration of missionally focused prayer. This was an additionally asked question, similar to Figure 7 with the general survey, in order to understand a more concentrated effort of missional prayer amidst a select group of leaders.

While only three questions were consistently asked of every leader in the interviews, if time permitted, a couple of additional questions were asked. The remaining portion of the

interview results are in the optional category. Following along throughout the interviews, the researcher began to notice a change shifting from “what is” to “what could be.” For instance, when asked, “What do you presently do to ensure that people under your care in small groups live integrated, not compartmentalized or dis-integrated faith lifestyles?” some responded what they could be doing differently. One participant clarified that some of teaching more on wholistic discipleship may be discerning which area is needed in order to ensure it is “well-rounded.”³⁴ In addition, they stated one way of helping people in their small group live integrated faith lifestyles is by not “treating evangelism as an extra special thing; or making it all appear magnified/glorified as if it is [more] than an everyday [activity]...[you] don’t have to just look for a sprained ankle to bless people.”³⁵

One group leader said it is very concerning to them because it is a challenge to encourage people to “bring their whole selves.”³⁶ As a result, this leader tries to meet with group members in addition outside of the group time to make sure they see the leader live their whole life, not just two hours a week. They believe “honest, transparent lifestyles help hold accountability.”³⁷ Participant J, a different leader, also agreed, “It is easy for the small group to go separate ways. That is when dis-integration happens, but staying in touch with one another and meeting up with each other for meals, they start to get a sense of belonging as to not drop off.”³⁸ Similarly,

³⁴ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

³⁵ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

³⁶ Per interview with the researcher on July 17th, 2024.

³⁷ Per interview with the researcher on July 17th, 2024.

³⁸ Per interview with the researcher on July 3rd, 2024.

another leader said the integration is probably tied more to the risk of “being vulnerable” and a desire to be able to share from a place of “testimony to breakthrough.”³⁹

While some leaders understood they have a role to play in the transformative lifestyle of other individuals, some other leaders doubt this. One stated that they work hard at being present in the lives of people but that there was not anything they could do to help ensure group members were walking in integrated faith lifestyles other than “continuing to build relationships and let them know resources available.”⁴⁰ Participant H communicated that they do not check in strategically as much on the people in small groups, implying that there is not as much interaction outside of group time as there is during group time.⁴¹

Some leaders were asked what they “put in place to ensure mission, discipleship, and prayer remain an active part of their life and how they continue to grow.” Of those that were asked, the responses collected all answered with the same response, stating spiritual disciplines. They utilize spiritual disciplines to grow in these areas. More specifically the graph on the next page in Figure 21 displays which disciplines in particular. Of the six that answered this question, the results showed that by the majority, prayer and quick obedience to the Holy Spirit’s promptings demonstrated the most significant finding. The second and third most significant data findings were statistically equal, Serving or Leading, along with the topic of Bible Study. This focus of Bible Study was distinctly different as a participant, not a leader, and the discipline of getting in the Word. The second to last discipline was Accountability with others so that one does not have to walk alone. The final discipline a leader stated was Attending Church. There are

³⁹ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

⁴⁰ Per interview with the researcher on July 12th, 2024.

⁴¹ Per interview with the researcher on July 2nd, 2024.

more than six responses as each of the six leaders communicated more than one spiritual discipline.

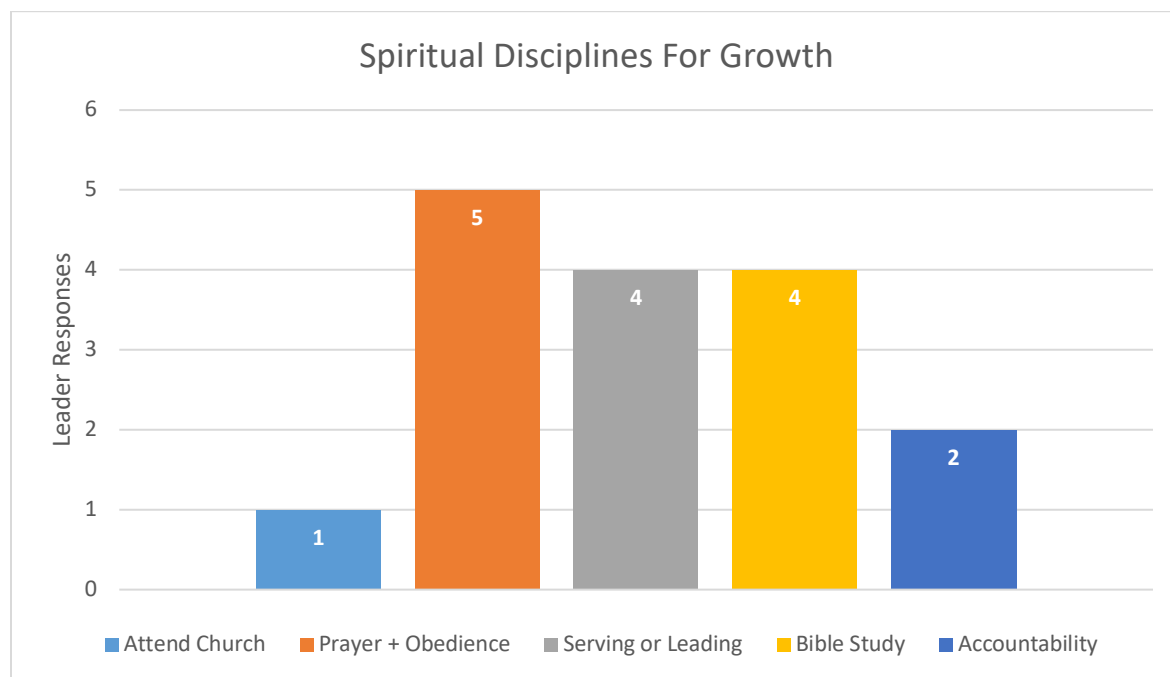


Figure 21. Spiritual Disciplines for Growth

Next, some leaders were asked how they personally “develop an integrated wholistic lifestyle and the lives around them.” One leader pointed out that it is two-fold, both attending church and small groups. More specifically, they stated, “It’s common to seek weekly church attendance and expect to be discipled, but in order to be discipled to, it requires more ministry team context, mission team context, or small groups. Church is better than nothing, but in terms of discipleship goes, it requires more.”⁴² Another leader honestly confessed and made a bold statement saying, “I lived a compartmentalized faith until the Lord accelerated a growth spirt in my life.”⁴³ Whereas another leader shared that Sabbath has helped them better develop an

⁴² Per interview with the researcher on June 26th, 2024.

⁴³ Per interview with the researcher on July 3rd, 2024.

integrated wholistic lifestyle. Sabbath has helped them have an “eternal perspective instead of temporal or what’s happening now.”⁴⁴

The final optional question that was answered by some stated, “How do you see prayer having a direct correlated impact in your city and neighborhood?” Participant D stated prayer is about “praying God’s Word back to Him.”⁴⁵ As a result, it “enables a partnership” that pushes back from the belief that one is just “hoping things would happen” or falls into the belief that “whatever happens” happens.⁴⁶ Participant I says prayer is about a “receiving relationship in Scripture,” a key focus of “abiding” before being “launched” to live it out.⁴⁷ Identifying the differences of perspective was important to highlight, as one leader views the responsibility of prayer in a neighborhood or city, other leaders have trouble wrestling with the idea. Participant B replied it is easier to assume people are just plugged into a church and assume “people’s lifestyles or involvement without really knowing in large cities.”⁴⁸ Another leader said they could not “visually see anything obvious happening in the city or neighborhood” tied to prayer.⁴⁹ One leader establishes that it is a “mindset shift” for them to pray for a city or a neighborhood.⁵⁰ While they continue to state that NCC is good at this, it is harder to zoom out and have the “broader perspective.”⁵¹ Another leader expressed the nature of living in the city and experiencing city hardships that have hindered them from seeing God at work or answering

⁴⁴ Per interview with the researcher on July 3rd, 2024.

⁴⁵ Per interview with the researcher on July 12th, 2024.

⁴⁶ Per interview with the researcher on July 12th, 2024.

⁴⁷ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

⁴⁸ Per interview with the researcher on June 26th, 2024.

⁴⁹ Per interview with the researcher on July 3rd, 2024.

⁵⁰ Per interview with the researcher on July 17th, 2024.

⁵¹ Per interview with the researcher on July 17th, 2024.

prayers in the city.⁵² At the end of the day, they stated that they have to “believe and trust” that something is happening. They just have trouble seeing it for the entire city.⁵³ It is far easier for this individual to see it in the day-to-day of one’s relationships.⁵⁴ In fact, this leader has decided to change where they pray, to get a good view of the city, and to pray for the city not just with their words but also by replicating it in a physical posture too. Another leader agreed that it is far easier to see God in personal relationships than it is in the city. But at the end of the day said, “Prayer makes you love people more, makes you love the city more. If there are frustrations in a city, prayer enlightens or makes it clear.”⁵⁵

In conclusion, Participant A said the opposite of some other leaders. They see prayer all over actively at work, and the leader specifically sees “answers to prayer in the neighborhood.”⁵⁶ They have learned to “not doubt or question prayer’s impact in the city/neighborhood as it has a property that has a ripple effect beyond what we can see.”⁵⁷ Overall, nine were asked this optional question. Five of them stated a portion of doubt about the impact prayer has on the city, even if they completely believed and saw the impact of personal prayer. Praying for and seeing the results city-wide was thought to be more challenging. This was categorized as uncertain or unaware. Four leaders stated prayer in a city has an impact and continued to list out the responses as to how they see prayers answered. This is displayed in Figure 22 below.

⁵² Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

⁵³ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

⁵⁴ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

⁵⁵ Per interview with the researcher on July 12th, 2024.

⁵⁶ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

⁵⁷ Per interview with the researcher on July 1st, 2024.

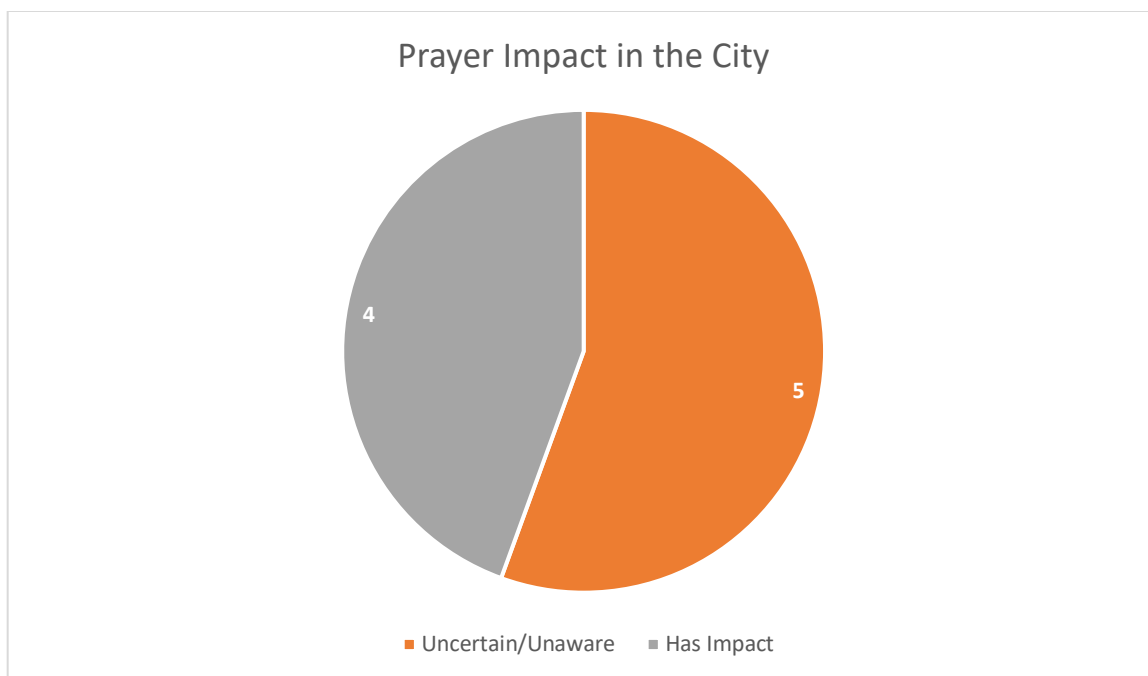


Figure 22. Prayer Impact in the City

Prayer Course Results

There was an initial understanding that each participant was agreeing to be a part of at least three of the four sessions. Participants had initially agreed to attend three sessions. There were unexpected situations that came up during the time period; however, participants were diligent in attending as many sessions as possible. While online accommodations were also made available, the majority of participants took advantage of the in-person opportunity. For the first session of the focus group, a PDF handout was sent out in advance as well as an agenda discussing what was going to be shared. See notes in Appendix M for more information. Both PowerPoint notes and the agenda are listed.

During all four weeks, it is important to note this group had a high level of engagement. In all of the small groups led by the researcher, there was never a moment of silence where someone was not sharing. Discussion questions went beyond what was offered, and one in the

room could tell that the participants actively engaged in expressing ideas, sharing experiences, and sharing challenging thoughts about things they had never considered. As a result, the four-week course certainly could have been extended an extra week because the dialogue was immensely rich, even beyond the PowerPoint slides. There was extensive engagement during each session and interactive discussion. During some weeks, every PowerPoint slide was covered. During other weeks, a remaining slide or two was encouraged to serve as devotional time throughout the week. One important notation is that this course was not recorded.

Knowing that each follower of Christ has different propensities based on strengths and wirings, during one of the weeks, each participant was asked as a round robin to share which of the three aspects of wholistic discipleship comes more naturally to them and which one is the hardest for them to live out. The results in Figure 23 on the next page explain in greater detail the area that was the most challenging for the eight participants who showed up that week. Both Discipleship and Mission were equally considered to be the most challenging topics that leaders related to the least.

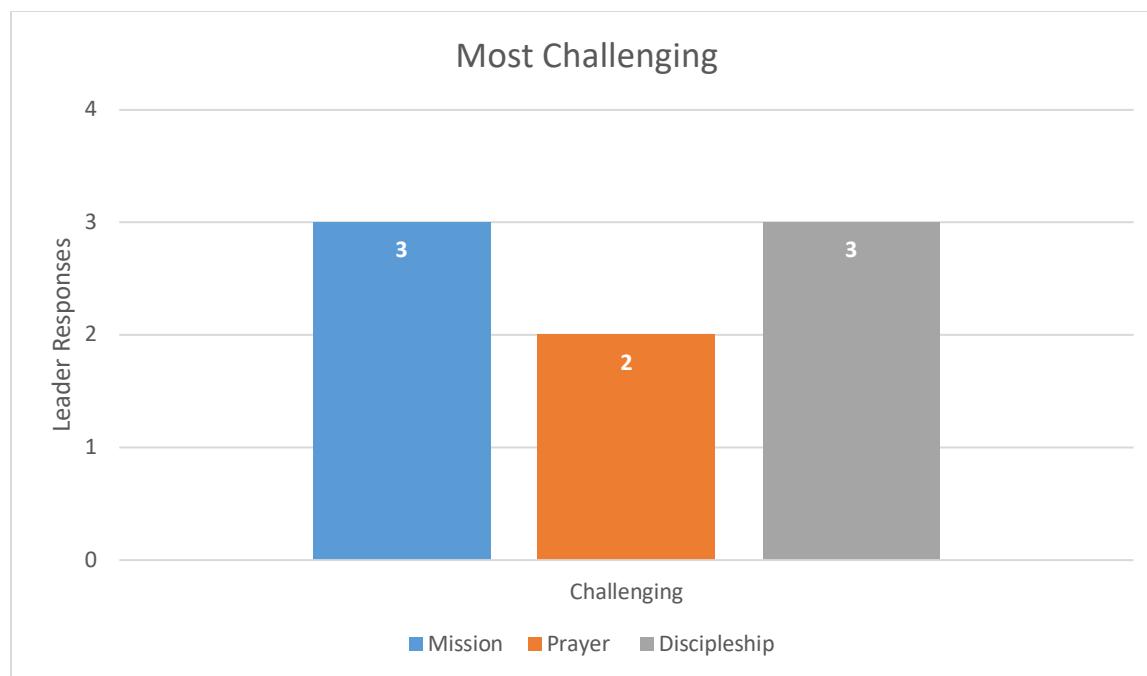


Figure 23. Most Challenging

The following week of the course, as the participants and researcher were discussing prayer evangelism, each participant unpacked any negative views of evangelism and how that has sometimes caused a rift or disconnect in ministry. This was completely organic and helpful to hear leaders share it made them think of “street evangelism” every time that word came up.⁵⁸ Another person thought of “unreached people groups” whereas another leader chimed in with a different definition of “kindness evangelism.”⁵⁹ An additional leader articulated evangelism has been a “scary word” most often associated with “televangelism” or “a political view with evangelical votes.”⁶⁰ These were unexpected answers and were helpful context clues to further understand how one translates keywords that could potentially carry history, a negative

⁵⁸ Per conversation on July 21st, 2024.

⁵⁹ Per conversation on July 21st, 2024.

⁶⁰ Per conversation on July 21st, 2024.

experience, or even a different understanding based on education, life experiences, and upbringing. In addition to these thought connections, additional definitions were asked, such as, “What does contextualization mean?”⁶¹ Repeatedly, week after week, there seemed to be a consensus around the same topic, regardless of whether Prayer Evangelism, Missional Discipleship, or the early church came up. Conversation continued to return to the same common themes, “Abiding” and “John 14-17.”⁶² One leader even highlighted the importance of abiding being the common foundational thread throughout all of prayer, mission, and discipleship, seeing it as “being over doing and people over productivity.”⁶³

The following week, a lot of time was spent on the Great Commission and unpacking more of what discipleship looks like in everyday life. One leader openly and honestly shared they have “never considered their authority to baptize or do what pastors do” when talking about the Great Commission that Jesus gave His disciples.⁶⁴ There also was much discussion around the Great Commission representing both local neighborhoods and expanding farther out to cities and countries. While some leaders leaned more towards thinking the Great Commission was about traveling overseas, others referenced the Great Commission as more local. One leader, when referencing local practices, said it is like being “on mission where you are in a grocery store, and that is a form of discipleship.”⁶⁵ Another leader mentioned that a personal

⁶¹ Per conversation on July 21st, 2024.

⁶² Per conversation on July 14th, 21st, 28th, and Aug 11th, 2024.

⁶³ Per conversation on July 21st, 2024.

⁶⁴ Per conversation on July 28th, 2024.

⁶⁵ Per conversation on July 28th, 2024.

understanding of global missions is to “fire you up to share the gospel in a different way” upon return.⁶⁶

In the final week, the topics discussed included the early church, Antioch, and Washington, D.C. The study covered Acts 13-16 and pointed out key things of the early church, such as household impact, Missio Dei, and city-wide impact. One leader said in response to, “What impact could you have if you believed how you followed Jesus could impact multiple households where you lived?” that there would be a “multiplication impact.”⁶⁷ Another participant added it would impact through “families healing,” and another offered it would form a “network of believers, not just your single home.”⁶⁸ Another leader joined in and said that they realized it is possible to “buy the lie of satan keeping us small”⁶⁹ in reference to the need for thinking bigger that our faith can impact cities. The concluding challenge for the group was a consensus that the researcher and participants would grow in “proximity to the Presence of God and our love for people.”⁷⁰

Focus Group with Conversation Guide Results

The final portion of this study is the conversation guide used in the focus group. The questions asked were partly from the questionnaire and interview questions, though not limited to those. This time, though, the questions were asked in a group setting after the prayer course. A few of the takeaways when the leaders were asked, “In what ways do they feel better equipped as

⁶⁶ Per conversation with the researcher on July 28th, 2024.

⁶⁷ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁶⁸ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁶⁹ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁷⁰ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

a leader?” are as follows. One leader stated that they feel more encouraged now to see the “bigger mission and how it impacts the community.”⁷¹ They also shared how they see the dots connecting between work, group life, and personal life. Another appreciated the structure of the course and said that the course gave them material to “pass on to [their] group.”⁷² Someone else seconded that, saying participating in the course provided a way for more fruitful discussion in their group. Another leader shared how they feel they have a “better overall understanding of discipleship and want to be more intentional.”⁷³ More specifically, one leader stated that it was a conviction moment for them, and they have “recommitted their abiding time with the Lord.”⁷⁴

When asked, “What was the most valuable thing they learned from the prayer course?” two leaders stated that seeing the concentric circles referenced by the researcher was the most valuable for them to visualize. However, one person stated that it was not just the visualization but rather,

It is viewing the whole experience with God and how it affects each of the three pieces prayer, mission, and discipleship all working together. We are pioneers. We are not called to settle, so we are on a continual journey with all of those things operating at the same time.⁷⁵

In addition, another themed response that greatly impacted leaders was the discussion around prayer and committed time listening to the Lord each week. One leader even mentioned that they have never thought about spending time in quiet prayer for longer periods of time because, naturally, they are an extravert, which sounded painful to them. Once they opened up,

⁷¹ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁷² Per an email with the researcher on August 19th, 2024.

⁷³ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁷⁴ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁷⁵ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

another individual opened up, stating the same. They both walked away from the course with a tangible, practical new challenge to try. In conclusion to this question, a leader emailed in a response due to travel, saying they were grateful for the course and that there were “Spirit-led [opportunities] to offer prayer to communities as a way to encourage people in Jesus.”⁷⁶

Some of the conclusive takeaways from the debrief time were participants stating that they had new ideas, such as “prayer walking in their hometown where the majority in the city do not think about faith...this would have never occurred to me before this course.”⁷⁷ Another leader said it created a great “shift in being present with God and with people” for them.⁷⁸ One subject said that even though there were prayer and mission opportunities offered at the church, such as neighborhood prayer walks, they “do not do anything with their neighborhood,” and as a result, this challenged them in the “way they view mission.”⁷⁹ One leader concluded, “The course challenged me to consider how I can be discipled better and how I can disciple better.”⁸⁰

Finally, each leader was asked what difference does this make or “what are they doing differently or more intentionally in [their] group context now that [they have] completed the prayer course (if anything)?” While each answer was unique to the group leader and specific to their group context, the researcher put it all in a graph so that the readers can visualize the vast array of practical steps leaders are leaving with after completing the prayer course. This is on display in the practical takeaways chart shown in Figure 24. While most responses differ because

⁷⁶ Per an email with the researcher on August 19th, 2024.

⁷⁷ Per conversation with researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁷⁸ Per conversation with researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁷⁹ Per conversation with researcher on August 11th, 2024.

⁸⁰ Per conversation with researcher on August 11th, 2024.

the nature of each group differs, the leading response is “bringing an awareness of what they have learned to [their] group to share, discuss, and dialogue.”⁸¹

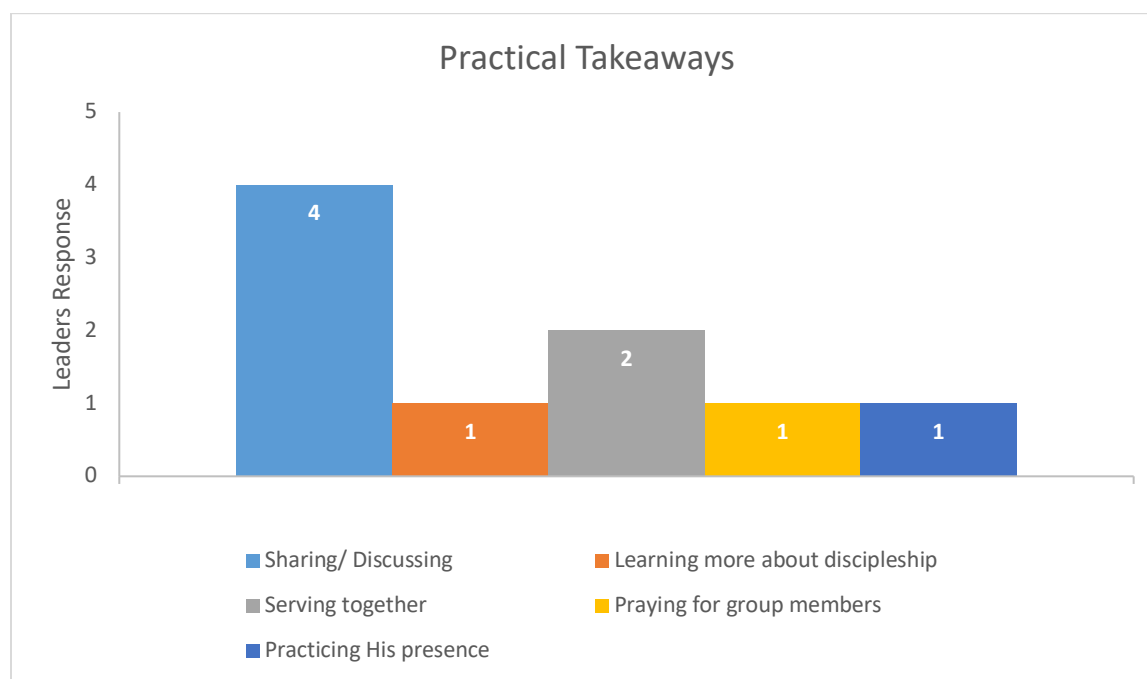


Figure 24. Practical Takeaways

Data Analysis

This section is considered to be emergent data that intersected showing changes from a compartmentalized faith that developed into an integrated lifestyle or a disintegrated lifestyle that is now showing transformation contributing to wholistic ecosystems. Two points of data that could be traced to original data point questions found in the early questionnaire are listed below to show movement. Throughout the responses to “How equipped do you feel to teach, model, and represent an active lifestyle of evangelism through the form of prayer and why?” there were stories provided that gave evidence of how one has grown, developed, or thought to do

⁸¹ Per conversation with researcher on August 11th, 2024.

something different in the opportunities God has provided through divine appointments and encounters. Of the nine who participated in the conversation guide debrief at the end of the study, six said they were “more equipped,” and three alluded to the fact that they feel the same in Figure 25 below. This drastically differs from the survey results of the four leaders before the prayer course, who did not feel equipped at all, as shown in Figure 12. Previously, it was categorized as four leaders saying they were “not equipped” and four leaders saying they were “very well equipped” or “moderately equipped.” The remaining two were unknown. The first figure stated that 40% felt equipped; however, after completing the prayer course, almost 67% shared they felt more equipped than before. It could potentially be higher; however, one participant did not provide any results.

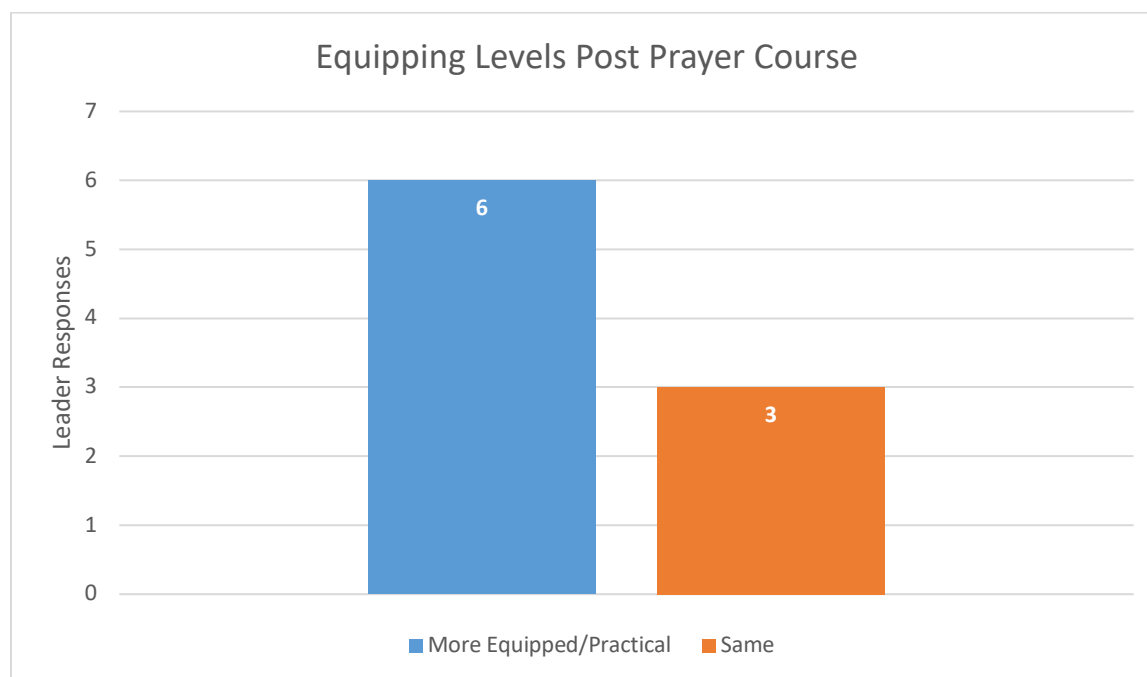


Figure 25. Equipping Levels Post Prayer Course

In addition, after the prayer course, leaders were asked again, “Of the three, where do you feel NCC is the strongest (in teaching, equipping, and modeling): discipleship, prayer, and

mission?” The answers are listed below in Figure 26. Figure 11 outlines that before the prayer course, group leaders identified that five leaders believed prayer is the strongest at NCC, mission is the second strongest, with four leaders stating so, and one leader stating discipleship. After the awareness of this prayer course, the results are as follows: six leaders stated prayer, two leaders stated mission, and one leader stated discipleship. While one individual did not participate in the debrief, the data significantly concludes that leaders became more aware of prayer as a strength at NCC. Possibly, each leader began to hear it more frequently or maybe was more attentive to prayer in weekend messages. In addition, it became a focal point for leaders as they were in this prayer course. As a result, there was a 17% increase in articulating an emphasis on prayer being the strongest area at NCC when it comes to the response of what is taught, how leaders are equipped, and how it is modeled for NCCers. With that increase, it resulted in the response of discipleship remaining the same. The emphasis on mission being the strongest interface at NCC earlier decreased by 18%.

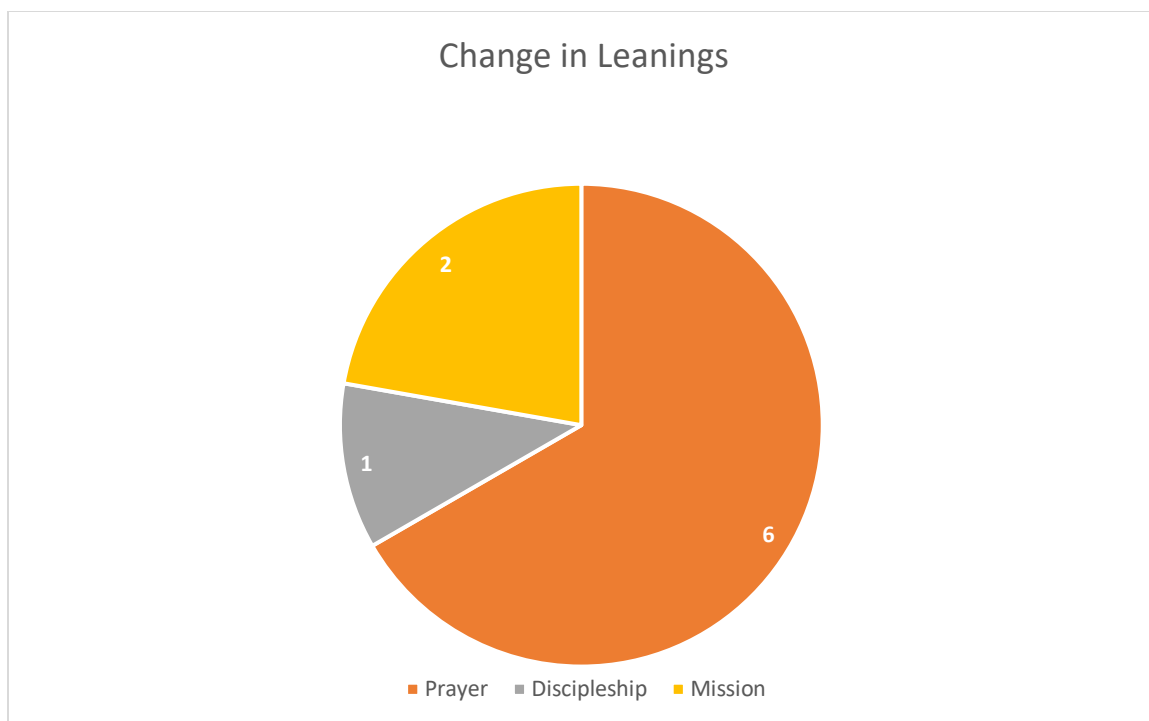


Figure 26. Change in Leanings

Uniquely, there is not only a need for greater awareness, but there is also a discrepancy in some of the stated items between Figures 9 and 10. The data finds that almost 50% state that serving the community is a top priority however, only 30.2% engage weekly or bi-weekly. This would necessitate additional research, specifically studying the practical engagement of mission. If one intends to study each component of wholistic discipleship separately, such as a study on mission, a study on prayer, and a study on discipleship, then the recommendation of this study would demonstrate additional research is needed. However, this study was intended to study discipleship as a whole to see where there is a disconnect between an active lifestyle in this particular area versus just a theoretical perspective of knowing key aspects pertinent to a biblical worldview. However, it is also noted that within this data, there could additionally be extended research from the baseline of data points provided in regards to wholistic discipleship.

Summary of Results

Ultimately, these results articulate several key findings that can be summarized from the initial generalized data survey to the debrief after the prayer course. Specifically, that data indicated the growth of a topic could potentially be linked to greater results when it is at the forefront of the focus for an individual. Explicitly, the research survey questions and findings confirmed the established connections between individual growth and the focus on prayer. The compelling data particularly articulates that NCC is the strongest in prayer, with a present growth rate of 17%, as evidenced in the findings, expressions, and stories shared in the prayer course. Prior to the course, only five people responded, saying that prayer was one of the strongest teaching and equipping points NCC offers. Several steps later and after an entire course, the findings associated with each research question support that prayer has more pivotal findings than mission. Research also tells readers that the more people see something the more people become aware of it, like the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon, more commonly known as the frequency illusion.⁸² For example, once someone buys a red car, that person is more likely to identify red cars on the road. The same is true with this research, where greater awareness closes the gap. The gap closes as equipping occurs. The effect of equipping results in practical lifestyle changes, which then can develop opportunities for influencing multiple communities, households, and a city at large. As stated by one of the leaders, it is imperative for the sake of the gospel and the full fruition of the life of a follower of Christ to no longer “buy the lie of satan keeping us small.”⁸³

⁸² “Frequency Illusion,” Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon, Psychology Today, last modified 2024, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/frequency-illusion>.

⁸³ Per conversation with the researcher on August 11th, 2024.

Secondly, Figure 6 identifies data that shows discipleship is most often heard in the context of mission, prayer, and small groups. In fact, 40.4% of leaders say they hear that. However, after analyzing all of the remaining results, it is clear that this is a unique data point because if discipleship is the most frequently heard, it still routinely demonstrates that a greater level of equipping is needed. These data points showed a resounding large number, portraying that 40% of leaders highlighted ongoing discipleship as an area of need in Figure 13. In addition, the data indicates a relative weakness in discipleship. This also identifies areas of development, process improvement, and ongoing opportunities for growth in discipleship at NCC displayed in Figure 11 as well as Figure 23 listing discipleship as the most challenging aspect of wholistic discipleship.

One interesting consideration is that discipleship consistently is identified as the lowest among data points. This necessitates there needs to be a more concentrated effort and energy in this area for alignment purposes, equipping, and empowerment. If discipleship is the weakest perceived link, that means that it is not equipping in a myriad of things such as biblical literacy and spiritual disciplines, in the way the NCC staff has hoped. In addition, there is an automatic implication that there is a gap in equipping, modeling, and teaching on missional discipleship and prayer evangelism. A domino effect can occur with a trickling impact throughout the congregation.

This collective data also points to the disconnect that was originally stated in the study in Chapter One. The problem presented was the disconnect between the knowledge of evangelistic discipleship and incarnational witnessing amongst group leaders at NCC. While one naturally may assume that the bulk of the research will be found in answers associated with the prayer and mission data points, this research concludes that the lack of data points in the discipleship realm

is driving the narrative, showing the need for greater integration amongst prayer and mission.

The data indicates discipleship is at a disintegrated state presently at the intersection of the head and heart of a leader.

Ultimately, without discipleship being the core focus, it can become disintegrated or put aside as an addition to the rest of the ministries instead of the driving force. Also, this research objectively communicates and goes beyond identifying a gap or disconnect. Instead, it communicates a deficiency of wholistic discipleship as it relates to prayer team leads, ministry staff, or even whole departments responsible for providing the equipping, modeling, and teaching. It also communicates that leaders are dependent upon this type of resourcing and support. This is most likely not the intended case but could be a byproduct of what is happening under the current of a fast-moving church in a transient urban city.

Overall, the dynamics of how each group identified or described discipleship, mission, and prayer differed. This also shows a clear distinction in the data for ways NCC can further develop capacity. What one may define as prayer evangelism or missional discipleship will differ from group to group. What remains the same is the need for greater training in what wholistic discipleship is and how to live out the Great Commission and Great Commandment, both in everyday life and across the globe. One cannot know, change, or grow if there is a lack of awareness, as this only expands the gap of the unknown. The same also applies to discipleship. The evidence and results found in this research can only bring about an even greater awareness from both the perspective of a leader and the leadership at NCC.

In conclusion, the key outcomes from this research fall into two different categories. The first category revealed that the data leads moved towards a focus of discipleship, more than the focus of mission or prayer. This is always important to follow the data findings to maintain

objectivity. However, the noticing of this shift is only looking at the data at a surface level. One anchor point that helps understand the data is that most leaders could interpret the definition of discipleship as internally focused within the small group with things such as biblical literacy and spiritual formation. This common definition actually creates a split point between the data.

Varying views appeared throughout in regard to how discipleship is defined.

The second largest takeaway is that the data unpacks discipleship with a greater concentrated focus. For example, while discipleship is frequently stated in multiple figures as a strength through biblical literacy and biblical teaching (see Figures 4, 5, and 6), it only remains a strength as long as discipleship remains within the context of the small group in and of itself. The more the data expands beyond the reach of the group, such as evangelistic discipleship in Figure 14, serving the community in Figure 10, engaging in impacting the city in Figure 9, or understanding where wholistic discipleship is experienced in Figure 15, the more it weakens. For example, the data identifies two very different outcomes. Most leaders say they study biblical curriculum regularly (see Figure 4) and also have a great need for ongoing discipleship as an area of growth (see Figure 13). This demonstrates a juxtaposition if the leaders see discipleship as something they are already studying. This would point in the analysis that there are different working definitions and quite possibly the leaders could be saying they are actively studying Scripture (as understood in Figure 5), but they potentially are struggling with knowing how to apply and implement wholistic discipleship outside of their small group (see Figures 14 and 15). Implementation and impact are key for wholistic discipleship. While there is a direct correlation that wholistic discipleship is most expressed or experienced within small groups, the data communicates wholistic discipleship is more seen in small groups than it is in everyday lifestyle interactions. This is also exhibited in Figure 23, discipleship and mission are stated as the most

challenging for leaders. As a result, this further expands the “transformational gap” mentioned in Chapter One that Richard Lovelace explains where one can have an internal change without it externally touching every part and life around you.⁸⁴ It is attributed to the knowledge of Christ, salvation, and discipleship without the immediate expression through embodiment. An understanding of discipleship falls short of disciple-making.

As originally stated in Chapter One, the problem presented is not a lack of biblical knowledge gained through study. This was also confirmed through multiple data points. The problem presented was the disconnect of the impact beyond the weekly circle and outside of the immediate group. The data also confirms several areas illustrating great strengths so long as they remain tied to and within the small group. Those same strengths are not transferred externally to the community or city at large, which would be the difference between the ability of “micro” and macro changes.⁸⁵ While there was immense growth in the prayer outlook as a strength of NCC (see Figure 26), and there were several individual testimonies tied to a new perspective of prayer from each of the leaders shared in the focus group, the outcome of the purpose of this study changed. It leaned less away from prayer being directly connected to evangelism as a way of everyday life and instead, prayer demonstrated a greater correlation of impact to discipleship. This resulted in an analysis stating two things. First, the transformation occurred in real-time when there was a connecting of dots that occurred in the lives of the group leaders when the time was taken to work towards closing a gap between knowledge and praxis. This research data signifies an increased understanding of the relationship of discipleship and prayer as more intricately connected, intertwining in both practice and knowledge. Secondly, there may be a

⁸⁴ Alan Andrews, ed., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*, 103.

⁸⁵ Petra Kuppinger, ed., *Emergent Spaces: Change and Innovation in Small Urban*, 51.

great understanding of the Great Commandment in community, but living out the Great Commission beyond invisible borders and boundaries fell short. If discipleship is a weakening area, and yet 70.6% of leaders (see Figure 8) believe everyone has the gift of evangelism, the Great Commission will remain marginalized and limited without mobilization within the city or beyond. As stated in Chapter One, this will impact both evangelistic discipleship and incarnational witnessing, which is what is needed to fulfill the Great Commission.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Research Implications

This research distinctively shows an increased understanding of the relationship between discipleship and prayer as more intricately connected, intertwining in both practice and knowledge. It also portrays a need for a wholistic standard of mission and prayer being essential components of discipleship. The researcher has been in discipleship work for more than a decade. It is apparent that even with learning various types of models, including those that are both historical and present-day models, the given models aim to provide examples of evangelistic lifestyles within the small group world that leaders are able to implement immediately. Similar models are often used widely across various church contexts, thus potentially perpetuating an existing gap through replication. Regardless of the context, including National Community Church, it is evident in the research that gaps have existed and continue to exist. The research findings from this project imply solutions are at hand and necessary simultaneously, which speaks to the desire for transformation occurring to counter static, repetitive models. While this is not a specific issue tied only to NCC, it is something that can specifically be resolved at NCC. This research analysis intends to assist in strategically closing the gap.

Even throughout studying external resources beyond what was conducted at NCC, the researcher was unable to find additional models that took it a step further, encompassing wholistic discipleship fully. Instead, as stated early on, most frequently, only two-thirds of the

essential components of the Great Commission are evident within small group contexts. The focus is most often prayer and small groups or small groups and mission. As a result, even throughout the period of this study, many resources still fall short of further missional discipleship and prayer anchor points of spiritual formation. Without prayer central to discipleship, it weakens discipleship and over time, hinders mission. While the direct results found in Chapter Four did not articulate the challenge of prayer as an overarching theme, it did specifically state missional prayer was a missing component, which ties back to ‘prayer evangelism.’¹ In addition, it stated that discipleship was perceived to be the weakest point of the three at NCC, thus furthering the need for greater teaching and equipping. Without the integrated picture, it furthers the gap of wholistic discipleship and allows ministries to continually perpetuate the cycle that most often goes unnoticed until it is too late to make great adjustments that shift the results that change discipleship trajectories.

As an outcome, this gap has remained, which is easily overlooked and unnoticed, forming a lack of connection to everyday contextualization within the public square, marketplaces, neighborhoods, cities, and homes. Any deficiency in growth in discipleship, results in a direct impact of discipleship outside of the church as well. This, in return, disintegrates spiritual formation, impact, and multiplication. Ultimately, this forms a negative domino effect when, in reality, prayer, mission, and discipleship ought to be the most integrated in these places and spaces. It ought to be the most contagious amidst lifestyles of praxis and deep conviction, similar to the parable of yeast (Matthew 13:33) that permeates every part of the life of an individual, just as shown in the concentric circles of Figure 1 below.

¹ Thomas Carruth, “Prayer Evangelism,” *The Asbury Seminarian* 12, no.1 (1958): 15-18, <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2131&context=asburyjournal>.

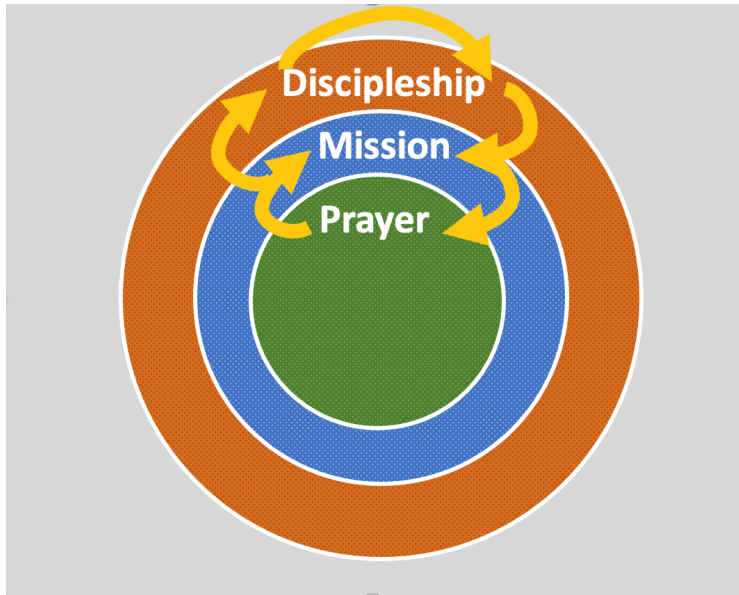


Figure 1. Concentric Circles

John D. Robb similarly summarizes when he says, “Could it be that prayer as perceived and practiced by ‘Great Commission Christians’ is a crucial missing link in the accomplishment of world evangelization?”² An analysis of the gap reveals that greater practical models with applied teaching are needed for implementation purposes in order to form a more rooted wholistic model within the context of local churches that are in the city centers of major metropolitan areas. Ultimately, this persistent gap in integration within the educational field of wholistic discipleship is self-perpetuating in a continuous cycle. Just as stated earlier in Chapter Two, it is historically where revival has come about when all three have converged in the life of a believer. While revivals are dependent upon the hand and manifestations of God, the posture and practices of wholistic discipleship are in the control of a follower of Christ.

² Robb, “Review of Prayer as a Strategic Weapon in Frontier Missions,” 23.

While this research cannot be aligned to a single formula, there is biblical precedence to show that prayer is similar to yeast, symbolically speaking, as it molds and is kneaded throughout mission and discipleship. The process then shifts awareness to be more aligned with the heart of God, resulting in the purpose of the Great Commission coming to life in congruence with the Great Commandment. Discipleship no longer becomes a means or a checklist but a way of living while remaining connected to the vine, “bearing fruit in every season” (Psalm 1:3, The Passion Translation). While this research is a contextualized snapshot located in Washington, D.C., it is transferrable beyond the city and beyond NCC. It is vast enough to be utilized in higher education publications, college campus ministries, or rural or suburban landscapes because the principles and ingredients are replicable, and wholistic discipleship crosses cultures, political spheres, age demographics, and denominations.

One of the larger outcomes of this study is a greater understanding and in-depth awareness of mission, prayer, and discipleship. This was a partially missing component when understanding the original meaning of the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the symbiotic relationship between the two. The research shows that in order to live out an integrated lifestyle, awareness is key and a necessary step. Most of the findings had a similar theme that could easily be attributed to either not knowing, being confused by, or a lack of awareness. While one section of results states that generally, prayer was heard in the weekend services and other spaces, noting what is most frequently communicated at NCC, the connecting of the dots for an average leader was filled with confusion, gaps, or assumptions. While prayer may have been largely heard at NCC, as portrayed in the results, it may not have been largely understood. In fact, most of the interviews pointed towards a need to dissect, uncover layers, or figure out a working definition respective to each individual. While varying opinions and perspectives are

essential to growth, if each person starts with a different definition of the Great Commission or Great Commandment, other than how Scripture lays it out and the historical precedence of orthodoxy of the church, one may miss the invitation to an overflowing lifestyle completely. It is a challenge to remain connected without a grounded understanding. While this certainly is not on the level of dogma or doctrine as a core belief of a Christian, it is tied to the DNA of a Christ-follower. It is important to note that this impacts lifestyles, not belief systems, but the lifestyle of one can directly impact the beliefs of another. While they are not dependent on each other, they certainly contribute to each other.

Last but not least, this is imperative to major metropolitan cities in the present day in order to be ahead of a new dynamic edge within Western Christianity. This study shows how important it is to be on the front end of a fast-moving train of a post-Christian society that is quickly impacting large cities within North America. In addition, it sets the stage for disciple-making with intended global growth, including the leading statistics of the Global South.³ If old models do not work in new times, the researcher has failed to adapt. Visionary leadership is essential to use new methods to meet the ever-changing needs of a local church and community. While the current times may be drastically different from biblical times, the cultural spreading of the gospel remains the same, just using a different method. In a society where a generation may not set foot in a church building, contextualization of the gospel to be communicated outward as an entire lifestyle is a non-negotiable. The Christian walk of prayer, mission, and discipleship lived out twenty-four-seven becomes the new normal. It is no longer reserved for two hours during small group and one hour on the weekend, specifically committed to a service and a group of Christ followers in a covenant community. Instead, discipleship is integrated into ways

³ Ho and Mak, "The Uniqueness of the Chinese Mission Movement," 60-61.

of living, families, and fabrics of society, carrying the good news wherever one goes with the utmost power and authority as Christ endowed and proclaimed his disciples would have. While this presently matters for years to come, the necessary changes at hand are tied to three key areas: awareness, alignment, and transformation.

Awareness

Overall, the analysis of these results broadened the perspective of the researcher to see that there is an existing vantage point from the leaders that differs from the vantage point of a staff leader. While varying views are usually important, this degree of differing views could actually create a misalignment from the original understanding of Scripture that, over time, becomes watered down and loses its potency. The differing viewpoints tended to focus more on how or if one lives this out instead of what one believes. As cited in Figures 8, 9, and 10, more than 70% agree evangelism is not reserved for a select few, but at the same time, the same leaders are not consistently serving in the community. This is where there is an awareness that may exist but does not translate to an active lifestyle within it. It is evident throughout the results that the leaders are not questioning the biblical principles of the Great Commandment or Great Commission. They are not questioning the importance of prayer, discipleship, or mission. Instead, they are uncertain of how to live it out. However, it was evident that some of the leaders are not even questioning how to live it out and have maintained disintegrated lifestyles because they do not have an understanding or perspective otherwise. To no fault of the participants, it is a common understanding that one does not know what one does not know. This is why an integration model growing in educating awareness of the original intentions of the gospel is key to helping people remain obedient to the promptings. Even though prayer was stated as being an aspect people were well aware of as a strength in Figure 11, communicated by NCC; it was still

evident that prayer, mission, and discipleship were very challenging for leaders, with discipleship and mission showing the most challenging in Figure 23. The question remains, how is it that there is ample communication and great challenges in the same areas simultaneously?

Quite possibly, the results are summarizing and projecting that the greater the awareness of a particular area, the less challenging it becomes. If people are more aware of prayer and taught different types of prayer, such as intercession as a form of evangelism and the prophetic, over time, the practice should become less challenging. These results are shown throughout Chapter Four. This summary also continues to prove that the areas where gaps remain will continue to produce more confusion. As a result, greater knowledge produces awareness that allows the practical application to flow from it, similar to the red car example used in Chapter Four. In other words, awareness grows intention. Intention enables transformation. The greatest finding of this research is not a new model, though it certainly points towards that as a component that will help. The greatest finding is also not that there is a lack of willingness on the part of the leader as that was disproven based on the transformation each leader went through in this course in Figure 25. This data shows that there is a hunger and high receptivity on the part of the leader. Far from a lack of willingness, the greatest finding of the data ties back to awareness and the degree of knowledge of discipleship, mission, and prayer, connecting to the everyday life of an individual. In a highly transient city that moves at a fast pace, discipleship requires a slowing down and a rootedness. When that is continually disrupted due to city challenges and limitations, it can create a hurdle to both personal awareness and practical application. The results clearly showed that it was not that the leaders could not put this into practice in their everyday lives. Instead, the research leads one to believe there just needs to be additional aid in

prompting the leaders to help connect the dots and see the ecosystem of wholistic discipleship as a whole.

The disconnect is also shown through the combination of Figure 11 and Figure 26, which asks, “What area NCC is the strongest in?” This is due in part because if mission and prayer are the most commonly understood, why is this not the highest practice lived out? Why does the concept seem to be understood well, but its praxis does not match in lifestyle? This was revealed in the study by less than 30% of participants saying they actively engage in missional prayer. From a staff perspective, this further confirms the need for there to be more strategic effort and partnership between the missions, prayer, and small group teams, focusing on what is mission, how NCC further equips in mission, and what are the practical implications of this impacting a small group or prayer life of an individual.

Alignment

Out of this research, in addition to awareness, a second great finding became apparent early on in the questionnaire with the ten individuals that there is a great need for terminology alignment. For instance, discipleship in a Scriptural context meant several different things to several different people. This is unusual data for those who have been active leaders of small groups at NCC for more than two years. Instead, this would be more likely for those who are new to NCC or even newer to faith. It is far more challenging to reach a common goal without a common definition. This was evident as many questions were posed to the researcher, asking for various definitions continually throughout each step of the process. One participant even included their findings in looking up the Oxford definition of who a disciple is, further alluding to the need for greater understanding in this particular area. This gave a large context clue early on in the study that the findings necessitated not just awareness but also alignment.

This also could speak to the freedom and great levels of empowerment that are given to the leader to go and do as disciples, but it may only be taking them so far as they are not coming back to ensure alignment is maintained. How can one live out, contextualize, translate, or communicate with one another if there are unknown definitions or numerous various working definitions that may or may not apply? For instance, an individual in the prayer course referenced kindness through the form of a smile or getting to know the name of someone as a form of living on mission. This was not negative in and of itself, but it was in response to a mission-oriented conversation. While that may be the case as a part of witnessing through the fruits of the Spirit, it certainly would fall short of the summary of mission in a greater capacity of what it looks like to share the gospel. When asked what mission looks like, the prayer course outlines that this requires more than just a demeanor or an act of kindness. Thus, a disconnect is evident through not just awareness but also definitive articulations.

When one hears about living on mission from a weekend service, if the focus is to translate it to the niceties of life, then there could be an undefined paradigm that may not be as well-rounded as church leadership naturally assumes. The responsibility of disciple-making is outlined in the Gospels and is directly tied to the church body through its replication and accountability. This became clearer over time as a couple of other participants shared that their understanding of mission stopped at understanding the neighborhood one lives in. It was not until further discussion with other participants in the room and the conversation around the Great Commission as a whole group that the idea of spreading across cultures and geographical regions enlightened some individuals that there was a joint responsibility both in the backyard as well as across the border.

Brene Brown once said, “Clear is kind,” and the same is true with discipleship.⁴ An assumption about what people know may or may not be accurate, and wherever there are gaps, over time, is usually filled with something in its place. That is why this study was crucial in determining what these gaps are so that paradigms can be redirected. This necessitates a greater collaboration amongst all fields: mission, groups, and prayer. Without more convergence and alignment here, there is evidence of confusion, which has the ability to weaken implementation. This is beyond structural and strategic planning conversations, as that may help only to a degree. In reality, the research findings are focused more on immediate felt needs on the ground level, and the results point towards practical steps that could impact everyday life to advance with long-term outcomes. Not only does this call for greater overlap amongst the small groups, prayer, and mission teams, but I believe it necessitates additional offerings, teachings, small group listings, and modeling in hopes that it is both caught and taught simultaneously. Repetition is key in alignment. More specifically and clearly stated in the interview question found in Figure 7, it is easy to identify that while it is one thing to talk about prayer in general and rally people around posture, it is another to move from an internal understanding to an external one within a neighborhood. This would be a particular area where the distinction shows a disconnect. Some reappearing themes throughout the data points that were expressed are: Prayer is a powerful tool, yet it is not leveraged as much in small group settings. NCC is really good at praying for a city collectively as a church body, but individually it is harder to live this out in a neighborhood or region beyond a small group.

⁴ Brene Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts* (Manhattan, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 2018), Google Books, 48.

Ideally, the impact of these results would go far and wide beyond the ten individuals within this study. The hope is that the significant findings and the transformational stories experienced in this prayer course are just the tip of the iceberg that could impact NCC far and wide, forming greater wholistic discipleship frameworks and models for small groups and ministries at large. Just as the prayer course greatly impacted several of the group leaders, the hope is that the same would happen within each small group and mission team. The greater the ability to equip, the greater the understanding, resulting in greater confidence levels for how to express, live out, and contextualize the gospel beyond the common good, old habitual patterns, or compartmentalized lifestyles that can remain stagnant. This level of intentional discipleship creates a new normal that impacts spheres and households just as it did in Acts 16.

Transformation

A final takeaway that was a significant component of the findings of this study is the connection between the head and the heart. It is labeled as transformation instead of growth but further communicating the transformation necessary to move from a conceptual understanding of what the gospel communicates to a practical lifestyle that matches everyday life. It moves from the head, meaning it goes beyond merely knowing what the Great Commandment and Great Commission are and moves one into the activation component of an overflowing lifestyle that flows out of the DNA of a believer. Numerous results, across all leaders, remained a concept or knowledge without the actual practice matching the said understanding. This is not tied as much to awareness or alignment as it is to transformation and personal growth. This area is one of ongoing development instead of remaining a learned concept distant from practice.

This was evidenced more specifically in Figure 5, which stated that 73.6% of groups regularly study the Word of God, indicating there is a high rate of biblical literacy, but if that was

the case, why were there so many factors for confusion regarding terminology or understanding of particular topics when asked? Of course, this research takes into account, as stated earlier, as a limitation that some responses will be given to appear more optimal than actual reality.

Regardless, the focus of this study is not asking about the percentage of people who are studying the Word but rather the level of engagement with the Word as a well-rounded disciple, memorizing and digesting the Word of God. These results proactively show that the input of the groups produces a different output. The topic of Biblical studies is quite possibly producing greater literacy and knowledge, but it is not producing more experiences or transformative interactions. In other words, the research findings indicate the conclusion to the question, “Could the input remain conceptual by becoming additional head knowledge without it translating into the everyday world of practical application?” If this was not the case, there would have been additional evidence showing within the areas of city impact and overlap between prayer and mission. This is included in the results listing mission as a challenge and least expressed. The gap associated with the findings of the research here was the data points of knowing the commands of Scripture without the accountability of living it out in everyday life.

Whether this was simply due to the data being a snapshot or a condensed period of time, there is enough evidence that remains showing there is a distance between knowing the Great Commandment and living it out through the Great Commission. This would confirm that discipleship data findings continued to be the lowest results throughout. In common terms, this would be the difference between concept and application or head and heart. This does not mean there was a lack of heart or a lack of application by any means. This also is a biblical principle every disciple has to grapple with as growth and metamorphosis continually take shape. Instead, it communicates the need for a better focus in discipleship training that allows the space for

personal growth to occur to see all three aspects work together. Scripture shows that a greater application in the area of better understanding the heart of God will directly translate to a heart transformation in the life of an individual. In the same way, Scripture also shows that application is the result of greater propelling growth formed in community, accountability, and a life modeled after what it means to be a Christ-follower passionately pursuing the way of the early church. The gap can be shrunk over time with intentional teaching and creative conversations hosting space for transformation to occur. The Center for Bible Engagement even did a study that showed the more people read their Bible, the greater there is a direct application not only in disciple-making but also evangelism.⁵ They state that Christ-followers “who read or listen to their Bible at least four days have a 228% higher odd of sharing their faith” and a “231% higher odd of discipling others.”⁶ While this study was done 15 years ago, the current day results from this study show that direct throughput from immersion produces a different outcome as well. Without a full integration beyond the scope of the immediate small group and without additional awareness and alignment, the potential for inaction to remain stagnant is high.

Separately but still coinciding, when there are linear advancement opportunities or reward-based progressions within the church and small group ministry structures, such as taking steps towards mission but not also prayer, it propels the separation to remain distinct natures instead of all intertwined flowing together. Secondly, separate components or departments can create dependencies on the ministry or the staff in order for the leader to grow. The outcome, as seen in the findings, is uncertainty or unawareness in one or more areas. Without wholistic discipleship

⁵ Arnold Cole and Pamela Caudill Ovwigho, “Understanding the Bible Engagement Challenge: Scientific Evidence for the Power of 4,” *Center for Bible Engagement*, (2009): 14, https://bttbfiles.com/web/docs/cbe/Scientific_Evidence_for_the_Power_of_4.pdf.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

operating simultaneously, it can create this false illusion that group leaders are operating in sync without the need for ongoing growth and intervention because they have arrived or reached a certain stage as leaders. While leaders would never say an arrival point has been reached, it creates a dichotomy between staff perspectives versus the perception of the leader. The concentric circles in Figure 1 and the vision of wholistic discipleship show that disciples never arrive. There is no starting or stopping point when learning, growing, and serving an Omniscient God. If growth remains linear, reward-based, or steps one can arrive at, discipleship will remain based on human standards instead of overflowing fruit that is measured in the likeness of Christ. This study is far more than just the life of a leader but also the relationship that leader has in their experience with God and their connection to their neighbor. A leader thrives more when all of the dots connect together amongst mission, discipleship, and prayer. Transformation occurs more when all three core aspects of wholistic discipleship are present. A gap in wholistic discipleship further perpetuates the disconnect between knowledge and praxis and continues to pass that down to each person within the small group to learn and grow together, thus having the capacity to hinder or stifle wholistic formation.

Research Applications

Assessing the data from here helps the researcher better know what to do and suggests improvements geared towards closing the gaps of awareness, alignment, and transformation displayed as countering the distance between the head and heart. Walton says there tends to be a lack of focus on “Bible Study and mission” and a greater “focus on pastoral care” within the

context of small groups.”⁷ This would be reflected as a key data point showing a lack of focus, with less than 29% of missionally-oriented prayer activated in groups in Figure 7.

While it is not enough to assess the data without a solution, the solution for this study at National Community Church will be the portion that is distinct and different for this particular context that may or may not be as transferrable or applicable in other areas. There are five offerings in this study that the researcher has found to be applicable. Each one is dependent upon changes that will be proposed to leadership. While several of the offerings can work in congruence with each other, they are not dependent upon each other. The solutions are directly correlated to the findings of this research. There is very little profit to the research if there is no implementation involved with this in the end. Each offering provides several application points that are action-oriented initiatives. To begin, the suggestions have been broken down into two categories. The first category is listed as minor adjustments. These are the things that can be implemented fairly quickly with support and will tweak adjustments to help change course and keep alignment consistent. This requires some vision and some hands-on approaches with staff-led initiatives. It also is consistent enough that it can be offered each semester regardless of how long a leader has been leading. The solutions impact the same whether someone has been leading for six years or two months.

The second options listed are major adjustments. While both minor and major adjustments can be made at the same time, they are not absolutely necessary to operate in conjunction with each other. While it would still be fruitful to make minor adjustments and not major, the opposite is not true. It would be less fruitful to make a major adjustment without

⁷ Butler, “The ‘Long and Winding Road’ of Faith,” 282.

minor adjustments. It would be the most fruitful if both minor and major adjustments were made. While these findings certainly do not dictate that fruit is not currently happening without these adjustments, it does demonstrate several proposed solutions to mitigate the aforementioned gap. The best ongoing discipleship programs are ones that regularly grow, develop, adjust, and do not remain static in methods. These solutions are offered as proposed options to the leadership team of National Community Church.

MINOR ADJUSTMENTS	MAJOR ADJUSTMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Health assessment of all groups with key questions every semester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Every group leader (no matter how long one has been leading) has to go through the initial wholistic discipleship prayer course as a new requirement to lead (<i>Most Recommended</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Semester offerings of staff teaching on prayer, discipleship, and mission. Unique courses like the prayer course offered to all groups annually (twice a year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ NCC moves away from a free-market system and solidifies a vision that all groups have to fit under the umbrella of wholistic discipleship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mid-semester check-in with the three areas of Wholistic Discipleship 	

Table 1.2. Adjustment Solutions

Minor Adjustments

To begin, one of the easier implementations requiring less effort would be conducting a regular health assessment of all groups. This assessment would utilize key questions that were originally asked in the general survey, questionnaire, and interviews in order to get a baseline of what may not be optimal across the board within our groups. This would be conducted every semester in order to create more personal touchpoints with each of the group leaders based on the results specific to their group. This also would help the staff create a track to help groups

navigate based on the strengths of the group and areas that would be recommended to help prioritize a more well-rounded discipleship outcome and plan based on provided feedback from each group. This would not just be specific to group leaders but rather, to everyone in the group, including all participants.

The second minor adjustment would be offering staff-taught courses open to all groups every semester, specifically teaching on prayer, discipleship, and mission. These would be ongoing leadership development courses, similar to the prayer course, that teach the cohesiveness of all three of these and how they operate and function in the life of a believer. Some courses would have equal representation of all three (33.3% on mission, 33.3% on discipleship, and 33.3% on prayer). Other courses would be 100% focused on mission or another aspect. The intention would be to look at the entire spectrum of development opportunities offered annually to group leaders and focus on the areas needing the most development. These courses would be offered at least twice a year and would be staff-led to ensure vision and alignment were taking place with a more a la carte method.

The last minor adjustment would focus on vision casting within the three areas of wholistic discipleship involving a mid-semester check-in structure with each group and their respective leader. It would entail several key questions to determine where group participants are the most active or least active as they engage in the three specific areas. This is different than a health assessment as that is just a particular point in time determining the overall fruit of the group, whereas this check-in would be more of a progress or update report post a health assessment. This would help staff better determine in what areas the group is engaging in. Where do they need the most help? How can staff better support each group and its group members?

Again, this is a minor adjustment that is customizable to help one navigate more hands-on than a questionnaire would and would provide guiding direction and vision.

While there are a few minor adjustments to choose from, a decision would need to be determined on which key adjustments should be implemented. They are listed as various options that would still make an initial impact and imprint wholistically within the discipleship ecosystem at NCC. While the researcher does not believe the minor adjustments will be the most fruitful amidst all of the provided options, they will be fruitful in the sense that they could provide more awareness, alignment, and transformation with the direction of working toward closing the existing gaps. While these require less effort and may have less impact, assessments and check-ins will still require a lot of time in order to help everyone gather on the same page in a fast-paced, transient environment.

Major Adjustment

Two major adjustments that could be considered within this structure will not only shift course and help realign but will also change the trajectory of what discipleship looks like at NCC. Both of these can work in tandem with each other, though they are not dependent on one another. The first major adjustment is what the researcher would implement right away as the top recommended option to help provide not only great vision amongst all of the leaders simultaneously but also add maximum impact in a shorter period. This recommendation would be to teach the prayer course right before the start of every semester for all group leaders. Every semester, there is a break of one to two months already built into the calendar that would enable operation in the current structure and still enrich future semesters without overlapping or conflicting with the current launches of groups. It is a short enough course that it can fit within a semester rhythm. Simultaneously, it engages all of the leaders at the same time, in the same

room, to ensure they are best equipped to think critically about their group, engage proactively, and prayerfully navigate what the semester will look like. It also allows leaders to interact with each other, not just with their respective group. This would be an added requirement for all group leaders moving forward and would be tracked in the database similar to other leadership requirements viewable by the Small Group Leadership Team.

The second major adjustment offering would be to change the structure of NCC small groups completely and move away from the free-market system as a whole. This would give greater guidance and vision, prompting all groups to fit under the umbrella of wholistic discipleship. In other words, the groups would have to fall under prayer, mission, and discipleship topics to meet the criteria of being an NCC-based small group. This would include developing in-house curriculum and seeking out curriculum in the areas of intercession, missional impact, and disciple-making. This would also necessitate a multi-team hands-on approach instead of simply the Groups Team offering a wholistic prayer course that teaches the enmeshment of all three. This would be a major overhaul and drastically change the discipleship efforts since the start of NCC. This would also require a lot of input and cross-collaboration between departments.

While both of these are larger overhauls, they would produce maximum fruit with lasting impact. It would directly influence not only group leaders but also their groups, which in return would directly impact the degrees of influence of those who are connected to NCCers. Both of these solutions are large-scale options requiring both the Executive and Central Leadership Team to approve this. In addition, they would put together a designated plan, a timeline for when this would go into effect, the language that would be used to communicate, a designated team lead for who would cast the vision, and ultimately, how the implementation would be rolled out.

Research Limitations

Throughout this research, there are several distinctions to note as limitations. Though they do not impact this research, they could impact research conducted again in the future. First, there are a few things the researcher would change when completing this again. For example, while the random generator protected the study from any bias associated with the study, it did not ensure diversity of age, demographics, or gender of the ten participants selected for the project. When the generator chose at random, it resulted in a random selection of diversity, which in one sense also remains unbiased, though it could have data leanings in certain categories such as gender, generational age groups, etc.

The question tied to what areas group leaders feel the most equipped in was reserved specifically for the ten participants. That is a limitation as it was not asked of the population at large. This would have potentially been an impactful question to ask the population at large in the general survey that went out to all group leaders. This is important to keep in mind that while not every question was asked to everyone, those asked provided enough breadth of a response with experiences that came to the table during this study. While the ten leaders all have a similar two years or greater experience in group leadership at NCC, they also come with different experiences prior that have shaped their time at NCC. These experiences are vital to the study in order to learn and grow, but nonetheless are all different. In addition to experiences, attitudes are all different within the study as well. It is challenging to measure attitudes towards mission, prayer, and discipleship. As a result, the researcher was able to discern and determine outcomes using keywords and observations, but attitudes are less quantifiable than statements.

Though this does not necessitate further research, questionnaires in and of themselves are limiting as well. While close-ended questions make it hard for research purposes, open-ended,

short-answer questions make it difficult if the individual does not respond to the question in the desired fashion or in a way that articulates a well-formed response. This would also limit the participant to answering with one response, not allowing several responses or all of the above when the primary question asked for only one response. Of course, there is always the limitation to misunderstanding questionnaires as well. The questionnaires do not provide the opportunity for the researcher to answer any immediate questions as the participant is working through each question. It would be ideal to do fewer questionnaire questions and more interview-based questions or multiple-choice questions instead of open-ended ones. The open-ended questionnaire questions permitted responses that may or may not be applicable. This could be further avoided by asking clearer multiple-choice questions.

Following the limitation with the questionnaires, a similar limitation would be the initial ask of each participant attending three of the four-week course. Not every participant honored the three of the four-week ask as outlined in Chapter Three, even though that was stated upfront before the participants were a part of it. The researcher can only ask, remind, and encourage, while the rest of the responsibility is up to the individual. As a result, while not every participant was in attendance for all three weeks, the researcher ensured detailed course notes and resources were provided in advance so that individuals could catch up as well as review each week.

Finally, another limitation could be that each participant utilized various working definitions throughout the study. Other than the definitions that were discussed in the class, such as what wholistic discipleship is when referenced in this study, many asked for definitions of “evangelism” or “mission” throughout the study. As a result, this could be a limitation. However, this was done intentionally so that the researcher could better gauge where each person was

coming from and what the starting points were for each person instead of assuming they were all the same for everyone.

Further Research

Upon completing the project, it became clear that this could be a part of an additional study in the future. Though further research is not necessary for this project in particular, as there were conclusive results, any study should have the ability to be expounded upon and replicable in various spaces. This study provides a foundation for further research. While most studies can be engaged in a multi-layered effort over the span of an indefinite number of years, this clearly had areas that could be extended. For example, prayer could be a study all by itself, just as mission and discipleship could be in three distinct parts. In addition, some individuals wanted to continue in the course beyond the four weeks. While four weeks can build a bond and trust, it is a shorter construct of content. If this were to be studied and led again, ideally, a five or six-week course may have allowed for continued exploration of depth within the Scriptures as well as greater time for participants to get to know each other. It also may have allotted for practical experiences such as homework assignments with an additional week to live out what was discussed in real time.

Secondly, the researcher was hesitant to ask any follow-up questions beyond what was approved and stated in the IRB process. As a result, if the researcher was going to do it again, the recommendation is to build in more detailed follow-up questions just in case someone maybe did not articulate it in a way that would be easily translatable or if it was off track, the researcher could guide the discussion back on track.

In addition, as stated earlier, the study intentionally gave the participants the option to work off of their own definition for this study instead of the researcher dictating what the

definition was. One could also do this study with a set of working definitions to get more clarity on the spectrums of each participant. This is what created new categories if there was not an applicable answer.

One thing that the researcher would have done differently, in addition to creating more closed-ended pointed questions, would be to generate better data that was not only more streamlined but also more detailed. For instance, Figure 21 states that one category of spiritual disciplines is through serving and leading. This would have been a great opportunity to separate serving and leading as two separate categories when collecting and gathering the data instead of a combination. This would have articulated the distinction between whether the leader is focused more on serving within the community or focused more on leading within a small group, again emphasizing the external and internal separations found within the data.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while one may review this from the outside looking in, the prayer of this study is that it falls on ears ready to receive and hear, just as we read about in the parable of the soil in Matthew 13. Similarly, to peeling a fruit or vegetable to get to the core, it is one thing to be aware of changes or needs on a surface level. This just merely peels back the layers to give information. It is an entirely different level to implement new ideas that come out of research. Thirdly, it is a deeper layer within the core to dislodge old paradigms and implement new scaffolding. This may cause disruptions, messes, or even hardships as new paradigms are shifted.

While one of the purposes of this study was to expand an understanding of how prayer can be directly connected to evangelism, the research did not immediately show that. Instead, it showed a new viewpoint of the kaleidoscope by strengthening the understanding one has of the relationship between prayer and discipleship. In reality, when tied to wholistic approaches, this

too will eventually also connect back to evangelism. The greater the focus of a robust wholistic discipleship model, the more it impacts ongoing disciple-making processes that become healthy and measurable over time. As stated earlier, this is vital to the overall health of the church, for the leaders implement the direction of the church. It is not just common knowledge or a good idea but rather paramount to be able to share, pray, and express an embodied gospel outside of weekend services so that one can communicate Jesus through their very life, not being fully dependent upon communicating Jesus through a weekend service or structured time frame within a small group. The proposed stance is not either/or; it is a both/and. Since the beginning of the original models discussing whether a church should offer seeker-friendly models or focus more on the growth of disciples, it is no longer a juxtaposition of missional attraction or discipleship. This would be a choice Jesus never offered. The offering and invitation are all-inclusive: mission, prayer, and discipleship.

The greatest offering a church can do is not a deep dive focus on spending time, effort, and energy on either the Great Commandment or the Great Commission but rather both. It is not just about marketplace discipleship but also prayer evangelism. It is the intertwining of an entire ecosystem rooted in the Trinity. It is not just about prayer as an individual but also corporate prayer as a House of Prayer. It is not just about missional movements within urban cities forming networks such as prayer networks and gospel movements but a partnership pouring back into the local church. It is not merely about living in the tension between choosing ministry outside of the church or ministry within the church as a main focus. It is equally about both with the same level of finances, rigor, training, and embodiment.

The closing of the gap is essential to bridging the head and the heart so that there is a great realization in the life of a leader that how they live their life impacts places and spaces that

have influence beyond in one's small group, home, neighborhood, workplace, and city. This happens through abiding and moving from a residing place of conceptual knowledge while in Scriptural agreement to a life fully lived out with passion overflowing in all relational spheres by better understanding the relationship between prayer, discipleship, and mission. It is about a people who are marked by the presence of God and fully alive, empowered by God with overflowing lifestyles that emerge through a partnership. It is about proximity and presence, both with God and with others. The convergence of wholistic discipleship encompasses discipleship, mission, and prayer that has the potential to create a spiritual wildfire in urban contexts, truly transforming people and places to be more Christ-like and kingdom-like as "the kingdom of the world [is becoming] the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah" (Revelation 11:15, NIV). The renewal of cities is first birthed through disciples growing in awareness, alignment, and experiencing a personal growth of transformation touched by the Holy Spirit, where Heaven invades earth, both personally and collectively. This happens by closing the gap to connect the seasoned leaders' knowledge of evangelistic discipleship and incarnational witnessing in order to fulfill the Great Commission. This happens by focusing on discipleship both internally within the small groups and externally with an outward-facing posture to the community. This is about a posture that moves beyond the categorized discipleship rhythms such as small groups and weekend services and impacts the local church in such a way that one cannot disciple without being moved to action through mission or convicted by the heart of God through prayer. This impact then penetrates everyday life while simultaneously tying mission and ministry back to the local church. A full transfusion of the gospel infuses life and light into cities, not through salvation dependent upon disciples but rather a genuine partnership of "equip[ping] his people" (Eph 4:12, NIV) to be "about the Father's business" (Luke 2:49, New King James Version). The

final portion of this thesis is best summarized by returning to the first sentence of the introduction of Chapter One; it is indeed, as Andrew Murray once said, “The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history.”⁸

⁸ Don Hawkins, *Master Discipleship Today: Jesus's Prayer and Plan for Every Believer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2019), 86, ProQuest Ebook Central.

APPENDIX A
PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER

April 12th, 2024

Dr. Mark Batterson
Lead Pastor
National Community Church

Dear Pastor Mark,

As a Doctoral Candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Ministry degree. The title of my project is Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church: The Most Effective Tool for Transforming Cities. The purpose of my research is to further equip leaders with integrated lifestyles of prayer, mission, and discipleship in order to impact the city and partner in the Great Commission as wholistic disciples.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at National Community Church, specifically with small group leaders.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey, fill out a questionnaire, go through an interview with me, participate in a prayer course, and a debrief focus group. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

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

Sincerely,

Kiersten Telzerow
Groups Pastor

APPENDIX B
PERMISSION RESPONSE LETTER

April 7th, 2024

Kiersten Telzerow
Groups Pastor
National Community Church

Dear Kiersten:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church: The Most Effective Tool for Transforming Cities, we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at National Community Church.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- We grant permission for Kiersten Telzerow to contact group leaders to invite them to participate in her research study.
- We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mark Batterson
Lead Pastor
National Community Church

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION RESPONSE LETTER

April 12th, 2024

Kiersten Telzerow
Groups Pastor

Dear Kiersten:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church: The Most Effective Tool for Transforming Cities, we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at National Community Church.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

We grant permission for Kiersten Telzerow to contact group leaders to invite them to participate in her research study.

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

Sincerely,

Dr. Mark Batterson
Lead Pastor
National Community Church

APPENDIX C
GENERAL RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Group Leader,

As a Doctoral Candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Ministry degree. The title of my project is *Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church: The Most Effective Tool for Transforming Cities*. The purpose of my project is to further equip leaders with integrated lifestyles of prayer, mission, and discipleship in order to impact the city and partner in the Great Commission as wholistic disciples, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be at least eighteen years of age and be currently leading or have led a small group at NCC in the last twelve months. You are eligible if you lead an online or in person small group as a part of National Community Church small groups.

Participants will be asked to take an anonymous online survey via email. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, click [here](#) to complete the survey.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my project. 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 link above to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Sincerely,

Kiersten Telzerow
Groups Pastor

APPENDIX D
SELECTED RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Group Leader,

As a Doctoral Candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Ministry degree. The title of my project is *Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church: The Most Effective Tool for Transforming Cities*. The purpose of my project is to further equip leaders with integrated lifestyles of prayer, mission, and discipleship in order to impact the city and partner in the Great Commission as wholistic disciples, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be at least eighteen years of age and be currently leading or have led a small group at NCC in the last twelve months. In addition, participants must be leading at NCC for at least two or more years. You are eligible if you lead an online or in person small group as a part of National Community Church small groups. Participants will be asked to:

- Complete a questionnaire that intentionally asks follow-up, related questions regarding wholistic lifestyles of discipleship. This will not take longer than 45 minutes.
- Participate in an interview with me that will be in person (or Zoom if needed accommodations) that will be recorded (audio only). This will take no more than 45 minutes.
- Review my interview transcripts to ensure for accuracy so that you are able to verify how I am receiving the data you provide. This will take no more than 15 minutes.
- Participate in a small group prayer course that is a deep dive study into effectively living out the Great Commission through prayer, mission, and discipleship. This course will be a pilot course as a part of NCC's small group offerings. This will be 1.5 hours a week for four weeks. It will be held in person, with an online option, to participate in both the teaching content and discussion.
- Participate in a debrief focus group that will meet at the conclusion of this study for 1 hour (accommodations will be in person or online) to discuss reflection questions.

For the questionnaire, interview, prayer course, and focus group, names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

Please contact me atto schedule an interview. If you meet my criteria, I will work with you to schedule a time for an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email in regards to the questionnaire, interviews, and focus group. The consent document contains additional information about my project. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me before the interview.

Sincerely,

Kiersten Telzerow
Groups Pastor

APPENDIX E
GENERAL RECRUITMENT FOLLOW-UP

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project to further integrate wholistic lifestyles of disciples that will result in flourishing models that impact the city and partner in the Great Commission as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Ministry degree. Last week an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a project. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is [JUNE 3rd, 2024](#).

Participants must be at least eighteen years of age and be currently leading or have led a small group at NCC in the last twelve months. You are eligible if you lead an online or in person small group as a part of National Community Church small groups. Participants will be asked to:

- Take an anonymous online survey via email. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the procedure listed. Participation will be completely anonymous in this survey, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please, click [here](#) to complete the survey.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my project. 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 link above to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Sincerely,

Kiersten Telzerow
Groups Pastor

APPENDIX F
SELECTED RECRUITMENT FOLLOW-UP

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project to further integrate wholistic lifestyles of disciples that will result in flourishing models that impact the city and partner in the Great Commission as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Ministry degree. Earlier an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a project. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you. The deadline for participation is [JUNE 10th, 2024](#).

Participants must be at least eighteen years of age and be currently leading or have led a small group at NCC in the last twelve months. In addition, participants must be leading at NCC for at least two or more years. You are eligible if you lead an online or in person small group as a part of National Community Church small groups. Participants will be asked to:

- Complete a questionnaire that intentionally asks follow-up, related questions regarding wholistic lifestyles of discipleship. This will not take longer than 45 minutes.
- Participate in an interview with me that will be in person (or Zoom if needed accommodations) that will be recorded (audio only). This will take no more than 45 minutes.
- Review my interview transcripts to ensure for accuracy so that you are able to verify how I am receiving the data you provide. This will take no more than 15 minutes.
- Participate in a small group prayer course that is a deep dive study into effectively living out the Great Commission through prayer, mission, and discipleship. This course will be a pilot course as a part of NCC's small group offerings. This will be 1.5 hours a week for four weeks. It will be held in person, with an online option, to participate in both the teaching content and discussion.
- Participate in a debrief focus group that will meet at the conclusion of this study for 1 hour (accommodations will be in person or online) to discuss reflection questions.

For the questionnaire, interview, prayer course, and focus group, names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

Please contact me at ... to schedule an interview. If you meet my research criteria, I will work with you to schedule a time for an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email in regards to the questionnaire, interviews, and focus group. The consent document contains additional information about my project. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me before the interview.

Sincerely,

Kiersten Telzerow
Groups Pastor

APPENDIX G
GENERAL CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church: The Most Effective Tool for Transforming Cities

Principal Investigator: Kiersten Telzerow, Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Co-investigator(s): Jason Mitchell, Ph.D., Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Study

You are invited to participate in a project. To participate, you must be at least eighteen years of age and be currently leading or have led a small group at NCC in the last twelve months. You are eligible if you lead an online or in person small group as a part of National Community Church small groups. Taking part in this project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to further equip leaders with integrated lifestyles of prayer, mission, and discipleship in order to impact the city and partner in the Great Commission as wholistic disciples.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

- Fill out a general survey that will come via email that will take no more than 15 minutes. This will remain anonymous.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

What risks might you experience from being in 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.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private and are listed as anonymous. Records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses to the online survey will be kept anonymous.
- Anonymous data collected from you may be used in future 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 seven years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as Groups Pastor at National Community Church. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, data collection will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this project.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the project, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included.

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

The researcher conducting this project is Kiersten Telzerow and Dr. Jason Mitchell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jason Mitchell, at ...

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project 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.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the project is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the project later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

APPENDIX H
SELECTED CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church: The Most Effective Tool for Transforming Cities

Principal Investigator: Kiersten Telzerow, Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Co-investigator(s): Jason Mitchell, Ph.D., Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Study

You are invited to participate in a project. To participate, you must be at least eighteen years of age and be currently leading or have led a small group at NCC in the last twelve months. In addition, participants must be leading at NCC for at least two or more years. You are eligible if you lead an online or in person small group as a part of National Community Church small groups. Taking part in this project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the project is to further equip leaders with integrated lifestyles of prayer, mission, and discipleship in order to impact the city and partner in the Great Commission as wholistic disciples.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

- You as the selected leader will fill out a questionnaire that intentionally asks follow-up, related questions regarding wholistic lifestyles of discipleship. This will not take longer than 45 minutes.
- You as the selected leader will be asked to participate in an interview with me that will be in person (or Zoom if needed accommodations) that will be recorded (audio only). This will take no more than 45 minutes.
- I will also ask you to review my interview transcripts to ensure for accuracy so that you are able to verify how I am receiving the data you provide. This will take no more than 15 minutes.

- You as the selected leader will be asked to participate in a small group prayer course that is a deep dive study into effectively living out the Great Commission through prayer, mission, and discipleship. This course will be a pilot course administered for NCC. This will be 1.5 hours a week for four weeks. It will be held in person, with an online option, to participate in both the teaching content and discussion.
- You as a selected leader will be a part of a debrief focus group that will meet at the conclusion of this study for 1 hour (accommodations will be in person or online) to discuss reflection questions.

In total, I am asking you to fill out an electronic questionnaire, participate in an interview with me, go through a small group course and debrief in a group context, in order to partake in this project.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include strengthening one's faith and better engaging and blessing one's community simultaneously. In addition, a benefit will be having a greater biblical understanding of the Great Commission.

Benefits to society include blessing your neighborhood, community, and friend circle as you continue to grow together more deeply in the Christian faith.

What risks might you experience from being in 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.

How will personal information be protected?

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

- Participant responses to the questionnaire, interview, and focus group will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms. All research information will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. There will be an online accommodation permitted. Audio recording only will be utilized.

- 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 seven years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Audio recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for seven years. Note that the researcher and the members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as the Groups Pastor at National Community Church. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, all project information from the questionnaire, interview, and focus group will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this project.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

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

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

The researcher conducting this project is Kiersten Telzerow and Dr. Jason Mitchell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jason Mitchell, at ...

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project 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.

Your Consent

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 project 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 me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX I
THANK YOU NOTE

Dear Leader,

Thank you for your kind consideration and your time with reviewing this study. I completely understand the decision that you have made and am grateful for your honesty. Please know that I am continuing to pray for your leadership and am grateful for all of the ways that you serve.

Blessings in this next season,
Kiersten

APPENDIX J
GENERAL SURVEY

1. How long have you been leading a small group at NCC?
 - a. 0-1 years
 - b. 2-4 years
 - c. 4-6 years
 - d. 6+ years

2. How long has your small group been together?
 - a. a year or less
 - b. we change every semester
 - c. same core but add new people
 - d. it's been the same group since we started

3. How many, including yourself, are in your small group on average?
 - a. 1-3
 - b. 4-7
 - c. 8-11
 - d. 12+

4. How frequently do you hear discipleship referred to in the context of wholistic discipleship at NCC (i.e. incorporating all aspects such as mission, prayer, small groups)?
 - a. frequently
 - b. somewhat frequent
 - c. not frequent enough
 - d. never

5. Missional Discipleship (discipleship overlapping with an external focus on the community) is reserved for those who have the gift of evangelism:
 - a. always true
 - b. mostly true
 - c. not always true
 - d. false

6. Serving the community, impacting the city, and having a missionally-focused group is a top priority for your small group:
 - a. true
 - b. false

7. How frequently do you spend time focusing on external, missionally-oriented prayer (longer than five minutes) in your small group?
 - a. every group meeting
 - b. frequently
 - c. inconsistent
 - d. not currently

8. How frequently do you study the Word in the context of your small group?

- a. every group meeting b. frequently c. we weave it in on occasion d. we primarily utilize different material instead
9. You are currently investing in additional discipleship relationships through apprenticeship or mentorship (can also be with someone outside your small group).
a. true b. false
10. What does your small group have a greater focus on:
a. biblical curriculum b. social gatherings c. prayer d. mission
11. To what degree is your small group actively engaged in impacting the city (Metro DMV area)?
a. bi-weekly b. monthly c. 1x/semester d. never

APPENDIX K
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What does discipleship look like in your everyday life and how would you define a mature wholistic disciple?
2. To what degree do you think that mission and prayer should overlap in the context of small groups?
3. What does the integration of mission and prayer as an active lifestyle within our current structure of discipleship and small groups look like?
4. Where do you experience or see the wholistic discipleship expressed the most?
5. How equipped do you feel to teach, model, and represent an active lifestyle of evangelism through the form of prayer and why?
6. In what area do you feel you need to grow the most as a leader: ongoing discipleship, prayer lifestyle, or missional activation?
7. What comes to mind when you hear discipleship talked about as components of a life devoted to prayer and heart for missionally caring for those around us?
8. Of the three, where do you feel NCC is the strongest (in teaching, equipping, and modeling): discipleship, prayer, or mission?
9. How frequently are you engaging in evangelistic discipleship outside your immediate small group gathering?

APPENDIX L
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Required questions for every interview:

1. What is the correlation between the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in the life of a disciple?
2. How do you personally lean into discipleship, mission, and prayer (wholistic discipleship) in your neighborhood, career, family life, etc.?
3. Less than x percentage said they prioritize more than five minutes of prayer in their small group and even less frequently serve the community, what do you do differently or more intentionally in your group context (if anything)?

Optional:

4. What do you presently do to ensure that the people under your care in small groups live integrated, not compartmentalized or dis-integrated faith lifestyles?
5. What do you put in place to ensure mission, discipleship, and prayer remain an active part of your life and how do you continue to grow?
6. How can you better develop integrated wholistic lifestyles in your life and the lives around you?
7. How do you see prayer having a direct correlated impact in your city and neighborhood?

APPENDIX M
PRAYER COURSE

Table of Curriculum Overview for Prayer Course

Week 1	Connecting Personal Faith to kingdom-oriented City Impact		
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to Know Leaders • Prayer as the Root of Evangelism & Discipleship • Discipleship as an ecosystem • How does one live this out? 	Optional Book: <i>Deep Discipleship</i> ⁹	Study: Deut. 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40
Practical Examples + Discussion			
Week 2	Reimagining Evangelism		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Prayer and Discipleship Evangelism? • What are negative connotations of evangelism? • Missional Ecclesiology • How could it be redefined for this context? 	Optional Books: <i>Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer</i> ¹⁰ <i>The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God</i> ¹¹	Study: Acts 1:8; 2:38-47; 8:4-5
Practical Examples + Discussion			
Week 3	Prayer as the Core-Centric Circle to Mission + Discipleship	Deep dive in Matthew 28	Study: Matt. 28:16-20

⁹ J.T. English, *Deep Discipleship*.

¹⁰ J. Gary Millar, *Calling on the Name of the Lord*.

¹¹ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a healthy picture of Wholistic Discipleship? • How do all three work as concentric circles in Scripture? 	Optional Book: <i>Practicing the Way of Jesus Life Together in the Kingdom of Love</i> ¹²	
Practical Examples + Discussion			
Week 4	The New Model		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compartmentalized Faith produces compartmentalized disciples • Lifestyle of Jesus • Renewal and transformation • Reverse engineer • Sending anointing 	Optional Book: <i>Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community</i> ¹³	Acts 11; Acts 13; Acts 16.
Practical Examples + Discussion			

Week 1 Agenda: Connecting Personal Faith to Kingdom-Oriented City Impact

- Introduction + Icebreaker + Snacks
- Overview of the Entire Course
- Open w/ Prayer + Listening
- My Story
- Reading: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40
- Purpose of this Course
- Unpacking Definitions- Wholistic Discipleship
- Relationship of Great Commandment + Great Commissioning
- Additional Resources

¹² Mark Scandrette, *Practicing the Way of Jesus*.

¹³ Ruth Haley Barton, *Life Together In Christ*.

PRAYER COURSE: WHOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP

KIERSTEN TELZEROW

DOCTORATE OF MINISTRY | LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

ANDREW MURRAY

- “The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history.”¹

¹ Don Hawkins, *Master Discipleship Today: Jesus's Prayer and Plan for Every Believer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2019), 84-87, ProQuest Ebook Central.

THEMES- UNPACK THROUGHOUT 4 WEEKS

- Head & Heart
- Prayer as Fruit of the Great Commandment
- Integration is External + Internal Approach
- Public + private life
- Prayer evangelism

WEEK I

Connecting Personal Faith to Kingdom-Oriented City Impact

INTRODUCTIONS

- Name
- Favorite ice cream or sorbet flavor
- What group you lead

WHOLISTIC DEFINITION

- Suzan Folkerts in a published article on religious connectivity in urban communities states, "A holistic approach goes beyond all categories. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'holism' as 'a theory that parts of a whole are in intimate interconnection, such that they cannot exist independently of the whole, or cannot be understood without reference to the whole.'"²

² Suzan Folkerts, *Religious Connectivity in Urban Communities (1400-1550): Reading, Worshipping, and Connecting Through the Continuum of Sacred and Secular* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2021), 13, ProQuest Ebook Central.

WHOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP

- *Discipleship – an external and internal process where one is becoming more Christlike and modeling an example for others to do the same in community.
- * Mission – is the activation of living it out in the context of everyday life
- * Prayer – at the core of one's discipleship pathway of growth, intimately learning more about God's heart for His people

WHOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP

- → Integrated, not compartmentalized (Sundays or 9-5)
- → Not formula or reward based
- Pursuing the WHOLENESS of Christ
- I don't see an instance in Scripture where only prayer and discipleship matter... but not mission. Or only mission and prayer matter but not discipleship. Jesus embodied ALL 3.
- Mission + prayer- minus discipleship = insulated (you focused– neglecting the Body of Christ)
- Mission + discipleship – minus prayer= burnout (others focused– works based, humanism- apart from Christ)
- Discipleship + prayer – minus mission = internal (you focused– neglecting those who don't know Christ)
- Discipleship + mission + prayer = God, others, and self focused.

WHOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP

- Idea is to live that John 15 lifestyle that I in you and you in me.
- His desires, my desires. His outreach, my outreach. His love, my love. Intertwined
- Embodied lifestyle → Living out of the OVERFLOW of a PERSONAL FAITH → Committed to impact within urban environments (DMV) where we are.
- How we live → Directly impacts those around us *social contagion (yawning to happiness to generosity).³

³ Milena Tsvetkova, "The Social Contagion of Generosity," *PLOS ONE* 9, no. 2 (February 13, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0087275>.

GOAL OF THE PRAYER COURSE

- #1 -To empower leaders with a prayer course that illuminates evangelism connecting a personal faith to kingdom-oriented city impact.
- #2- To spur one another toward living out wholistic discipleship in a community right where God has planted one to remain faithful.

OUTCOME

- To be more actively engaged in all 3 aspects of one's everyday life: missional evangelization, personal and corporate prayer, and discipleship as an ongoing lifestyle

GREAT COMMANDMENT

- ⁴ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.⁵ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deut 6:4-9)
- ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22: 36-40)

GREAT COMMANDMENT

- Oneness of affection
- Generational impact
- Influences cross-sectional spheres + places
- A prayer + a proclamation
- Externally shared + internally processed amidst communal lifestyle
- Repeated in Mark + Matthew + 80x's in NT⁴
- The Shema is a covenant resulting in an overflow one is not able to keep to themselves. The outline set for us in the growing in oneness with the Father in the Old Testament is a thread for discipleship and mission birthed through "divine interrelation," or prayer, as a way of living this out under the New Covenant.⁵

⁴ Herbert Wolf, *Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 218, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁵ Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017), ProQuest Ebook Central.

REFLECTION

- What stands out the passage?
- Where do you see discipleship, prayer, and mission explained in the Shema?
- How can prayer be the root of evangelism + root of discipleship?
- Where do we see Jesus operate in all three aspects simultaneously?
- How does the Great Commandment inspire kingdom-oriented action?
- Looking at wholistic discipleship (mission, prayer, and discipleship) → why is it easy to compartmentalize or view each one categorized as a spiritual gift as opposed to the DNA of every disciple?

Week 2 Agenda: Reimagining Evangelism

- Snacks
- Recap Week 1 and overview of 3 buckets
- Open w/ Prayer + Listening
- Opening Reflection Questions
- Historical Prayer Movements
- Prayer Evangelism
- Missional Ecclesiology- Acts 1:8; 2:38-47; 8:4-5
- Additional Resources

WEEK 2

• *Reimagining Evangelism*

RECAP

- Great Commandment & Shema → Internal relationship with God; how we live this out even under the new covenant – formed in prayer.
- Prayer as the root of evangelism + discipleship
- Wholistic discipleship: mission, prayer & discipleship = wholeness of Christ/ Jesus embodies

OPENING QUESTIONS

- What comes to mind when you hear evangelism? / What has been your experience with it?
- What are some negative connotations of the word evangelism?
- What is contextualized evangelism and how have you seen this play out?

HISTORICAL PRAYER MOVEMENTS

- Moravian Movement → Led John Wesley to Deep Prayer Lifestyle and William Carey who later became “Father of Modern Missions”⁶
- Moravian’s first started 24/7 prayer that many follow today.⁷
- Revivals have been formed because of prayer communities.
- What are different types of prayer?

⁶ Randall L. Downs, “The Influence of the Moravian Missions Movement on Baptist Global Missions,” (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), ProQuest.

⁷ Ian Randall, “Early Moravian Spirituality and Missionary Vision,” *Wesley and Methodist studies*, 9, no. 2 (2017): 126, <https://doi.org/10.5325/wesmethstud.9.2.0123>.

PRAYER EVANGELISM

- Sharing the Good News through Prayer – opportunities to share, witnessing, praying with someone, for someone, and prophetic words/ images, listening prayer
- City impact- formed through prayer
- Evangelism begins with intercession⁸ → It shapes how you see your neighborhood and city.
- Missionaries in China first coined “prayer evangelists”⁹ – prayer as mission

⁸ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 504.

⁹ Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission: The Growth of a Work of God* (Independent, 2023), 36.

MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY | ACTS

- Fun Fact: “Prayer is mentioned 30xs in Acts.”¹⁰
- Acts 1:8- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
 - Willie Jennings– comments this stating “the disciples are formed by the Spirit as witnesses.”¹¹
 - In the same way → that’s the model we carry out today. “We carry out Jesus’ commission.”¹²

¹⁰ John Robb, “Review of Prayer as a Strategic Weapon in Frontier Missions,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 1, no.8 (1991): 25, https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_LJFM08_1_PDFs%8_1_Robb.pdf.

¹¹ Willie James Jennings, *Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2017), 18.

¹² Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., Jay Sklar, and Biran Vickers, ed., *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 9): John-Acts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 463, ProQuest Ebook Central.

ACTS CONT.

- Ecclesial understanding of church first coined by David Bosch— **“The church IS the mission, not just an activity or sender of mission.”**^{13 & 14}
- Acts 2:38-47- “Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...”
 - Willie Jennings references Pentecost as “the revolution of the intimate.”¹⁵ In other words-> external mission cannot happen apart from our internal revelation.
 - Pure devotion (to God → Shema; to each other)

¹³ Cliff R. Jordan, “The Sent Life: Discovering The Mission of God and the Christian’s Place In It” (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 5, ProQuest, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3776&context=doctonal>.

¹⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016).

¹⁵ Willie James Jennings, *Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2017), 34.

ACTS CONT.

- Acts 8:4-5- “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.”
 - The “scattered church became the witnessing church”¹⁶
 - The scatter wasn’t just from persecution but an intentional decision that shows the identity of God’s people is bearing witness.

¹⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Revive Us Again: Biblical Principles for Revival Today* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2001), 200.

WHY IS PRAYER IMPORTANT?

- *Prayer is what activates one to be more intentional w/ God and others → Mark Mittelberg and Lee Strobel*¹⁷
- Where else do we see prayer a central part of missional ecclesiology?
- How do you live out the fullest expression of prayer w/ God (vertical) + w/ others (horizontal) simultaneously?

¹⁷ Mark Mittelberg and Lee Strobel, *Contagious Faith: Discover Your Natural Style for Sharing Jesus with Others* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 6, ProQuest Ebook Central.

PRAYER (ANCHOR) + MISSION (EXPRESSION)

- Prayer (Repent, Receive, Devote) → Mission (Tell/Share, Preach, Go)
- John Robb, who did work with International Frontier Missions once said: it's prayer that enabled the people to truly minister. Prayer came first with Pentecost before mission for a reason.¹⁸

¹⁸ John Robb, "Review of Prayer as a Strategic Weapon in Frontier Missions," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 1, no.8 (1991): 26, https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM08_1_PDFs/8_1Robb.pdf.

ISAIAH – MISSIONAL PRAYER

- Isaiah 6– A stark commissioning; marked by mission; anointing but also received in prayer (a vision w/ repentance)
- Deep revelatory prayer BEFORE his commission.
- Isaiah 56:7- "house of prayer for all nations" → Means outside of our own house!
- John Oswalt says, "The prophet is reminding us that the redeemed servants of the Lord have a mission, to draw all the world to the 'holy mountain,' but also telling us that being a member of covenant community is not a matter of inheritance but obedience."¹⁹ (prayer + mission)

¹⁹ John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah: The NIV Application Commentary From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 518, ProQuest Ebook Central.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How is prayer directly correlated to evangelism?
- How can prayer be a more missional component of your lifestyle?

NOTES

- Resources:

- Millar, J. Gary *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Beale, G. K. *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
 - Final Debrief– Friday, Aug 9th – Lunch Hour ; Sunday, Aug 11th

Week 3 Agenda: Prayer as the Core-Central Circle to Mission + Discipleship

- Snacks
- Recap Week 2
- Open w/ Prayer + Listening
- Great Commission: Matthew 28:16-20
- Prayer, Action & Relationship
- Missio Dei
- Concentric Circles
- Additional Resources

WEEK 3

- *Prayer as the Core-Central Circle to Mission + Discipleship*

GREAT COMMISSION

- ¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20).

GREAT COMMISSION

- *What comes to mind when you hear Great Commission?*
- *How is one "commissioned"? How do you live this out in everyday life?*
- International Mission Board states that there seems to be a dichotomy in the Great Commission between "going to a nation" versus "an ongoing lifestyle" → "It is absolutely true that we should strive with all of our energy to make disciples "as we go." God's people are to engage in evangelism and discipleship wherever they are regardless of whether they are missionaries, pastors, engineers, pilots, or janitors. But the Great Commission is so much more than a lifestyle command. It's a summons to join God on his mission to redeem a people from every single tribe and language and people and nation ([Rev 5:9](#))."¹
- How have you been taught the Great Commission? Either or both?

¹ Robert Wells, "Go Means Go: A Closer Look at the Great Commission," International Mission Board, Jan 16, 2018, <https://www.imb.org/2018/01/16/go-means-go-a-closer-look-at-the-great-commission/>.

GREAT COMMISSION CONT.

- Who were the first evangelists?
- Frederick Brunner says this isn't just true of the disciples or of Jesus, but we see evangelism on display by: "Mary and Mary who were the first to visit the empty tomb as the "first evangelists commissioned by Jesus" to "go and tell" (Matt 28:7, NIV).²
- He actually goes as far to correlate just as we've been talking– Shema to OT; Great Commission to NT → almost like a continuation woven throughout Scripture.³

² Rodney Reeves, *Matthew*. Ed. by Tremper Longman and Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 564, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary, vol. 2* (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 213, ProQuest Ebook Central.

GREAT COMMISSION

- Jun says its more about an “identity than an activity...Missional Discipleship is more than the transmission of the gospel but also the transformation of individuals and societies by demonstrating true fellowship of believers whose values are transformed.”⁴
- What does the prayer life look like of a disciple?
- Of a disciple-maker?
- How do we “make disciples”? → Is it related to conversion? Defined by baptism?
- How do we measure this in small groups?

⁴ Guichun Jun, “Missional Discipleship in the Public Sphere,” 112-113.

PRAYER & LISTENING

- How am I personally partnering with or being sent as a part of the Great Commission?
 - How is prayer a central component of the GC?
- Monastic traditions focus on: contemplative action-- Rooted in “presence, prayerful engagement, and activity on behalf of the world- and specifically on behalf of the most needy.”⁵

⁵ Ian Adams, *Cave Refectory Road: Monastic Rhythms for Contemporary Living* (London, UK: Canterbury Press, 2010), 25.

PRAYER, ACTION & RELATIONSHIP

- While we can be open, aware, and earnestly desire to grow in the Great Commission... and we can be obedient to the mandate...
- Ultimately it is about: The work of the Spirit & our obedience/action.
- *Prayer: Break my heart for what breaks yours.*
- *Action: Obey promptings*
- *Relationship: Ongoing investment*
- *ALONE: Action → overactive works/deeds; Prayer → Could isolate w/ inaction*
- *PRAYER & ACTION– missional cause w/out long term investment*
- *PRAYER, ACTION, & RELATIONSHIP (mission, discipleship, & prayer) = lifestyle intertwined w/ investment*

MISSIO DEI

- Missio Dei = Mission of God/ How many have heard this term? How is prayer @ heart of Missio Dei?
- Missional discipleship/spirituality is beyond spiritual gifts/ skill sets.
- Albert Wolters says, "Witness and mission have been reduced to sending out missionaries and evangelists, or evangelistic encounters with our neighbors and co-workers...[It] cannot be reduced to verbal articulation of the gospel or to certain kinds of service activity...all of life is a witness."⁶

⁶ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 130.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES | ECOSYSTEM



- Continual
- Feeds & Fuels- building off of each other
- Greater sum together than separate
- Prayer @ center, mission in the immediate outer circle being fueled by prayer, and discipleship in the outermost circle being fueled by mission
- Ongoing discipleship fuels both mission & prayer
- Larger the circle, larger the seen in the natural impact- multiplication

⁷ Kiersten Telzerow, 2024

REFLECTION

- How does the Great Commission help us contextualize evangelism?
- What does a healthy picture of wholistic discipleship look like in a small group? In the local church?
- How do all three work as concentric circles in Scripture?
- Is it possible to lean more on wholistic discipleship being more theoretical than practical? Why do you think some may talk about all aspects of this but not put it into practice?

NOTES

- Resources

Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life Together in the Kingdom of Love

- **Aug 11- debrief- 1hr @ 12:30pm**

Mark Scandrette, *Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life Together in the Kingdom of Love*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011.

Week 4 Agenda: The New Model

- Snacks
- Recap- Week 3
- Why Does This Matter?
- Acts (11, 13, and 16)
- The Church in Antioch
- Empowered by the Spirit
- Prayer & Listening
- What's Next?
- Additional Resources

WEEK 4

- *The New Model*

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?- FORMED IN HIS PRESENCE

- J.T. English, states that wholistic discipleship is formed in the “presence of God more than a ministry philosophy.”²
- If Wholistic Discipleship is formed first in God’s presence– then how does that inform how we understand all 3 concentric circles (or both the Great Commission and Great Commandment)?

² J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship, How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), xlv, ProQuest Ebook Central.

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH- ACTS 11

- Integration:
 - Compartmentalized lifestyles/ faith (When we think faith has to look a certain way)
 - God made a way for Gentiles to be saved (v. 2-10)
- Paradigm shifts:
 - Peter says, “Who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?” (v. 18)- God can use anything
- Sent People:
 - Walking out Great Commission + Great Commandment
 - Church in Antioch (marketplace + local church); v. 19– scattered;
 - V. 19-30--> Early Church all over again (devotion, prophetic, caring for needs, discipleship, teaching)

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

- A place that crosses-cultures:
 - > Jerusalem → Samaria (different ethnic, political, geographical make-up)³
 - One scholar even views Samaria close in location but not in relationships. ⁴
- “Once the neighbor is defined, then one’s moral obligation is clear. In a memorable story Jesus defined the neighbor by telling of the Good Samaritan. With sure artistry and great power he depicted what happens when a man responds directly to human need across the barriers of class, race, and condition. Every man is potentially every other man’s neighbor. Neighborliness is nonspatial; it is qualitative. A man must love his neighbor directly, clearly, permitting no barriers between.”⁵ - Howard Thurman

³ G. A. Keddle, “Who Is My Neighbor?” Ethnic Boundaries and the Samaritan Other in Luke 10:25-37, *Biblical Interpretation*, 28, no. 2 (2020): 246–271, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685152-00282P06>

⁴ Adenigba Olatayo Stephen and Kolawole Oladotun Paul, “The Implications of the Book of Acts 8:1-8 for the Nigerian Church,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* 102, (2021), 3, <https://doi.org/10.46722/pharosjot.10210>.

⁵ Howard Thurman, and Dr. Kelly Douglas, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2022), 79, Google Books.

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

- > Jew and Gentiles
- “The post-Christendom era Evangelical Church in the United Kingdom currently also finds itself at a transitional point of having to redefine itself in a culture where the predominant Christian worldview is vanishing, whilst simultaneously grappling with discipleship in order to fulfil the great commission. This tension is not unlike what was experienced by the church in Antioch, having to look back to Scripture for validation and forward to the nations for mission.”⁶

⁶ Henry, D. & Swart, M.F., “Beyond post-Christendom discipleship of the Evangelical Church in the United Kingdom: A study of the Gospel of Matthew in the transformational and holistic perspective,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42, no.1 (2021): 2, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42n1.2229>.

ANTIOCH CONT.

- A “cosmopolitan city far removed from theological universe of Jerusalem”⁷
- “one of the most significant major cities of the eastern Mediterranean and a crossroads for the Silk Road, from its foundation by the Seleucids, through Roman rule, the rise of Christianity, Islamic and Byzantine conquests, to the Crusades and beyond.”⁸
- The birthplace of the early Church
- Pivotal moment of the spreading/sending of the Church
- Crossover of discipleship, prayer, and mission empowered by the Spirit
- In what ways do we see Antioch similar to modern-day cities?

⁷ Willie James Jennings, *Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2017), 124.

⁸ Andrea U De Giorgi and A. Asa Eger, *Antioch: A History* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), i, ProQuest Ebook.

EMPOWERED BY HOLY SPIRIT | MISSIO DEI | ACTS 13

- Sent to carry out the mission of God to the Nations
- Acts 13:1-3 → Sent
- Acts 13- continued on full of the Holy Spirit, even amidst persecution
- 13:47 → quoted from Isaiah 49:6– where Christ was rejected; His followers would now bring the Good News of salvation to the nations.
- *God’s heart is for the people of all nations → in what ways do our lifestyles carry that message?*

ACTS 16- CITY IMPACT

- Household impact= neighborhood impact = city impact
- (Lydia's household saved v. 14-15; jailer's household saved.V. 29-31)
- A single decision impacts whole households
- *What impact could you have if you believed how you followed Jesus could impact multiple households where you lived?*

LOVING GOD + LOVING OTHERS= WHOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP

- Easy to do with those we know & love.
- Pick an area as a challenge...
 - *How do you love God more AND love others more than you do now:*
 - At the grocery store? In your prayer life? On mission to spread the Gospel?
 - *How do we love God and love those hardest to love by being on mission?*
 - Much of Jesus outpouring → from His infilling (went away to a solitary place, prayed extended periods of time, the Beatitudes, etc.)
 - Loving God + Loving those who “insult, persecute, and falsely say evil against you?”
- *How does deep abiding inform how you live on mission?*

IN CONCLUSION

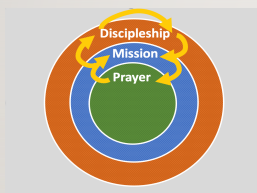
- “In a world where billions have never received the gospel, where in many traditional western circles passion for missions is waning, and where churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America are increasingly taking the lead in world missions, this emphasis bears repeating in new ways for the twenty-first century. The gospel does not belong to any one people. Jesus gives us both a commission and a promise: despite persecution and obstacles, the good news of our Lord will reach the ends of the earth. In light of the availability of prayer and the Lord’s promise, the best may be yet to come.”⁹

⁹ Craig S. Keener, “The Spirit and the Mission of the Church in Acts 1-2,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62, no.1 (March 2019): 44-45, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI&G0V190415001480&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

REFLECTION & PRAYERFUL LISTENING

- What does a wholistic small group look like rooted in prayer, discipleship, and mission?
- How can your wholistic discipleship walk impact the DMV?
- What area do you need to challenge yourself?
- If presence is more important than philosophy, how can we double down on prayer to know His heart more?

REFLECTION



How may these concentric circles shape or change your view an embedded or integrated understanding of the Christian walk instead of linear steps?

RESOURCES

- *Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community*
by Ruth Haley Barton

APPENDIX N
CONVERSATION GUIDE

1. In what ways do you feel better equipped as a small group leader?
2. What was the most valuable thing you learned from the prayer course?
3. What are two examples of how you grew in prayer, discipleship, and mission more throughout this course?
4. Less than 30% percent said they prioritize more than five minutes of missional prayer in their small group and even less frequently serve the community, what do you do differently or more intentionally in your group context now that you've completed the prayer course (if anything)?
5. How do you see prayer having a direct correlated impact in your city and neighborhood?
6. What does discipleship look like in your everyday life and how would you define a mature wholistic disciple after completing this research project?
7. How can you better develop integrated wholistic lifestyles in your life and the lives around you?
8. How equipped do you feel to teach, model, and represent an active lifestyle of evangelism through the form of prayer and why?
9. How frequently are you engaging in evangelistic discipleship within the circles outside your immediate small group gathering after completing the prayer course?
10. Of the three, where do you feel NCC is the strongest (in teaching, equipping, and modeling): discipleship, prayer, or mission?

APPENDIX O
CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ADDENDUM

Summary of Human Development Theory and Theological Perspective:

In order to best understand human development, one has to understand the Imago Dei, that each person is made in the image of God. Like a seesaw, it can quickly become imbalanced if one focuses on human development without Christian formation or theology without social sciences. We see the Imago Dei at play in the “physical, intellectual, moral, social, purposeful, and spiritual” realms just as we see developmental theories play out universally, “cognitively, morally, psychologically, and spiritually.”¹⁴ Rather than seeing each one separately, it is imperative to understand the sum of the whole concerning each part. Estep and Kim summarize it saying, “We are constructed holistically with a wholeness that does not allow us to be divided into this part or that part.”¹⁵

While it is already a given that human development can and does integrate with Christian formation, the key is determining to what degree. The more one continually learns about human development and theology, the greater the paths will intersect.¹⁶ National Community Church’s small groups and leadership journeys all will look slightly different while also reflecting God’s image. While there are certainly similar progressions and stages, there are varying phases that could cause one individual to accelerate more rapidly in growth than another or life events that

¹⁴ James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 32.

¹⁵ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

cause a hindrance in one's walk that is unique to their life story and age. Development can have similar "stages" with different "approaches or responses."¹⁷

The most popular development theories give shape to a better understanding of the overarching umbrellas of various stages humanity walks through and how culture can play a role. All of these play a role in Christian education, or discipleship in the growth contexts of the local church.¹⁸ For the focus of this addendum, there will be an emphasis on faith development as a human development theory that reflects the spiritual component of the Imago Dei.¹⁹ It is about the group leaders and the role each one plays within the community. The growth of one group leader's faith immediately impacts another sphere of influence.

This ties into my specific purposes and problem of researching wholistic discipleship as it unfolds in the context of how each small group leader has been raised, pieces of one's story, church background, and present-day engagement. It all feeds into the problem and purpose while understanding that there is a larger development theory at play that is impacting the discipleship ecosystem as a whole at National Community Church. Estep and Kim advocate for the developmental theories that are about "social sciences integrating with Scripture"²⁰ as a split avenue of equal importance instead of seeing the world through just the lens of Scripture. Instead of empirical knowledge juxtaposed to the Word of God, what does it look like to activate our logic and emotions knowing "the spiritual capacity of humanity, which directly influences all of the other dimensions of our existence?"²¹

¹⁷ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 39.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

This both/and paradigm is more complex with greater detail than an either/or approach. It ultimately helps the researcher better understand how development and formation can work together hand in hand instead of opposing each other. Estep and Kim refer to this as “paradigmatic.”²² “It affirms the value of both the insights of Scripture as God’s special revelation (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21) and creation as God’s general revelation (Job 38:1ff, Romans 1:18-22).”²³

Up front, it is important to note that, within the context of faith development and Christian formation, uniquely James W. Fowler is most known for his Faith Development Theory.²⁴ This theory though primarily focuses on faith objectively as an “ontological truth” as opposed to integration with theology and existing belief in a single God.²⁵ The way each stage is portrayed symbolizes that like much of today’s modern context. One can have faith, goodwill, and well-being, without it being directly correlated to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While I can also see some of the subjective biases included in Fowler’s main developmental research, as others do, one substantive takeaway is that progression in Christian formation is most often marked by the workings of the Holy Spirit. One cannot proactively force one’s way or begin to see new paradigm shifts such as the “paradoxical” lifestyle as described in Fowler’s five stages without a fresh revelation of ongoing connection to the Vine described in John 15.²⁶ Whereas Fowler believes one can arrive if one makes it through all phases including: “intuitive-projective,

²² Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 50

²³ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 170-174.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

mythic-literal, synthetic-conventional, individuative-reflective, paradoxical-consolidative, and universalizing.”²⁷

Uniquely, this can spill over into our everyday lives within the context of discipleship as it plays out through the form of constructing good living, imparting good-will, and becoming good people. “Self, others, and shared centers of value and power” can all co-exist apart from the Christian walk with God in today’s context.²⁸ To unpack this is to ensure that one is progressively growing and expanding in their walk growing closer towards the likeness of Christ and proximity to the presence of God.²⁹

**Future Participants in My Action Research will Grow Theologically (Christian Formation)
When Human Development Theory is Applied:**

Apart from what is practical or impractical in everyday life, the basis for human development and Christian formation is ultimately about the source of Truth. If God is the Creator of all, He would also be the Creator of all endeavors of human development and social thought. As a result, it is an invitation to explore the depths of the social sciences as opposed to a juxtaposition. Creation should always point back to the Creator. The job of creation is to excavate with given potential to learn as much as we can about the soil, stars, galaxies, human cells, etc. to work in partnership with God to restore and renew the created order. When human development theory is applied, it is an invitation to go deeper as a part of Shalom which is a “restoration with God, ourselves, others, and creation.”³⁰ This is already inherent within as a part of the DNA of the

²⁷ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 170-174.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁰ Amy L. Sherman, *Agents of Flourishing*, 14.

image-bearers of God.³¹ Whether it is Westerhoff, Fowler, Oser, or Streib's research on faith development, each phase amounts to a degree of maturation and defining faith for the individual and the community at large.³² The research of wholistic discipleship not only impacts the life of an individual small group leader but will also impact their small group and neighborhood at large. There is a direct correlation.

Practically, this is just making sure that image-bearers are not prevented from living out the image of God. It's putting practices and disciplines in place in order that one does not become stagnant in false identities or stuck within habitual patterns as the body will always revert back to the human form of human development. When human development theory is applied to theology, it allows the opportunity for continual progress, as the process in and of itself "cannot overcome sin's effect."³³

As a result of the prayer course within this research, the hope is that each group leader will ultimately be able to move from an informative state that is ontological or remaining rational in knowledge to an experiential state that is "owned faith" corporately and able to view the "sacredness of all of life" in how one lives and works.³⁴ Even though there is an in-depth study of faith development in Estep and Kim's book, there is still the conclusion that this may not "lead to Christ-centered maturity."³⁵ As a result, Timothy Paul Jones and Michael S. Wilder suggest that if Christian discipleship spaces cannot rely ultimately upon faith development to

³¹ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 31.

³² *Ibid.*, 186-187.

³³ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

give the necessary replicable steps, then perhaps it could be better understood as steps to growing in stature and “wisdom.”³⁶ In other words, it is less about what particular stage individuals may be at and more about the proximity of growing in Christ-likeness through divine wisdom that is comprehensive, wholistic, and “sanctifying.”³⁷ So instead of looking at the completion of a prayer course, the research will become infinitely valuable as an added resource of wisdom in a group leader’s toolbox.

Measured and Determined through Action-Oriented Intervention:

Whether it is described as “growth in holiness” or “transformation through testimony,” action-oriented research requires shifts that are measurable.³⁸ More specifically, how this will be measured or determined in the research for Holistic Discipleship will be about better gauging integration as well as discerning the markers of frequency and consistency around prayer, mission, and discipleship. How this is played out at the beginning of the research ideally will produce and develop different results of integration after the prayer course is completed within our group leadership.

While the goal is not to create easy linear steps of spiritual formation, there is a necessity for continual movement in forward motion without stopping, remaining stagnant, or reversing. This will focus on assessing growth in understanding the discipleship ecosystem, experiencing wholistic lifestyles that play a role in the community, and discerning through testimony what the correlated impact is between prayer, mission, and discipleship within Washington, D.C. Specific

³⁶ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 189.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

questions addressed in the interviews will provide responses showing the researcher a level of growth in wisdom, practical prayer, or missional components within the city while portraying the impact within the entire group.

While some of the markers will be numerical growth, others will remain in a qualitative form through interviews and testimonies. One key aspect will be focusing on the comprehensive dialogue instead of each individual narrative. The more expansive the analysis, the more the researcher will be able to measure stages from starting points to ending points over a period of time. Another marker would be the evidence of the fruits of the Spirit that are active within one's lifestyle and contextualizing wherever God has planted the individual. Jones and Wilder refer to this as a multi-part faith that is "formed by community, love, authenticity, and suffering."³⁹ The goal is for there to be a distinct progression between what was once a philosophy that is now a lived-out praxis or way of living on display publicly for people to see within a small group. The ultimate ideal goal would circle directly back to the researcher's purpose which is for the group leaders to experience the transformation that fosters the practice of replication and multiplication within a small group context at National Community Church.

³⁹ Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 196.

Bibliography

- 24/7 Prayer. "About 24/7 Prayer." Accessed May 10th, 2024. https://www.24-7prayer.com/about/about-us/who-we-are/?_gl=1*1aowyrq*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTQ1MjlyMzUwNS4xNzE1MzkwOTc5*_ga_EP7TTC0T8Z*MTcxNTM5MDk3OS4xLjEuMTcxNTM5MTEwMi4wLjAuMA.
- Adams, Ian. *Cave Refectory Road: Monastic Rhythms for Contemporary Living* (London, UK: Canterbury Press, 2010), 5.
- Adams, Scott. *In Jesus' Name: Johannine Prayers in Ethical, Missional, and Eschatological Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022. Google Books.
- Allen, Edward. "The Form and Function of Prayer in the Student Volunteer Movement, 1886–1914." *Studies in World Christianity* 25, no. 2 (2019): 187-201. <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=d41d425e-e9aa-4a9b-9eeb-5437fbd484d8%40redis>.
- Andrews, Alan, ed., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Atkinson, Harley, and Joshua Rose. "The Small-Group Ministry Movement of the Last Four Decades." *Christian education journal*. 17, no. 3 (2020): 547–559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320942932>.
- Barth, Al. "A Vision for Our Cities." Redeemer City to City. Last modified January 1, 2009. <https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/a-vision-for-our-cities>.
- Barton, Ruth Haley. *Life Together In Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014.
- Bakke, Ray. *A Theology As Big As the City*. Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Batterson, Mark. "Like Those Who Dream." National Community Church. January 20th, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aov0LoOGbKk>.
- Beale, G.K. *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- Bennett, Kyle David. *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017.
- Bevins, Winfield. *Liturgical Mission: The Work of the People for the Life of the World*. Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2022.

- Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016.
- Bradshaw, David. *Awaken the Dawn: An Adventure in Hosting Jesus' Presence and Discovering Your Part in the Story*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2021.
- Briggs, J. R. *The Sacred Overlap: Learning to Live Faithfully in the Space Between*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2020.
- Brown, Brene. *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*. Manhattan, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 2018. Google Books.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989.
- Bruner, Frederick Dale. *Matthew: A Commentary. Vol. 2*. Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Butler, James. "The 'Long and Winding Road' of Faith: Learning about the Christian Life and Discipleship from Two Methodist Congregations." *Practical Theology* 13, no.3 (2020): 277-89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2019.1678859>.
- Byers, Andrew J. "The Shema as the Foundation For John's Theological Use of 'One': Identifying and Addressing Reservations." In *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*, 105-28. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Campanale, Andrea. "A Missional Journey to the Margins." Archives at Search- A Church of Ireland Journal. Last modified 2023, <https://searchjournal.ireland.anglican.org/archives/2023/02/a-missional-journey-to-the-margins>.
- Campanale, Andrea. St. Augustine's College of Theology. <https://staugustinescollege.ac.uk/andrea-campanale/>.
- Campbell, Duncan. *Revival in the Hebrides*. Kraus House, 2015. Barnes and Noble Nook.
- Carruth, Thomas. "Prayer Evangelism." *The Asbury Seminarian* 12, no.1 (1958): 15-18. <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2131&context=asburyjournal>.
- Carson, D.A. *The Gospel According to John*. Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1990. ProQuest Ebook Central.

- Clayton, Roger Graham Jr. "The Modern Wesley Class Meeting - Bringing Accountability, Practical Faith, and Personal Connection into Established Local Congregations." PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 2022.
https://scholar.smu.edu/theology_ministry_etds/12.
- Cole, Arnold and Pamela Caudill Ovwigho. "Understanding the Bible Engagement Challenge: Scientific Evidence for the Power of 4." *Center for Bible Engagement*, (2009): 1-20.
https://bttbfiles.com/web/docs/cbe/Scientific_Evidencefor_the_Power_of_4.pdf.
- Docusen, David. *Neighborliness: Love Like Jesus. Cross Dividing Lines. Transform Your Community*. Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2022.
- Dodson, Jonathan K. *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Downs, Randall L. "The Influence of the Moravian Missions Movement on Baptist Global Missions." PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/influence-moravian-missions-movement-on-baptist/docview/2090034334/se-2>.
- Duguid, Iain, James M. Hamilton Jr., Jay Sklar, and Biran Vickers, ed., *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 9): John-Acts*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Duguid, Iain M., James M. Hamilton, Jay Sklar, Dan Doriani, Hans F. Bayer, and Thomas R. Schreiner, ed., *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 8): Matthew-Luke*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Duewel, Wesley L., *Heroes of the Holy Life: Biographies of Fully Devoted Followers of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002. Google Books.
- Eisenberg, Daniel, Ezra Golberstein, Janis Whitlock, and Marilyn F. Downs. "Social Contagion of Mental Health: Evidence From College Roommates." *Health Economics* 22, no. 8 (2013): 965-86. doi:10.1002/hec.2873.
- Elwell, Walter A. "Know, Knowledge - Bible Meaning & Definition - Baker's Dictionary." *Bible Study Tools*. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/know-knowledge.html#:~:text=The%20%20Old%20Testament.,willing%2C%20%20performing%2C%20and%20%20experiencing>.
- English, J.T. *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Estep, James, R. and Jonathan H. Kim. *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010.

- Farah, Warrick, ed., *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations*. Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2021.
- Fellows, Philip. "Discipleship in Three Dimensions: A Critical Examination of John Wesley's Doctrine of Holiness and Its Implications for Contemporary Small Group Discipleship." *Ecclesiology*. 17, no. 1 (2021): 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455316-bja10006>.
- Folkerts, Suzan. *Religious Connectivity in Urban Communities (1400-1550): Reading, Worshipping, and Connecting Through the Continuum of Sacred and Secular*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Ford, Lance, Rob Wegner, and Alan Hirsch. *The Starfish and the Spirit: Unleashing the Leadership Potential of Churches and Organizations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021.
- Forge America. "Home." Last modified 2024. <https://www.forgeamerica.com/>.
- Fuentes, Cristobal Serrán-Pagán y."The Active Life and the Contemplative Life in St. John of the Cross: The Mixed Life in the Teresian Carmelite Tradition." *Religions* 11, no. 10 (2020): 509. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11100509>.
- George Washington University. "Media Tip Sheet: Chamber of Commerce Data: Washington, D.C. is the 'Loneliest City' in America." GW Media Relations. Last modified February 22nd, 2024. <https://mediarelations.gwu.edu/media-tip-sheet-chamber-commerce-data-washington-dc-loneliest-city-america>.
- Goheen, Michael W. *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Baker Publishing Group, 2011.
- González, Justo L. *Teach Us to Pray: The Lord's Prayer in the Early Church and Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Grenz, Stanley. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000.
- Grimm, Tammie Marie. "Ordinary, Everyday Discipleship: Banding Together for Faithful Living at Home, Work, and in the World." *Christian education journal* 17, no. 2 (2020): 347–359. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320919418>.
- Gustafson, David M. *Gospel Witness: Evangelism in Word and Deed*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Hah, Seung M. "Intercultural Missional Leadership: Theological Foundation and Biblical Narratives." *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 75, no. 1 (2019): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5211>.

- Hardy, Andrew R., and Dan Yarnell. *Missional Discipleship after Christendom*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Hawkins, Don. *Master Discipleship Today: Jesus's Prayer and Plan for Every Believer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Henry, Desmond and Max F. Swart. "Beyond Post-Christendom Discipleship of the Evangelical Church in the United Kingdom: A Study of the Gospel of Matthew in the Transformational and Holistic Perspective." *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (2021): 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42i1.2229>.
- Henry, James Daryn. *A.B. Simpson and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Henry, Matthew. "Chapter 28, The Gospel According to Saint Matthew." In *Zondervan NIV Matthew Henry Commentary in One Volume*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub House, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Hirsch, Alan. "Welcome." <https://www.alanhirsch.org/>.
- Ho, Mary and Rudolf Mak. "The Uniqueness of the Chinese Mission Movement—Past, Present, and Future." *International bulletin of mission research*. 46, no. 1 (2022): 60–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/239693932111026444>.
- Horton, Stanley M. *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary*. Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Humphrey, Billy and Corey Russell. *Reclaiming Revival: Calling a Generation to Contend for Historic Awakening*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers Inc, 2022.
- International House of Prayer Kansas City. "About the International House of Prayer." About IHOPKC. Last modified 2024. <https://ihopkc.org>.
- Jennings, Willie James. *Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.
- Jordan, Cliff R. "The Sent Life: Discovering The Mission of God and the Christian's Place In It." DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020. ProQuest. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3776&context=doctoral>.
- Jun, Guichun. "Missional Discipleship in the Public Sphere: With Special Reference to Lordship, Followership and Christlikeness in the Concept of Public Discipleship." *Transformation: an international evangelical dialogue on mission and ethics* 39, no. 2 (2022): 111-121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02653788211062462>.

- Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. *Revive Us Again: Biblical Principles for Revival Today*. Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2001.
- Kaiser, Otto. *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1983. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- KC Underground Network. "Exegetical Prayer Walk." Live as Missionaries. Last modified 2024. <https://kcunderground.org/resources-content/exegetical-walk>.
- Kent, Trey and Kie Bowman. *City of Prayer: Transform Your Community through Praying Churches*. Terre Haute, IN: PrayerShop Publishing, 2019.
- King Jr., Dr. Martin Luther. *A Gift of Love: Sermons from Strength to Love and Other Preachings*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012. Google Books.
- Koshy, Sarosh. *Beyond Missio Dei: Contesting Mission, Rethinking Witness*, 1st ed. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Kuppinger, Petra, ed., *Emergent Spaces: Change and Innovation in Small Urban Spaces*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84379-3>.
- Lee, Samuel. "Faith in the Marketplace: Measuring the Impact of Church Based Entrepreneurial Approaches to Holistic Mission." PhD diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2019. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/faith-marketplace-measuring-impact-church-based/docview/2242477956/se-2>.
- Lessing, R. Reed. "Zechariah 8: God's Vision for the City." *Concordia Journal* 48 (1): 25-38. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAIiREM220507000235&site=ehost-live>.
- Ligonier Ministries. "Seventy Years of Exile." Last modified July 24, 2013, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/seventy-years-exile>.
- Mason, Eric. *Urban Ministry: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021.
- McClendon, P. Adam, and Jared E. Lockhart. *Timeless Church: Five Lessons from Acts*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020.
- McDow, Malcolm and Alvin L. Reid. *Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997.
- McGinley, John. *Mission Shaped Living Leader's Guide*. 1st ed. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

- Meeks, Angel. "A Call for Revolution of Global Ministry through the Short-Term Mission Movement: A Book Proposal for Creative Solutions to the Problems Surrounding the STM Phenomenon." Master's Thesis, Northwest University, 2020.
https://archives.northwestu.edu/bitstream/handle/nu/54994/meeks_angel_icd_2020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Millar, J. Gary. *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Mittelberg, Mark, and Lee Strobel. *Contagious Faith : Discover Your Natural Style for Sharing Jesus with Others*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- National Community Church. Last modified 2024. <https://national.cc>.
- National Community Church. "Core Convictions." Core Convictions. Last modified 2024. <https://national.cc/about/core-convictions>.
- National Community Church. "Intentional." Media. Last modified 2022. <https://national.cc/sermon-series/intentional/>.
- Niebauer, Michael. *Virtuous Persuasion: A Theology of Christian Mission*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022.
- Niemandt, Doret and Nelus C. Niemandt. "Missional Metanoia: Missional Spirituality in Holistic Theological Education." *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6506>.
- North Coast Church. "Sermon Messages." Sermon Messages. Last modified 2024. <https://www.northcoastchurch.com/sermons/>.
- Ortlund, Ray. *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Osborne, Grant R., *Acts Verse by Verse*. Ashland: Faithlife Corporation, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Luke Verse by Verse*. Ashland: Faithlife Corporation, 2018. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Oswalt, John N. *Isaiah: The NIV Application Commentary From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Payne, J.D. *Apostolic Imagination: Recovering a Biblical Vision for the Church's Mission Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022.

- Psychology Today. "Frequency Illusion." Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon. Last modified 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/frequency-illusion>.
- Microsoft. "RAND Function." <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/rand-function-4cbfa695-8869-4788-8d90-021ea9f5be7>.
- Randall, Ian. "Early Moravian Spirituality and Missionary Vision." *Wesley and Methodist studies*. 9, no. 2 (2017): 123-140. <https://doi.org/10.5325/weslmethstud.9.2.0123>.
- Ravenhill, Leonard. *Revival Praying: An Urgent and Powerful Message for the Family of Christ*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2005.
- Reeves, Rodney. *Matthew*. Edited by Tremper Longman and Scot McKnight. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Robb, John. "Review of Prayer as a Strategic Weapon in Frontier Missions." *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 1, no.8 (1991): 26. https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/08_1_PDFs/8_1Robb.pdf.
- Rutt, Douglas L. "The City of Antioch as Bridge Between Jerusalem and the World." *Concordia Journal*. 48, no.1 (2022): 11-23. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAIiREM220507000234&site=ehost-live>.
- Sanchez, M., Leopoldo A. "Who is the City? Theological Approaches to the City." *Concordia Journal* 48 (1): 39–52. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAIiREM220507000236&site=ehost-live>.
- Sanders, Alvin. *Uncommon Church: Community Transformation for the Common Good*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020. ProQuest Ebrary.
- Scandrette, Mark. *Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life Together in the Kingdom of Love*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011.
- Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Acts: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Schoon, Christopher James. *Cultivating an Evangelistic Character: Integrating Worship and Discipleship in the Missional Church Movement*. Eugene: OR. Wipf and Stock, 2018.
- Scott, Andrew. *Scatter: Go Therefore and Take Your Job With You*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2016.
- Shead, Andrew G. *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central.

- Sherman, Amy L. *Agents of Flourishing: Pursuing Shalom in Every Corner of Society*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022.
- Simpson, Matthew Christopher. "A Case for the Traditional Translation of the Shema, Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God the LORD is One." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010. ProQuest.
- Small Group Network. Last Modified in 2024. <https://smallgroupnetwork.com/>.
- Staton, Tyler. *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools: An Invitation to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2022.
- Stott, John, and Tim Chester. *The World*. Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Stringer, Ernest T., and Alfredo Ortiz Aragon. *Action Research*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication, 2020. Liberty Online Vital Source.
- Taylor, Howard. *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission: The Growth of a Work of God*. Independent, 2023.
- Taylor, John V. *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015. Google Books.
- The Gospel Coalition. "Introduction to Zachariah: Discover the Basics of the Book of Zechariah." Last modified, 2024. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/zechariah/#overview>.
- Topliss, John, Thomas V. Gourlay, and Reginald Mary Chua. "In Altum—'Put Out into the Deep': A Formation Program for Missionary Discipleship for Students at the University of Notre Dame Australia." *Religions* 15, no. 2 (2024): 147. <https://doi.org/10.3390/re115020147>.
- Upper Room Dallas. "Upper Room." Accessed August 10th, 2024. <https://upperroom.co/prayer-room/>.
- Van der Merwe, Willie. "Nurturing a Missional Spirituality: Any Lessons to Learn from the Ministry of Andrew Murray Jr (1828-1917)" *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 8, no. 3 (2022): 103-117. <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2022.v8n3.a5>.
- Wilkinson, Michael and Linda McGuire Ambrose. *After the Revival: Pentecostalism and the Making of a Canadian Church*. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Williams, Rowan. *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016.

- Wolf, Herbert. *Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.
- Wright, Christopher J. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Yeager, Jonathan. *The Oxford Handbook of Early Evangelicalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Zempel, Heather. *Community is Messy: The Perils and Promise of Small Group Ministry*. Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

APPENDIX P

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 19, 2024

Kiersten Telzerow
Jason Mitchell

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY23-24-1689 Wholistic Discipleship at National Community Church: The Most Effective Tool for Transforming Cities

Dear Kiersten Telzerow and Jason Mitchell,

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 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