

Volume 1

DISCIPLESHIP &
Leadership

Training

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VOLUME 1

Discipleship and Leadership Training – Volume 1

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Introduction

An Outreach of the Foursquare Global Council

DLT began in January 2016 as a response of the Foursquare Global Council to a thirty-five nation National Strategic Assessment conducted in 2015 by Dr. Daniel Brown. Under the leadership of the Global Education Coordinator and a global team of over 250 Foursquare leaders, DLT addresses the four top “concerns/areas of global improvement” the Assessment identified—

- o We need to get better at strategically discipling converts.
- o We need to get better at holistically training leaders for ministry.
- o We need to get better at defining and ministering the baptism with the Holy Spirit, including discipling those baptized on how Spirit baptism influences their transformational growth and their missional involvement in God’s kingdom.
- o We need to get better at defining in writing what Foursquare believes on key topics/issues raised by our global constituency, enabling a unified, collaborative global partnership.

The modules in this two-volume 2023 publication are DLT’s first efforts (2017-2023) at providing Foursquare’s global biblical and theological understanding of these topics. Written by a global team of Foursquare pastors, professors, and leaders the modules have proven valuable in addressing the Assessment’s fourth concern. More are planned.

In addition to content, the DLT modules reflect a specific methodology of presentation that enables them to be strategic in moving us toward the other three DLT goals as well. This DLT method, reflected in the various questions embedded throughout each module, is one of “self-discovery learning, incarnating and applying truth” (from the head to the heart to the hands)—be it through one-on-one discipling (mentoring) or in a small group discussion. Please see “The DLT Engine” that follows for further explanation.¹

The modules have been used and adapted to a variety of settings—personal mentoring; seminars; small group studies; and even Schools of Ministry classrooms. Regardless of the setting, the aim when using

¹ The DLT team, in conjunction with the Foursquare Global Council, asks that these modules NOT be presented “lecture/preaching style,” whereby the audience listens and leaves. Such violates the purpose and integrity of DLT.

the DLT modules is transformational and incarnational discipleship through the biblical and theological content and DLT method. May they be a great help to you.

Gary Matsdorf
Global Education Coordinator
May 2023

Foundational Understanding

Gary Matsdorf

INTRODUCTION—

DLT (Discipleship and Leadership Training) is the Global Council's response to the four top findings of Foursquare's 2016 National Strategic Assessment—namely, the need to globally improve our efforts at **1)** “making disciples” (creating a global culture of discipleship); **2)** training leaders (including both character transformation and skill improvement); **3)** recovering an emphasis on Holy Spirit fullness and moving in Kingdom authority; and **4)** addressing “doctrinal drift” (endeavoring to produce materials that reflect what Foursquare believes globally on key issues and directing Foursquare leaders and disciples to resources where they can ascertain “what we believe” [i.e., what do the *Declaration of Faith* and *Global Distinctives* actually mean when exegeted?]).

At the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus formalized His gracious call by defining the fundamental task of the Church, often referred to as The Great Commission—**“Go and make disciples of all nations.”**

Because DLT's core is discipleship, we want to begin with a foundational understanding of discipleship.¹

JESUS' CALL TO MAKE DISCIPLES—

Jesus' ministry begins with His gracious call, **“Come, follow Me, and I will send you out to fish for people”** (Matthew 4:19). This life-long following, which includes personal transformation and involvement in His mission, will have “ups and downs,” as His followers give themselves to **[pressing] on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of [us]** (Philippians 3:12).

At the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus formalized His gracious call by defining the fundamental task of the Church, often referred to as The Great Commission—**“Go and make disciples² of all nations”** (Matthew 28:19).³ This process includes **“baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything**

¹ See attached “DLT Engine” for additional details.

² In 2020, the Global Council adopted the following working definition of a disciple. “A disciple is a believer in Christ who, together with others and by the power of the Holy Spirit, intentionally pursues Jesus, is being changed by Jesus and is actively engaged in the mission of Jesus to love God, make disciples, and love people.”

³ All Scripture, unless otherwise noted, is from the TNIV. This Commission is to result in Christian communities whose

I have commanded you” and concludes with the reassuring promise, **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”** (Matthew 28:19-20).

One way of looking at discipleship is to see it as Jesus’ call to totally attach oneself to Him; to follow Him with the intent to direct one’s whole existence toward the will of God. “Jesus’ call clearly points to a lasting association; Jesus is not inviting them to a pleasant stroll along the seashore but inviting them to discipleship; there is the thought of personal attachment.”⁴ Disciples are life-long learners⁵ who grow increasingly accustomed to God and His priorities (Mark 12:29-31), who undergo personal change and transformation by the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:1-14), and who involve themselves in His mission (Ephesians 4:11-12).⁶

Viewed from the perspective of God’s ultimate intention for us, salvation is one divine act, the work of the Spirit in bringing us into full conformity with the likeness of Christ.

Disciples are motivated by God’s love (1 John 4:9) and empowered by His grace (1 Corinthians 15:10); in addition to doing **the [generalized] work of ministry** (Ephesians 4:12 [NRSV]), disciples express their commitment to Jesus in the way they love God and love people, including enemies (Mark 12:29-31; Matthew 5:44).

Matthew’s details regarding Jesus’ call of two sets of brothers give some interesting insight into discipleship (Matthew 4:18-22). He notes that when Peter and Andrew were called, **at once they left their nets and followed Him** (vs. 20). When James and John were called, **immediately**

they left the boat and their father and followed Him (vs. 22). **And their father** is an important detail, in that it indicates that discipleship involves varied particulars; Jesus manages the specifics of our discipleship on an individual basis, yet always toward the same goal.

- *Following Jesus means togetherness with him and service to him while traveling on the Way...the goal of discipleship toward self is “become like Christ”...the process of becoming like Jesus brings the disciple into intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as such, is the goal of individual discipleship...the goal toward others is servanthood...authentic discipleship entails selfless servant-*

culture is that of disciple-making. Again, in 2020 the Global Council adopted this working definition of a culture of discipleship. “A culture of discipleship is a group of disciples who collectively, by the power of the Holy Spirit, intentionally commits to being devoted disciples who love God and love people, and to making mature and whole disciples who pursue Jesus, are being changed by Jesus and actively engage themselves in the mission of Jesus to love God, make disciples, and love people.”

⁴ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According To Matthew—The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992, pg. 85.

⁵ The Greek word translated *disciple* in the New Testament derives from a verb meaning, “to learn.”

⁶ An element in this process is that of having a strong biblical foundation, built in part through education.

hood...the goal of discipleship toward the world is the Great Commission...[believers] are to make disciples of all the nations (Matt. 28:16-20).⁷

AREAS INFLUENCED BY DISCIPLESHIP—

Some define the broad aspects of discipleship as “personal formation, life-skill formation and ministry formation.” Others define it in terms of transformation of a Christ-follower’s “head, heart and hands” or “knowing Christ, growing in Christ, serving Christ and influencing others for Christ.” Regardless of how one categorizes the aspects of discipleship, it is that of **present[ing] everyone fully mature in Christ** (Colossians 1:28), such that they reflect that maturity by influencing those around them for Christ and for the life of the kingdom of God. “Viewed from the perspective of God’s ultimate intention for us, salvation is one divine act, the work of the Spirit in bringing us into full conformity with the likeness of Christ.”⁸ This begins with oneself and one’s family (I Timothy 4:16; 3:4) and extends outward from there.

Before we look at some specific areas that discipleship influences, let’s define what Paul means by **present[ing] everyone mature in Christ** (Colossians 1:28). **Mature** translates a Greek word (*teleios*) that is difficult to render in a single word. “*Teleios* is the complete and undivided way in which a person, with all one’s positive and negative attributes, is oriented toward God or toward Christ.”⁹ Maturity then is a life-long goal towards which Christians aim, a goal that will be characterized by “positive and negative” personal attributes along the way. This goal is reached only by the inner empowering of the Spirit, not by rules, regulations or human effort. **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...and against such things there is no law** (Galatians 5:22-23).

A sample of what the Bible says identifies a fully mature Christ-follower can be helpful in our strategic development of disciples. Maturity describes a believer who—

⁷ Wilkins, Michael, *Disciple, Discipleship in Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Elwell, Walter (Editor), Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996, pp. 176-177.

⁸ Grenz, Stanley, *Theology For The Community Of God*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994, pg. 433.

⁹ Moo, Douglas, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon—The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008, pg. 161.

Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 4 that the work of the ministry belongs to all believers and not to a “professional priesthood.”

- Understands¹⁰ love for God and for people (Mark 12:29-31).
- Understands salvation (Romans 5:1); the person of Jesus (Philippians 2:7-8; Colossians 1:15-16) and who they are in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17); understands the place of water baptism and has been water baptized (Matthew 28:19)
 - Understands how to handle God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15)
 - Understands how to die to sin so it doesn’t have dominion (Romans 6:1-14); understands the “old self/new self” and how to “put off/on” aspects of the two natures (Colossians 3:5-14); understands what’s morally important to God (Ephesians 4:1)
 - Understands how to walk in the Spirit (sanctification/fruit of the Spirit [Romans 8; Galatians 5:22-26]); what it means to be “Spirit-filled” (the importance of a prayer language; baptism with the Holy Spirit [Ephesians 5:18; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 14:15])
 - Knows their spiritual gifting and importance of serving Christ according to their gifting, passion and temperament (Romans 12:3-8; 2 Timothy 1:6; Psalm 139:14); involved in **works of service** (Ephesians 4:12)
- Understands the Church/participates in community (Acts 2:42-46; 4:32-35; Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Understands what it means to influence others for Christ; understands the importance of evangelism; has a global heart for people’s spiritual and practical needs (Matthew 25:34-46; 2 Peter 3:9)
- Understands basic Christian disciplines (stewardship/devotions [Matthew 25:14-30; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Psalm 119])
- Understands how to pray/fast and worship (Luke 18:1; Matthew 6:9-18; Colossians 3:15-17)
- Understands forgiveness and basic “peacemaking” principles (Romans 12:17-20); understands control of the tongue (James 3:3-12); understands bases of healthy relationships with others; is relationally intelligent (Romans 12:10)
- Understands how the devil and the demonic work; know how to resist him and deal with demonic influences/possession (Luke 10:1-20; Ephesians 6:10-17; James 4:7-8)
- Understands when they have a “besetting” issue in their life that requires extra (sometimes professional) help determining its origin/diagnosis and healing process (Luke 4:18-19); has access to resources within the church that guide them through healing/recovery
- Understands how to do life “by grace and not by works”—both “being with God” and “doing as a result of love for Him”; understands how to grow in Christ (Romans 1-8; 2 Peter 1:5-9)

¹⁰ Finding a single verb to define these attributes is nearly impossible. Inherent in “understands” is the idea of having a biblical knowledge of the truth (head) that is then incarnated (heart) and is lived out in life (hands). Please do NOT interpret “understands” as only referencing intellectual knowledge.

- Understands how we're healed—physically, spiritually, emotionally (psychologically) and relationally (Luke 4:16-21)
- Is emotionally healthy¹¹
- Understands the Bible's teaching on key life specifics (i.e., on marriage/being single [Deuteronomy 24:1-5; Matthew 19:3-12; I Corinthians 7:1-16]; gender identity [Genesis 1:27; 2:20-25]; employer and employee roles [Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-4:1]; parenting/parental responsibility in bringing kids to Christ [Deuteronomy 6:20-25; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21]; the place of government/the State and being a citizen [Romans 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:13-17]; healthy submission to spiritual authority [Hebrews 13:17]; the role of women in the Church [Acts 18:24-26, Romans 16:1, 7], etc.)
- Is a discipler of others (Matthew 28:19-20)
- Understands God's "Grand Story" (Genesis 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20)
- Is a life-long learner (Colossians 1:9-10)

EQUIPPING DISCIPLES (Ephesians 4:7-16)—

Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 4 that the work of the ministry belongs to all believers and not to a "professional priesthood." Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature (Ephesians 4:11-13). But such serving requires "equipping" to be most effective. Equip has the idea of making someone fit for a task.¹² It includes training them (including helping them define their spiritual gifting, personal temperament and passion) and dealing with any personal difficulties that would hinder performing the task. "God has created and designed us with a purpose in mind. We are 'wired' to care about some things more than others. We have been given spiritual gifts to competently accomplish ministry tasks. We have also been designed with a personal style...and given a passion."¹³

...All discipleship must go beyond knowledge to incarnating the truth and then to living it out...to having it show up in the day-to-day life of the disciple.

¹¹ "Emotional health concerns itself primarily with loving others well. It connects us to our interior life, making possible the seeing and treating of each individual as worthy of respect...self-awareness—knowing what is going on inside of us—is indispensable to emotional healthy and loving well...the extent to which we love and respect ourselves is the extent to which we will be able to love and respect others" (Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, Updated Edition*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2017, pg. 215).

¹² "The verb has a range of meanings, such as 'to restore' or 'to outfit.' Outside the biblical text, the noun is used in medical writings to speak of setting bones, and this connotation could be operating in the background, given that Paul speaks of Christ's body in this verse" (Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2020, pg. 270).

¹³ Bugbee, Bruce, *What You Do Best In The Body of Christ*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1995, pg. 15.

The task for which the saints are equipped is that of works of service (vs. 12),¹⁴ a generic term referring to everything and anything needed to advance the gospel and bring the influence of the kingdom of God to lives and situations. When equipped saints perform works of service (ministry), it results in the body of Christ [being] built up (vs. 12). Paul goes on to state further that when every supporting ligament is equipped and each part does its work, it promotes the Church's growth (vs. 16). This entire process must continue until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (*i.e.*, until Christ returns [vs. 13]). When we are not fully equipped and involved in kingdom life, we are easily tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming (vs. 14).

THE “SO THAT” OF 2 TIMOTHY 3:17—

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, SO THAT all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17, emphasis noted). We must not forget the SO THAT as we disciple believers, meaning that all discipleship must go beyond knowledge to incarnating the truth and then to living it out... to having it show up in the day-to-day life of the disciple. “God gave the Bible a mission: God speaks to us so we will be the kind of people he wants and will live the way he wants us to live...if we are committed to missional listening to God as we read the Bible, we will learn, we will be rebuked about our failures, we will be restored...and we will be righteous.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Or **the work of ministry** (NRSV).

¹⁵ McKnight, Scot, *The Blue Parakeet*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008, pp. 106, 111. “Ultimately, Paul's argument about Scripture's inspiration and usefulness is not an academic matter but a very practical one. In v. 17 he adds a statement that describes the chief purpose toward which his logic has been pressing all along—that the “person of God” might be capable, fully equipped for every good deed” (Philip Towner, *The Letters To Timothy and Titus—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2006, pg. 592).

THE DLT ENGINE

Gary Matsdorf

DLT (Discipleship and Leadership Training) is the Global Council's response to the four top findings of the Global Council's 2016 National Strategic Assessment—the need to globally improve our efforts at **1)** “making disciples” (creating a global culture of discipleship); **2)** training leaders (including both character transformation and skill improvement); **3)** recovering an emphasis on Holy Spirit fullness and moving in Kingdom authority; and **4)** addressing “doctrinal drift” (endeavoring to produce materials that reflect what Foursquare believes globally on key issues and directing Foursquare leaders and disciples to resources where they can ascertain “what we believe” [i.e., what do the *Declaration of Faith* and *Global Distinctives* actually mean when exegeted]).

There are two distinct aspects to DLT that must be separated in our understanding.

1. **THE THEOLOGY/PHILOSOPHY OF DLT**—DLT is first and foremost a theology and philosophy of making disciples. It is built on the theology of our Four-Stage methodology for fulfilling our missiology. We term this “the DLT Engine.” Whenever we think of DLT, we must think of the “engine”—“making disciples...creating a culture of discipleship and holistically training leaders.” This “engine” emphasizes that as we disciple all Christ-followers, we equip them in “head, heart and hands” to be ever maturing in Christ and giving themselves to kingdom *works of service* (Ephesians 4:12).

The DLT “Engine”—

- a. Emphasizes “character-based discipleship” which affirms the need for ongoing transformation into the image of Christ.
- b. Emphasizes that every Christ-follower has a story and is a leader in their own sphere of influence. Every Christ-follower can be a disciple-maker.
- c. Emphasizes “incarnational learning,” meaning that biblical knowledge and understanding are to show up in one's life.
- d. Emphasizes that as people are disciplined, we will identify those called to “vocational ministry” who will then be appropriately trained.
- e. Recognizes that discipling believers and training leaders are most effective when presented through a combination of three *ongoing* venues—**formal discipleship**

and training (classroom-type training), **non-formal discipleship and training** (conferences, seminars, conventions, church services, reading), and **informal discipleship and training** (mentoring, apprenticeship-type training, day-to-day life-based discipleship) *Discipleship and leadership training are only as effective as the practice of all three venues.*

2. **THE DLT MODULES (Courses)**—in order to address the NSA finding regarding “doctrinal drift,” and to provide content for making disciples and training leaders for nations where content is lacking, DLT has written ten modules. There is also a DLT global writing team which continues to write modules (following the methodology of the original FMI In-Service Leadership Training [ILT]).

The eleven modules to date (January 2023) are—

- *Foundational Understanding of Discipleship/The Four-Stage Missiology*
- *Developing Transformational Leaders/Disciple-Making Made Simple*
- *Hermeneutics*
- *Grace and Spiritual Formation*
- *Church Leadership (updated 2023)*
- *Holy Spirit Fullness (Baptism with the Holy Spirit)*
- *Kingdom of God*
- *Grace and Legalism*
- *Ecclesiology*
- *Family*
- *Evangelism and Global Missions*

In addition, churches/nations could add their own modules/courses, or use recognized Foursquare discipleship and leadership training materials, such as *Operation Solid Life*, *Doing What Jesus Did*, *The Journey...* with the hope that “the DLT Engine” would “drive” whatever discipleship or leadership content is used.

BASICS OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Gary Matsdorf

INTRODUCTION—

Any document must be interpreted, and it must be done with care. Hermeneutics is the technical name for the science of interpretation.

- *Hermeneutics can be generally defined as the principles, rules and methods of the interpretation of literary texts. Interpretation refers here to a specific twofold process that is initiated with a methodical search for the original meaning of a text (exegesis) and is concluded with a determination of the meaning of this same text for the modern reader. Throughout this process the interpreter must deal with any linguistic, cultural, geographical or temporal barriers that hinder his or her understanding of the text.*¹
- *We believe that God’s Word for us today is first of all precisely what his Word was to (the original readers). Thus we have two tasks: First, our task is to find out what the text originally meant; this is called **exegesis**. Second, we must learn to hear that same meaning in the variety of new or different contexts of our own day; we call this second task **hermeneutics**.*²

Careful interpretation is especially necessary regarding the Bible. **Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth** (2 Timothy 2:15)³ carries the idea of carefully and diligently handling the Bible, to lay out its truths as precisely and accurately as possible. As noted above, this includes both understanding its original intent and translating that intent into contemporary situations. “Fixing as accurately as possible the general and also the detailed meaning of Scripture is the vital and inescapable task of interpretation.”⁴ Bromiley goes on to note that sound hermeneutics is crucial with reference to the Bible because Scripture’s authority is nullified if the true meaning is missed.

¹ Arrington, F. L., *Hermeneutics in Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Burgess, Stanley and McGee, Gary (General Editors), Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988, pg. 377.

² Fee, Gordon and Stuart, Douglas, *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth – Fourth Edition*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2014, pg. 18.

³ All Scripture references are from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Bromiley, Geoffrey, *The Interpretation of the Bible in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Volume 1*, Gaebelein, Frank (General Editor), Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1979, pg. 61.

All biblical readers, aware or not, interpret (practice hermeneutics); unfortunately, most interpret only in terms of what the words suggest to them. This may miss the true meaning altogether.

A major factor regarding interpreting the Bible is being honest regarding one's presuppositions on any topic or text.

- *The fact that we all have presuppositions “lays upon every scholar the demand to recognize his presuppositions and to be honestly critical of them and of himself in the light of established historical facts.”⁵*
- *The interpreter...cannot be a neutral spectator. It is true that this involvement may bring a wrong kind of subjectivity—that is, the interpreter may pretend to be clarifying the idea of Paul or John when he is setting forth his own idea. No procedure could be more erroneous. Yet we cannot escape subjectivity in our interpretation of the Bible. An interpreter brings to bear upon the text all that he is, all that he knows, and even all that he wants to become. It will help us just to be aware that this is so.⁶*
- *No one interprets in a theological vacuum. Interpretation, indeed, the very approach to the task of interpretation, is shaped by the theological presuppositions that the interpreter brings to the process. (Furthermore), experience can and does impact the hermeneutical task... (however), when experience becomes the starting point for interpretation, it tends to usurp biblical authority.⁷*

Another important aspect of effectively practicing sound biblical interpretation is knowing the Holy Spirit's role in hermeneutics. This introductory course on hermeneutics emphasizes Pentecostal scholar Gordon Fee's genre-based, historical-grammatical hermeneutics, which is an excellent starting point, but it has limits which Christians discover as they continue their journey with hermeneutics beyond this course.

- *The believer comes to understand the Word of God only in his relationship with its ultimate author, the Spirit of God...there is, however, an imminent danger of relying solely on this pneumatic guidance in the hermeneutical process. This danger lies in the potential that the interpreter confuses his or her own (or some other) spirit with the Spirit of God. Because the interpreter has claimed divine guidance, the resulting interpretation is assumed to be above questioning and*

⁵ Ladd, George, *The New Testament and Criticism*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1967, pg. 15.

⁶ Mickelsen, A. Berkeley, *Interpreting The Bible*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1977 printing, pg. 65.

⁷ Arrington, *op. cit.*, pp. 378, 384.

*thus implicitly demands an authority on par with Scripture itself. This unchallenged status ostensibly renders the interpretation itself as inspired, infallible and inherently authoritative.*⁸

- *Early Pentecostals practiced a pragmatic hermeneutic [which] became the bulwark of Pentecostal apologetics, and the pillar of classical Pentecostalism... [today that approach is expanded] with Pentecostal scholars... Gordon Fee, Howard Ervin and William Menzies demanding attention... these scholars espouse a genre, pneumatic and holistic hermeneutic, respectively.*⁹

THE “SO THAT” OF 2 TIMOTHY 3:17—

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, SO THAT all God’s people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17, emphasis added). We must not forget the SO THAT as we read our Bible, meaning that all reading must go beyond knowledge to living...to showing up in our day-to-day lives. “God gave the Bible a mission: God speaks to us so we will be the kind of people he wants and will live the way he wants us to live...if we are committed to missional listening to God as we read the Bible, we will learn, we will be rebuked about our failures, we will be restored...and we will be righteous...any reading and any interpretation that does not lead to good works, both as the practical application and as the behavioral result, aborts what the Bible is designed to produce.”¹⁰

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 382-383. Notes Pinnock, “I would say that the Holy Spirit, who inspired the apostolic testimony and binds himself to it, opens up the significance of the Scriptures for believers of all ages...He opens up what is written there under the conditions of a controlled liberty. By controlled liberty I mean a freedom within parameters, a liberty which honours both the original meaning of Scripture and the fecundity of the text to be opened up” (Clark Pinnock, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics, Journal of Pentecostal Theology—Issue 2*, Sheffield Academic Press Limited, Sheffield, England, 1993, pg. 9).

⁹ Stronstad, Roger, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, Baguio City, Philippines, 2018, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰ McKnight, Scot, *The Blue Parakeet—Second Edition*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, pp. 116, 121-122. “Ultimately, Paul’s argument about Scripture’s inspiration and usefulness is not an academic matter but a very practical one. In v. 17 he adds a statement that describes the chief purpose toward which his logic has been pressing all along—that the “person of God” might be capable, fully equipped for every good deed” (Philip Towner, *The Letters To Timothy And Titus—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2006, pg. 592).

HERMENEUTICS

The Interpretive Principles That Guide Bible Study

Larry Powers

What is your hermeneutic? *This is something you ought to know and be able to explain!*

Many Christians today do not have or use good hermeneutics. They do not have an organized and consistent method of studying the Bible.

An Introduction To Hermeneutics

What Is “Hermeneutics”?

The principles that guide and restrict the interpretation of the Bible.

Luke 24:27: **Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself (explained – Greek—*hermeneuo*)**

Luke 24:32: **“Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”**

Why Do We Need Hermeneutics?

Because Every Reader is an Interpreter

Because of Differences in Interpretation

How Is It Related To Other Areas Of Our Faith? *Hermeneutics is “Foundational”*

HERMENEUTICS

1. THE PROPER HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH
Historical-Grammatical Interpretation

2. THE GENERAL HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH
 - a. The Context of the Passage
 - b. The Content of the Passage
Put The Text Into The Context!

3. THE SPECIAL HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH
 - a. The Literature of the Passage
What Kind of Material Are You Studying?
Recommend Resource:
How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth (Fee and Stuart)
 - b. The Language of the Passage
 - 1) Is The Text Literal?
 - 2) Is The Text Figurative?

INTERPRETING EPISTLES

By way of review, good biblical interpretation begins with identifying the genre. Though some elements of interpretation apply to all genre, each genre also has unique- nesses. Technically, an “epistle was an artistic literary form or a species of literature that was intended for the public.”¹¹ Although twenty-one New Testament writings are usually referred to as **epistles** (Romans to Jude), “they have some considerable differences in character. Some are totally ad hoc, very specifically occasioned (e.g., Philemon, 1 Corinthians, Jude, Galatians), while others appear to be more like tracts at large. It is important at this point to be sensitive to the degree that some are more like real ‘letters’ and some more public, and therefore real ‘epistles’”.¹² They can, nonetheless, all be approached with a common interpretive scheme.

Having established the genre, interpretation involves two steps—exegesis and hermeneutics. Exegesis refers “to the historical investigation into the meaning of the biblical text. Exegesis, therefore, answers the question, What *did* the biblical author *mean*? It has to do both with *what* he said (the content itself) and why he said it at any given point (the literary context). Furthermore, exegesis is primarily concerned with intentionality: What did the author *intend* his original readers to understand?...the key to good exegesis is the ability to ask the right questions of the text in order to get at the author’s intended meaning. Good exegetical questions fall into two basic categories: questions of *content* (what is said) and of *context* (why it is said).”¹³

Hermeneutics has to do with “application”—what the text means to *me*.¹⁴ With reference to hermeneutics, two basic rules apply, “*a text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or readers... whenever we share comparable particulars (i.e., similar specific life situations) with the first-century hearers, God’s word to us is the same as his Word to them.*”¹⁵

When interpreting epistles, one must remember their nature—“*occasional documents* (i.e., arising out of and intended for a specific occasion)...they are *not* first of all theological treatises, nor are they summaries of Paul’s or Peter’s theology. There is theology implied, but it is always ‘task theology’—theology being written for or brought to bear on the task at hand.”¹⁶ This often complicates interpretation be-

¹¹ Fee and Stuart, *op. cit.*, pg. 58.

¹² Fee, Gordon, *New Testament Exegesis – Revised Edition*, Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1993, pg. 42.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 31.

¹⁴ We are here following the distinction between exegesis and hermeneutics as established by Fee and Stuart. Historically, the term hermeneutics covers both aspects.

¹⁵ Fee and Stuart, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 60.

cause we do not always know clearly the occasion for the writing; in some instances, what was written was directly based on knowledge the author and original readers both knew but which is lost to us (*cf.* 2 Thessalonians 2:5-6).

Hermeneutics Worksheet—Epistles

PHILEMON

BACKGROUND: Philemon was a wealthy Christian of Colossae who hosted a house-church. Philemon was converted under the apostle Paul (Philemon 19), perhaps when Paul ministered in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). He is remembered because of his runaway slave, Onesimus, who, after damaging or stealing his master's property (Philemon 11, 18), made his way to Rome, where he was converted under Paul's ministry (Philemon 10). Accompanied by Tychicus (Colossians 4:7), Onesimus later returned to his master, Philemon. He carried with him the Epistle to the Colossians, plus the shorter Epistle to Philemon.

Philemon was likely written about AD 61, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

1. Read the Epistle to Philemon.
2. Who is the author(s)?
3. Who are the recipients?
4. What seems to be the main concern of the letter? What occasioned its writing?

5. Summarize in one sentence **WHAT** each paragraph says. **Your Bible may have more/less paragraphs.**

- Paragraph #1

- Paragraph #2

- Paragraph #3

- Paragraph #4



- Paragraph #5

- Paragraph #6

- Paragraph #7

- Paragraph #8

- Paragraph #9

- Paragraph #10

-
6. Summarize Paul's argument from beginning to conclusion.

APPLICATION—

7. Can you name any other relationships other than that of a slave and slave owner in which it might be legitimate to extend the application of principles taught here?

8. What is the Holy Spirit showing you about being a wise mediator of relational conflict?

9. What is the Holy Spirit showing you that you should do whenever you encounter relational conflict with someone?

INTERPRETING OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES

The largest single genre in our Bible is that of narrative—truth taught in “story” form—“Narratives are stories—purposeful stories retelling the *historical events* of the past that are intended to give meaning and direction for a given people *in the present*...it is God’s story—and it becomes ours as he ‘writes’ us into it.”¹⁷ More than 40% of the Old Testament is narrative, as is most of Acts and large sections of the Gospels.

A major interpretive key to narratives is realizing that truth is taught both *explicitly* and *implicitly*. *Explicit* truths are directly stated, didactic truths (i.e., **Then the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite** [1 Kings 11:14]); *implicit* truths are those which are clearly stated in the narrative, but not in direct words. For an implicit truth to be valid, it must be substantiated by explicit truth found elsewhere in the Bible.

Fee and Stuart state well the unique value of narratives. “Narratives are precious to us because they so vividly *demonstrate* God’s involvement in the world and *illustrate* his principles and calling.”¹⁸

In addition to exegetical methods common to much of scripture, Old Testament narratives have three levels of understanding—

- A **third level** understanding—how this narrative gives us insight or understanding into God’s bigger, overall plan of redemption (His metanarrative); what does this narrative tell us about the advancement or impediment of God’s plan in the Earth?
- A **second level** understanding—how this narrative gives us insight or understanding into God’s overall plan for the nation of Israel; what does this narrative tell us about Israel’s cooperation and/or non-cooperation in fulfilling her assigned role?
- A **first level** understanding—how this narrative gives us insight or understanding into God’s individual dealing with the person(s) involved; how do the players in this narrative cooperate and/or fail to cooperate in fulfilling God’s plan for either Israel or humankind’s redemption?

In a narrative, God is always the Hero—that is, narratives glorify Him by giving us insight into His nature and/or how He interacts with humankind to bring redemption.

When it comes to Old Testament narratives and hermeneutics, we often *eisegete* (read into a text what we want to see) rather than *exegete* (let the narrative speak for itself). This is usually done for three reasons—

¹⁷ Fee and Stuart, *op. cit.*, pg. 94.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 110.

- We're desperate for biblical answers.
- We're impatient to search for a biblical section that more clearly teaches the answer we're seeking.
- We wrongly assume all in the Bible applies to our lives.

Hermeneutics Worksheet— Old Testament Narrative

MOSES' CALL Exodus 3:1-4:17

“Narratives are stories that are intended to give meaning and direction for God’s people” (Fee and Stuart). They state truths directly, but there are also **implied** biblical truths (buried principles) in each narrative.

1. Read Exodus 3:1-4:17.
2. Who are the main characters?
3. Write down everything you observe about Moses in this section and compile a profile of him.
4. Summarize the events in this section.

5. What is the **SINGLE** main point of this section?

6. What do we learn here about God's universal plan of salvation?

7. What do we learn here about God's dealings with and commitment to ancient Israel?

8. What do we learn here about how God calls individuals to ministry or specific ministry tasks?

9. Note three biblical truths in this section that are not directly stated but rather **implied** that are personally meaningful to you. Cite a New Testament text from the Epistles to support why you think this is a legitimate implicit truth.

- Truth #1—

- Truth #2—

- Truth #3—

10. What do we learn here about God's character?

11. What are we **not** told in Exodus 3:2 that we probably shouldn't try to explain?

APPLICATION—

1. Which of your stated implied truths seem transferable to general life issues we face?
2. Can you see any clear commands here **that apply to us today**? What is the basis of your conclusion?
3. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you personally from this text?

INTERPRETING THE GOSPELS

In many ways, much of what we've already learned comes to play in interpreting the Gospels, for they are part narrative and part teaching (the exegesis/hermeneutics of the epistles). But there is some uniqueness. Because there are four Gospels (three of which [the Synoptics] are constructed similarly), exegesis of the Gospels requires what's termed *Horizontal Exegesis*—asking, “Is this event or saying recorded in another of the Gospels? If so, what's different in terms of setting, emphasis, or wording and what does that do to its overall understanding?”

Hermeneutics Worksheet—Gospels

JOHN'S CONCERN WHILE IMPRISONED

Matthew 11:2-19 and Luke 7:18-35

1. Read Matthew 11:2-19 and Luke 7:18-35 carefully.
2. What is Matthew's context for this passage? What is Luke's context?
3. Why do you suppose John is asking his question from prison?
4. How does Jesus define His ministry in this section? How does this relate to the context in which each Evangelist records His pronouncement?
5. Who was audience to Jesus' response in each Gospel—close disciples, the crowd, or opponents?
6. What *point* (**MAIN CONCERN**) does Jesus seem to want to make to His audience?

7. What does Matthew add/delete when carefully compared with Luke? Do any of these additions/deletions seem crucial to you?

8. What does a careful *comparative* reading of Matthew 11:11B and Luke 7:28B reveal regarding the kingdom?

APPLICATION—

1. What does this passage illustrate about the kingdom of God?

2. What do the Evangelists seemingly want us to learn from this passage?

3. Are there any direct commands that apply to us today?

4. What did the Holy Spirit speak to you from this passage?

INTERPRETING PARABLES

“A [true] parable is a story drawn from everyday life to convey a moral or religious truth. Because the author does not create his story and therefore does not have control over the details, they are often of little importance to the truth conveyed by the story. A parable is designed to convey essentially a single truth rather than a complex of truths.”¹⁹ In a parable, “spiritual truth is unfolded in everyday language and figures. The details of a parable should not be pressed beyond the principle object of the comparison. Each parable has a main point and was spoken to make that point easily apparent.”²⁰ “The best clues as to what the parables are is to be found in their *function*...[they] function as a striking way of *calling forth a response* on the part of the hearer.”²¹

To best interpret a parable—

- Regard the parable as a whole, used to illustrate and to emphasize some important truth or principle that is at work in God’s government.
- Consider the context and attendant circumstances in arriving at the prominent meaning—including understanding Jesus’ mission, the parable’s *sitz im leben* and its points of reference (i.e., the moneylender and the two debtors in the Parable of the Canceled Debts [Luke 7:40-42]).
- Identify its original audience. Even “Contextless Parables” give clues to the audience when one asks, “Who is being *caught* by this parable?”
- Recognize its “unexpected turn”—the very means by which it calls forth a response (i.e., it is a Samaritan who becomes identified as the lawyer’s neighbor).

Regarding Hermeneutics, we must—

- Grasp the parable’s point and “translate” it into our situation. This might entail retelling the parable, substituting such things as a bishop, professor and atheist for the priest, Levite and Samaritan in the Good Samaritan.²²
- Analyze and apply it within the overall understanding of the kingdom of God as “already... not yet” present.

¹⁹ Ladd, George, *A Theology of the New Testament – Revised Edition*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000 reprint, pg. 90.

²⁰ Lindsell, Harold (General Editor), *Harper Study Bible – Annotation*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1965, pg. 458.

²¹ Fee and Stuart, *op. cit.*, pg. 157.

²² See Fee and Stuart, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.

Hermeneutics Worksheet—Parables

INVITED TO A WEDDING FEAST

Luke 14:7-14

1. Read Luke 14:1-14.
2. What events surround this parable?
3. What prompted Christ to speak the parable?
4. To whom was the parable originally spoken?
5. What are the **facts** of the parable itself?
6. What is the **SINGLE** main point of the parable? (Remember the context and the original recipients.)

7. What is the significance of vv. 12-14?

8. How did Jesus “spiritually convict” the intended recipients of this parable and what response did He hope from them?

APPLICATION—

1. What is the parable’s main application for us?

2. What can we learn from this parable about the nature of the kingdom of God?

3. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you personally from this parable?

INTERPRETING OLD TESTAMENT LAW

Although the term “Law” is used to reference various aspects of the Old Testament, in the most technical sense it defines the material in Exodus 20 through Deuteronomy 33. The major interpretive problem with the Law is again hermeneutical—how much is binding on Christians? What are the hermeneutical implications of Matthew 5:18—“**Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished**”?

Fee and Stuart offer the following important truths to remember when interpreting the Law sections of the Old Testament—

- The Law was the basis of Israel’s faith. It was based on a suzerain/vassal relationship, whereby Israel would receive benefit from Yahweh in return for her obedience to some 600+ stipulations.
- The covenant basis of Israel’s faith is not the covenant basis of the Christian faith. Hence, no Old Testament stipulations are binding unless they are renewed by the New Testament. Loyalty is still expected, but the HOW of that loyalty has changed with the testaments.
- Some Old Testament stipulations are very clearly no longer valid—i.e., the specifics of Israel’s civil laws and her ritual laws.²³ These came to an end with the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 16:16-17).
- What is binding to Christians are those ethical aspects of the Law explicitly renewed under the New Covenant—i.e., The 10 Commandments.

By way of technical understanding, Old Testament laws generally fall into one of two categories—*Apo-dictic Laws* (the do/do not commands, whereby divine standards are set by specific examples [see Leviticus 19:9-14]) and *Casuistic Laws* (case-by-case laws whose conditions have limited application [see Deuteronomy 15:12-17]). Both are God’s Word *for* us, though not His command *to* us.

Two important truths must also be remembered in interpreting the Law—it demonstrates God’s mercy and grace, not His endeavor to “take the fun out of life” and it shows us our desperate need for Him, for no one can keep the Law.

²³ This does not mean there are no “extended applications” of the bigger principles behind many of these laws.

Hermeneutics Worksheet—

Old Testament Law

DEUTERONOMY 23:15-25

1. Read Deuteronomy 23:15-25.
2. Are there any cultural particulars in this section that need additional understanding to understand Moses' original intent?

APPLICATION—

1. What can we learn from each of the laws in Deuteronomy 23:15-25 about either our devotion to God, His view of justice and fairness, His view of respect for people's property, His view of human worth or His view of providing for people?
 - Verses 15-16—
 - Verses 17-18—
 - Verses 19-20—
 - Verses 21-23—
 - Verses 24-25—
2. Can you name any of these principles that are renewed in the New Testament either from the Epistles or Jesus' teachings? If so, what and where is it found?

INTERPRETING OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

The interpretive difficulties of the Old Testament prophets are both exegetical and hermeneutical. The primary exegetical difficulties come from a failure to understand both their *function* and *form*, as well as their original historical setting; the hermeneutical difficulties arise from determining how God wants the same obedience from us as from ancient Israel (yet against a very different backdrop and means) and from understanding the differing “levels” of fulfillment applicable to some prophecies.²⁴

The aim of the prophets was to help people know God and His will for them. They were largely *forth-tellers*, primarily speaking to their immediate communities regarding their obedience/lack of obedience to the Sinai Covenant. “The prophets carried a message *from* God to their communities *about* their own communities and the nations surrounding them. The prophets usually were deeply involved in the life of their communities.”²⁵ Their message was highly “unoriginal” in that it contained very little information not found in at least seed form in the Pentateuch. The prophets used drama, song, parable, story, poem and exhortation to convey their message. God spoke to them directly, and through dreams and visions; their message was often received in an ecstatic state.

When the prophets spoke in a *fore-telling* manner, what they foretold was largely future to their time but is past to us. Less than 10% of what they wrote was either directly messianic or is *yet* unfulfilled. With reference to yet unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies, Mickelsen and Mickelsen have an excellent perspective—

Do not think in terms of literal fulfillment, but in terms of equivalents, analogy, and correspondence. In this method, the chariots of the prophet's day will have an equivalent means of transportation at the time of the prophecy's fulfillment. The enemies of the people of God in one period are replaced by later enemies. The details of worship of God's people at an earlier period will be replaced by appropriate modes of worship during the period of fulfillment. This principle can be illustrated by examining the prophecy in Ezekiel 40 to 48, where Ezekiel prophesied that worship of God would be restored. . . in the light of God's action in Jesus Christ, the fulfillment can hardly be literal. How could the true people of God return to the sacrifices that were abolished by the supreme sacrifice of Christ? The rituals of which Ezekiel spoke were but a shadow that was fulfilled in Christ. This is a place for the principle of equivalents. The temple, the ritual, and the priests involved in the ancient worship of God were meant to bring the Israelites into vital fellowship with God. The book of Hebrews says that with Christ as our high priest, all older commandments regarding the priesthood are now annulled (Heb. 7:12-28). The things of which Ezekiel

²⁴ See Fee and Stuart, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-211.

²⁵ Mickelsen, A. Berkeley and Mickelsen, Alvera, *Understanding Scripture - Revised Edition*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 2000 printing, pg. 87.

*wrote were a shadow. Christ is the reality (Heb. 1-4; Col. 2:16-17). The coming worship will exalt Jesus Christ.*²⁶

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

Hermeneutics Worksheet— Old Testament Prophets

OBADIAH

1. If possible, read an introductory article on Obadiah in a Bible dictionary or a Study Bible to gain a basic understanding of the historical context.
2. Read the Book of Obadiah.
3. Who is the author?
4. Other than problems with understanding the historical setting and references, what do you see as other major exegetical (interpretation) problems in Obadiah?
5. About whom is the book *primarily* written? About whom is it written *secondarily*?

6. What is the book's *direct* prediction in vv. 1-14 and 18B?

7. What is the book's *direct* prediction in vv. 15-16?

8. What is the book's *direct* prediction in vv. 17-18A and 19-21?

9. Identify the verses that speak of God's various judgments. Note the recipient, the announced distress, the reason for the distress and the specific prediction of doom.

3. Who/what does the New Testament identify as our *Edom* and *all nations*?

Disciple-Making

GOD'S TOOL OF CHOICE

Daniel A. Brown, PhD

Introduction

Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so.

~Genesis 1:11

"Seedless watermelons are from the devil," I declared. I was in Montana at a pastor's/leader's seminar, speaking about *disciple-making*, when those shocking words leapt from my lips. Everyone laughed. I gulped at my unintended audacity, and quickly retreated from assaulting agribusiness. I know the technique used by speakers to make outlandish declarations as a tease to interest people in their message. But I WAS the speaker, and that statement was NOT in my notes; I was as interested as the audience in what my heart meant by such a claim. I could feel another of those life-shaping teaching moments coming my way—simple understandings that alter and rearrange my thinking about the ways of God. I was having an epiphany.

We kept our Bibles open to the story of Creation.

In the beginning, before anything was the way it became, before Eve, and then Adam rebelled against *God-of-All's* warnings, He had a definite plan for multiplying everything. Instead of re-creating each individual animal and plant, the *Maker-of-All* ordained three-generation creations, like trees bearing seed-carrying fruit. It's the Creative-order. God wasn't too tired or too busy to create more, but He wanted the earth to bear His imprint, and for each species of life to be 'like' Him. Only humankind bore His features and image, but He fashioned all forms of life to bear offspring/fruit in their own likeness. That is His signature stamp on the world, and it authenticates His artistry.

Like an artist's name at the bottom of a painting, God completed Creation by speaking its most vital element: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Seedless watermelons and oranges look great stacked neatly in a market. They're far easier to eat and far less messy, but they violate God's intentions because they cannot reproduce. They do not extend themselves beyond themselves.

“I prefer eating them, too,” I eventually confessed. “As *consumer* fruit, they’re glorious. As *Kingdom* fruit...” My words trailed off.

I’ve been having those sorts of realizations for nearly 40 years—from the time as a senior at UCLA I told God exactly what I thought about the ‘stupid’ organization He ran. The advisor who was supposed to have offered us students guidance and counsel elected, instead, to head off to the mission field, so we were left to ourselves. Not many Bible-believing churches could be found near the campus, and in those wild days of the Jesus Movement, few would have welcomed us anyway. Because my parents taught me a little song with all the Books of the OT in order, I was able to turn to almost any Bible passage before my peers. In our book that made me a mature Christian. I even led several failed Bible studies, and offered to talk to anyone who wanted to ask questions.

I had plenty of questions of my own. Feeling especially stymied and spiritually uncertain one day, I muttered aloud a deep longing in my life—I wished for an older friend, a fellow-follower who could teach me a few things. “Why does every generation have to learn everything on their own,” I barked at God. Can’t someone pass along to me useful pointers and a few cautions to guide my way? How stupid to make each person learn everything on their own. No wonder Your Church isn’t doing well!”

“If You promise I can be to others what no one has been to me; if You tell me I can speak into people’s lives and help them on their journey; if I can be the mentor I hoped for and never got—then You can have my stinkin’ life!”

“Gotcha,” replied the Lord.

Ever since, I’ve accumulated tidbits and lessons from scores and scores of little moments like the watermelon seeds. Most come from small details in Bible passages, a few from life experiences, but all by revelation rather than smarts. If you are interested in learning how to be better at influencing and impacting others’ spiritual life, and helping them mature through the benefit of your vicarious experience, I happily offer you some of what has been given to me.

A SIMPLE PATTERN OF DISCIPLESHIP

But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. ~Philippians 2:17

Decades ago, a friend told me that he was able to open deep places in his heart and revisit painful memories from his past because another person (whose life he admired) had loved him unconditionally. Steady and relentless love from a man he respected convinced my friend he was ‘worth’ spending time on. Instead of being rejected, he was welcomed over and over. Eventually, the value my friend put on that man began to reflect back.

The world’s rank-has-privileges concept of authority suggests that higher-ups have license to tell lower-downs what to do; they can order underlings around in order to benefit themselves. Higher positions come with greater advantages, freedoms and benefits. The Kingdom isn’t arranged that way; in fact, it’s flipped opposite.

Kingdom rank simply gives us greater and greater responsibilities to promote, profit and advantage people who have less. As was the case with my friend’s friend, he used his respected role (as a more mature Jesus-follower) to lift a struggling soul out of the quicksand of his past.

Kingdom leaders are called to deflate themselves, and insert their squeezed-small selves into collapsed spaces in others’ lives. As those leaders fill back out and return to their full, true shape, their presence lifts and decompresses damaged souls.

Paul poured himself into others. Ultimately, that was proof of his apostleship; instead of claiming that he had worked hard enough already—and others should do journeyman work—Paul understood that everything stored up inside him, through the many years, was a reservoir from which to continue pouring out. The ageless pattern plays out. Our life counts for more because we give it up to serve others’ walk with Jesus. Years and years later, my friend empties himself.

3RD FROM THE LEFT

For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.

~1 Timothy 6:7

Birth and death are the great equalizers. We bring nothing in, and take nothing out...

“One day,” I keep telling myself, “I’m going to write an article entitled ‘Third from the Left,’ using the metaphor of an old black and white group photo of about 100 people sitting in two rows and standing in the third row. Beneath the picture, first initials and last names identify who’s who.

I'm in the second row, 3rd from the left: D. Brown.

The group photo hangs slightly askew on the wall in some important building somewhere, but since the picture was taken several decades ago, nobody who stops to view it knew any of the people in the photo when they were still alive. Mere curiosity, like we feel in a museum, might cause someone to pause and look at the faces in the photo. Nope. They recognize no one.

Wondering if names of anyone pictured might be familiar, a passer-by might read the listed identities (from left to right), and glance again at the faces. "Second row, third from the left: D. Brown," they read. And silently muse, "Never heard of the guy. Wonder what he was like?"

Then someone calls out just down the hall from an open elevator, "You coming?"

"Yep. Thanks."

And just like that, 'D. Brown, third from the left' is forgotten, and left hanging unheralded on a wall. So, before that picture becomes the sum-total of my life, I want to make a difference in the lives of all the other people who will, also, be in that photo.

SPLASHED IN THE SAND

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come."

~2 Timothy 4:6

It's tempting to think of Peter, Paul, Prisca and all the other people in the Bible as superheroes who walked around with sounds of a symphony following in their wake. But they were real people—no different than you and me. Because they aren't made of special stuff, I can learn lots of things from them.

Paul had a sense of his impending death, but he wasn't depressed about it. He's already looking forward to after-death and the huge awards ceremony and reunion we'll all enjoy. But what strikes me is the revealing picture he had of his role on earth. Pouring out a libation was quite common in those days—as a religious sacrifice, much like a burnt offering. It was another way to accept and surrender to God's purposes.

I see in this picture of Paul's life, a sobering but beautiful model for my own. The stream of days granted to me is like a long, steady pour from a container. God filled my vessel; He holds me in His hand; and

He uses me how He wills. The whole point is the sacrifice and service of others' faith. If I 'hold back' or lean against the tilting of my vessel, wanting to conserve myself and make sure I don't run dry, what have I really gained?

If I somehow manage to avoid being poured out for others, or drip reluctantly instead of stream forth, have I really been victorious? I don't think so. 'Splashed to the sand' means I have been used—poured out—by the hand of God. "Pour more," my heart cries. "Pour more..."

HELPING WITH THE EDGE-PIECES

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

~2 John 1:9

"I get it—like the edge-pieces of a jigsaw puzzle," I thought to myself the first time reading this sobering declaration (October, 1970), tucked away near the end of the Bible. In the Jesus' Movement days in early 1970's, huge numbers of counter-culture people, who had little background with Scripture, experienced a spiritual awakening. Most responded to the Gospel; many were deceived by various cults and eastern mysticism.

Teachers, communes and religions actively recruited us in those heady days of anti-war protests and rock 'n roll. With few exceptions, the Church didn't reach out to include the newly saved long-hairs, so many spiritually open young adults fell under the sway of false doctrine, quasi-Christian teaching and the 'charisma' of demonically-strengthened personalities.

It was a spiritual free-for-all. Anyone could teach almost anything!

Because I was raised in a believing home and had all the advantages of Sunday school, I knew the basics (and not much else). I recognized key corner-pieces—Jesus' sacrificial death; salvation by grace-alone; Christ's 2nd Coming; heaven and hell; etc. I realized that I could at least help other people with the spiritual jigsaw puzzle!

That was one of the keys that got me started offering small, not-very-good Bible studies: among the countless, vulnerable souls who had little understanding of Scripture, I had a little (but not much) more understanding... If I stuck with obvious truths in the Bible, I could really help some friends.

Thanks to the Spirit, who leads us into truth, most people can finish their puzzle, but I found that helping them with the first key pieces gave them a great advantage. I'm still asking the same question almost 50 years later: "Can I help you with the edge-pieces?"

#1 YOU AS YOU

Let's start where God starts. With you. He didn't make you with His eyes closed. He wasn't distracted or preoccupied. He knew precisely what He was doing, and He did exactly what He intended to do when He made you. He made you like Him, in His image and bearing His likeness. You are not an accident. You are not an arbitrary byproduct, or some random set of traits threaded together by happenstance or fate. God, Himself, intentionally formed your very essence.

That's why it can never be said enough—God wants you to be you!

God wanted you before you were born. He loved you before your being took shape in the womb, and that longing in His heart became the blueprint to fashion you. He didn't settle for something less than He wanted. You are not an approximation, an *almost-but-not-quite*, an *only-wish-you-could-have-been-more* version of God's intended creation. He wanted you just as you are. You did not make yourself; He crafted you as a *one-of-a-kind* creation (Psalm 100:3).

God wove the fabric of your soul like a tapestry. Did you know that tapestry-makers work while facing the back of the tapestry, following the reverse-design 'painted' or pinned there? When the tapestry is finished and removed from the loom, the woven image on the front of the tapestry is the mirror image of the back.

Just so, God introduced you into the visible, natural world (when you were born) by following the design His heart had already 'painted' on the invisible, backside-dimension of the tapestry. Both the front and the back are called 'you'; just by being you, you are fulfilling a huge part of God's will for your life.

YOU ARE ONE OF A KIND

For You formed my inward parts; you wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. ~Psalm 139:13-14

God meant you to be something special—not more special than everyone else, but different than all the other people He ever created. Your personality and character, and all the elements of mind and heart that make you, were handmade by God! Your significance lies in that shaping.

Each of us wants to have our life count for something, to make a lasting difference in the lives of others. We want to believe that we are special—not because we have an oversized ego, but because God’s DNA passes traces of His “greatness” to us, His offspring. And yet how many of us have grown up in family or cultural settings that made us feel like the odd person out, or that we don’t ever quite fit in. Perhaps from the mouths of our parents we heard statements that said, in so many words, *“You were an accident, I wish you had never happened...”* Schoolmates mocked. Artistic or musical talents belonged to others. We weren’t like our older sister, or someone else’s favorite. We were just us.

Even if parents, friends and early-year experiences introduced us to adult life with cheer and confidence, we eventually encountered one of the intolerable tortures of this broken world. It shuts the door in everyone’s face—sooner or later. You know the routine: if you were good enough to be a squad leader for intramural softball in 10th grade PE, you weren’t good enough for the varsity baseball team—or, if you were, you weren’t good enough to earn an athletic scholarship at the University—or, if you were, you weren’t (translate that *won’t be*) good enough, smart enough, cute enough for something.

Eventually, you get cut. Life’s damning commentary tells you there is nothing special about you. But that lie is terribly wrong! And terribly wicked! The wickedness is not just what it says about you, but also what it claims about God: *“God, You don’t know what you are doing; You made a terrible mistake in making me.”*

The truth of God’s word informs us differently; God made no mistake. He knew exactly what He was doing when He made you!

He prepared you and me to be who we are. Oh, sure, the “you” He originally designed has been disfigured by bad choices you made, and things done to you by life and other people. But the essential fabric of who God intended you to be is still there, and the Lord delights in what He made. Any ministry use God has for you will always reflect His already-done work making you. Your making is directly tied to your calling. He enjoys the real-you He made, and He has things in mind for each of His children.

That’s why God loves to work His great purposes through *who-me? people*. Though He could easily write His glory and truth in giant script across the sky, He elects, instead, to inscribe human hearts, and reflect the truth indirectly to the rest of the world. His delight in us reflects the love that inspired

Him to shape us in the womb, and He calls us to be *ministry-agents* because He wants everyone to know (1) how much He values each of us, and (2) how able He is to restore us back to relationship with Him. God makes things about us ‘right’ again, we get to tell people about it.

We are God’s *tools-of-choice*.

You and I aren’t the same tool. We don’t have precisely the same assignment or use, but three things are true for each of us—no matter how young or old we are in renewed relationship with God; no matter where we come from (culture, background or personal history); and, no matter how we feel about ourselves:

1. **God intends you to have a significant place in others’ lives.** You are meant to influence people and their life-choices. He designed you to help others make spiritual progress simply by being an example and sharing what you know (1 Timothy 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 1:9).

EXERCISE #1:

Tell a story about someone you influenced significantly —and how you did it.

2. **God equips you for that kind of impact.** He has been getting you ready your whole life—and He will keep tooling you to affect people. He utilizes every lesson you learn, each insight you gain, for others’ spiritual gain (2 Corinthians 12:15; Philippians 1:25 and 2:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:9).
3. **Being an influential ministry-agent does not require you to be something ‘more’ than you are.** God invites you to participate in a timeless and proven process—similar to making friends and raising children—that enables you to lead and affect many more people than just your family and friends. By following His ministry-patterns, you can become a *disciple-maker* (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 2 Timothy 4:5).

WHO, ME?

A quick survey of Bible characters will comfort you if you don’t believe that God can or will use someone like you to affect others in meaningful ways. You’ll discover that God has lots of practice making incapable people capable. God actually seems to target unqualified souls. He selected Moses, a man with speech impediments, as His spokesman to Pharaoh; He commissioned Gideon, the youngest of a minor-

league family, to deliver a nation. Abraham, who dangled his wife as a prize-for-profit; Rahab, who ran a house of ill-repute; and, Jonah, who ran away from ministry—these are not exactly leadership material.

Except, God chose to accomplish His purposes through them. His choice, not their capabilities, made the difference. We are neither saved nor used according to our own strength or ability. The same grace that saves us from our sins, is the grace that capacitates us for beyond-ourselves ministry.

Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household. ~Mark 6:4

Prophets get no respect in their own neighborhood, among people who have known them prior to their ministry activity. We can't easily imagine childhood buddies as spiritual people because we grew up with them. Humans have the strange idea that 'spiritual' people are different than normal people. So, if we have experience with someone that proves he or she is just ordinary, it doesn't seem possible for that person to be a special minister.

You've been living with yourself all your life. Your memories prove you aren't exceptional, and that you've messed up many times. You know your vulnerabilities and your mistakes. You remember all sorts of things about yourself that seem too ordinary or too inadequate. You know yourself well! Perhaps, too well. That's why, despite the things God says about you as His child, it's hard to believe He really can and will accomplish wonderful works through you. What you see when you look inside yourself isn't what God sees. Unless you are determined to hold onto broken places in your life, God has plans to use you for others' sake.

Self-Disqualifiers

But, if you're like the rest of us, you probably still think:

1. I'M NOT SPIRITUAL ENOUGH.

Do you try to convince Jesus that He shouldn't try to use you? Have you already concluded that you aren't spiritual enough? Are you like Peter when he first realized Jesus was a holy person, but didn't yet know Him as Savior (Luke 5:8-10)? Peter quickly advised Jesus, “Stay away from me because I am a sinful man—and I'll ruin your reputation.” Does that sound like you, too? To Peter's advice, Jesus re-

plied, “I am going to change everything about your life, anyway, and use you to draw people back to Me. So, it doesn’t really matter what you have been.”

OK, let’s even agree that on your own, you’re not very spiritual. That’s no real surprise to God, and it’s precisely why He gives you His Spirit—so you can access spiritual dynamics and tools. God promises to lead you by the Spirit, so you end up knowing what to do/say when you don’t naturally know what to do/say.

2. I’M NOTHING GREAT.

Think for a moment about your spiritual DNA. You were made in God’s image, and through Jesus, you are being reformed back into that design. God is great, and your heredity comes from Him. Because of that, you are destined to be *great* in the Kingdom. Whoa—that sounds strange, doesn’t it? Being great?! The kind of greatness I’m talking about—Kingdom greatness—is serving others. Jesus said those who serve others will be *great* in the Kingdom (Matthew 20:25-26). He modeled that servanthood for us:

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who... emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant... ~Philippians 2:3-7

The world doesn’t celebrate or platform God’s notion of greatness. Fame, fortune—these aren’t Kingdom valuables. God prizes humility, obscurity and servanthood. A truly great person chooses to deflect attention, not draw it. Can you be that sort of great? I think we all can.

As strange as it sounds, you and I can promote ourselves—not in self-importance or as an effort to become impressive to others, but elevating ourselves to be servants to others. No one objects to being served, and if Kingdom greatness is all about serving, we can move into as ‘high’ a position as we want: the more we intentionally serve people, without requiring recognition or congratulation, the more we truly function in greatness.

3. I’M NOT A LEADER.

Many sincere Christ-followers believe there are two categories of Christians: leaders and non-leaders. Leaders are intrinsically different from normal believers, right? You’ve seen leaders on the platform, in

front of big groups of people or overseeing programs/events—and you’re just not one of those. You even have proof in your mind: *If I was a leader, I would be more/better than I am; since I’m not better/more than I am, I must not be a leader.* “I try to be a good sheep, but I’m no shepherd!”

But if you compare yourself, and your spiritual walk today, with where you were when you first met Jesus, can you see the progress? How you have developed and matured into more than you once were is exactly the same *little-by-little* way that God will develop you as a *leader-of-others*. Perhaps you aren’t ready to be a shepherd to tend and feed His flock, but can you, at least—help as a sheepdog? Willingness to care for others, and practice at doing so, are far more significant than supposed levels or traits of leadership.

EXERCISE #2:

Which of these three taunts most makes you feel disqualified as a ministry-agent?

Ridicule and Mockery

Deep down, we know our life is meant to be about more than just our life. The sneering lie that tells us we’re ‘nothing special’ only pains us because we come up short of our potential. The enemy uses a damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don’t trick on us: “You should be something, special but you’re not” and “You were never intended to become anything special.” Somewhere in-between those disheartening bookends, we live with the idea that, spiritually, we should already know what to do—and how to do it.

Because the Church uses words like leadership and ministry frequently, they seem like well-defined concepts, and easy-to-catalog groups: leaders and non-leaders; people called into ministry and those not called; ministers and non-ministers; clergy and laity. Did you know that for decades and decades, church leaders have been trying (unsuccessfully) to arrive at a list of characteristics and qualities that distinguish leaders from non-leaders? Even the question—what should a spiritual leader know and know how to do?—never gets answered satisfactorily! Why? Because God uses such a wide variety of people, at such different stages on their journey, to do such amazing things.

Decades of ministry have convinced me that spiritual ministry and Kingdom leadership are not confined to certain sorts of people with certain sorts of knowledge. You don’t have to be someone else, and you do not need to know more than you know now, in order to make the single decision that ultimately

distinguishes *ministry-agents* from all others. That choice is to offer your life to God, to be used by Him for the sake of others, to advantage and advance their walk with Him. (If you'd like a list of some other taunts thrown our way by the Enemy, read Nehemiah 4:1-3.)

EXERCISE #3A:

What does that strong and persistent voice in your mind tell you in order to back you away from trying to spiritually influence others?

EXERCISE #3B:

Read Nehemiah 1:10 and 4:1-3. *Do you think the voice of disqualification in your mind is from God or the Enemy?*

YOU WERE MADE FOR THIS

I'll tell you a secret: God has been setting you up for *this*—for a long time. From the beginning, He planned to involve you in what He is doing. What does He do in our world? He finds the lost, redeems the pawned, restores the damaged, forgives the rebellious and rebuilds the dismantled. He's in the salvage business. God uses you as a *model-of-recovery* to give hope to others who have been broken like you; He uses you as a *ministry-agent* to prove He can use each of His kids, formerly discarded and discounted by life, to do amazing things for others. You are *Exhibit A*.

More than you realize, your entire life—including the hard/ugly parts—prepares you to be a sympathetic minister who deals gently with weak, tempted and misguided humans (Hebrews 4:15-5:2). Like Paul explained:

...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that... Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

~1 Timothy 1:15-16

That is the *this* He has been aiming you toward all your life. You and your story are perfect tools in His hand, and that's all He needs to make you a *ministry-person* who impacts and influences people. Unfortunately, when the only model offered to us is that of a "good Christian," we know we come up short on the "good" part, and "Christian" is so featureless in personality that its generic *look* doesn't

look anything like us. What we see in the mirror isn't reflected anywhere else in ministry/leadership discussions, so we conclude we aren't leaders or ministry people.

You may not have understood the full implications of what happened when Jesus saved you. You weren't just converted from your sins; you were also converted into a *spiritual minister*, a member of His priesthood:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you...

~1 Peter 2:9

But you will be called the priests of the Lord; you will be spoken of as ministers of our God. ~Isaiah 61:6

Even though it will feel awkward to spend time/energy considering how God has made and led you thus far in life, remember that He raised up Esther and David, and so many other distinct people, to fulfill His particular purposes in the world. You are His workmanship, created specially by Him to carry out a prepared set of good works with your life (Ephesians 2:10). So let's begin to look at you with spiritual eyes... and discover some of the ways God has been preparing you for ministry-to-others.

MEANINGFUL LIFE-VERSES

Much of our reluctance to become a *ministry-agent* is due to our mistaken assumption that we will need to become something we're not. But that would be like saying every child in the same family has to have the same interest in sports, fashion or engineering. That's crazy! The 'dream job' one youngster aspires to as an IT professional sounds like a nightmare to her sibling who loves design.

God made you, and everyone else, unique. If you accept the premise that you are His *tool-of-choice* AND that He created you to be useful to Him, would it make any sense, at all, for Him to make you a griddle if He wanted you to toast bread? Hammers hammer; saws saw. Carpenters don't switch uses on their best tools. But somehow we wrongly imagine that everyone ought to minister the same—regardless of their God-designed uniqueness.

You don't have to be like others whom you admire. You just have to be yourself! Even though we are disciples (lesson-learners) of Jesus, we aren't necessarily going to look and act alike. The better you understand God's design for yourself, and recognize His intentions for others, the more everyone around

you will grow (Ephesians 4:16). One of the best ways to get an understanding of yourself as a designed tool is to listen to what God has said to you and about you.

THROUGH THE YEARS, HAVE VARIOUS BIBLE PASSAGES SPOKEN TO YOU ABOUT YOUR MINISTRY/LIFE? Beyond just teaching you points of truth and doctrine, they have had personal and particular significance. Maybe the verses convey some detail of your heart, or some hope you have for your future. They have become prevailing words to your soul—reminding you of Jesus’ call on your life. Have people given you prophetic words—perhaps while praying for you? Have trusted spiritual ‘authorities’ spoken into your life—promises, words of comfort, or something that lets you know He is intimately acquainted with you?

Perhaps these landmark verses or prophecies or conversations have seen you through times of trouble or confusion, but they seem to stay in place even after the trouble is done. They contain clues about your ministry and the most effective ways to influence others. What are your favorite verses (or passages) in the entire Bible—and what about them speaks to you? Why they are so special to you. Are there clues about what you ought always to keep in mind, or simple promises of how God will use you?

*...in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you...
by them fight the good fight. ~1 Timothy 1:18*

It’s essential that you “hang onto” those words while you are living and contending for the Kingdom of God on earth (1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14). As you meditate on those words made alive especially to you by the Holy Spirit, you will likely discover inklings of His plans and purposes for you. They are like the words of a parent helping a youngster come to grips with their distinct personality. For instance, here are my life-verses—and what they say to me about being a *ministry-agent*:

- *Deuteronomy 33:17*—I often push people to the ends of the earth.
- *1 Thessalonians 2:5-8*—I’m supposed to be very open, sharing my life, not just words.
- *Romans 15:18-20*—I won’t usually build on others’ foundation.
- *1 Timothy 4:12-16*—I will rescue and secure others by paying attention to my walk.

EXERCISE #4:

List two life scriptures with a brief explanation of what they tell you about you as a custom-made ministry-agent.

DESCRIPTIONS OF YOUR LIFE AND MINISTRY

Another easy way to begin seeing yourself as God does is to look at what sorts of spiritual activities interest you the most—and especially the ways in which you seem to affect others. God uses life's circumstances to sharpen/shape us. He plans to use us frequently, and He wants us to sit easy and familiar in His hands. As *select* tools, we work in specific ways. We contribute to the whole body when we work properly—that is, “operating at peak efficiency according to design” (Ephesians 4:16).

We are good at some things, and not so good at others. Some people thrive in a crisis, and they love to make decisions on the run; others are more deliberate and shy away from uncertainty. Are you one of those animated and refreshed in the midst of many people—most of whom you don't know—or, do you need lots of solitude and down-time to recharge your batteries? Are you more alert to people-signals, details, needs, causes or developing situations?

For the body is not one member, but many...If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be...? ~1 Corinthians 12:14-20

Though a screwdriver can gouge a piece of wood repeatedly, simulating a saw, the results are better (and less messy) if the screwdriver waits to attach the sawn board with screws. Over time, a ministry history develops—the screwdriver learns to look for screws that need turning, rather than boards that need cutting. My point is that if God made you a fingertip, He doesn't want you to have the same sense of smell as a nose.

You are what you are by God's grace, but what, exactly are you intended to be? And how do you work best? What is your unique design as a tool in the hand of God? Think back on the kind of effect you have most often had on people or situations. What happens through you and around you to other people?

For instance, I would tell you that I am like Capt. Kirk from Star Trek: I like to go where others have not gone before, to explore uncharted territory. I see myself as an orphan-grown-older who collects stray and 'uncovered' people, inviting them to join the family at an orphanage. I also seem to function like a plow—overturning people's long-held ideas in order to get them ready for new seed.

I don't consciously try to do these things, but like a screwdriver I feel pleasure and purpose when they happen. Learning how to clarify God's purpose/calling in your own life will enable you to help others' do likewise. One of the most profound gifts we can give those whom Jesus has entrusted to our care is

to tell them about how God uses them. That's one reason why we're practicing on ourselves. What kind of a person have you "proved to be among" people—for their sake (1 Thessalonians 1:5)? How would you describe what God seems to do most often with you, and how do you affect people? As His tool-of-choice, what is your activity/work-of-choice? When and how do you feel most satisfied in serving others?

EXERCISE #5:

Paint two verbal pictures of how God has shaped you—and uses you? Be as specific as you can be with the pictures or analogies.

Using the pictures, define what makes you feel the most excited, fulfilled and useful when you interact with others

YOUR MINISTRY GIFT-MIX

Ever wonder why you think and act so differently from your closest friend, even though both of you are doing your best to live as believers? Or why people seem to appreciate aspects of your life/ministry that seem almost insignificant to you? They make a big deal out of things which are, to you, no big deal at all! Being the way we are doesn't strike us as unusual; we tend to think, "*Well, isn't everyone like this?*" No. That isn't how God designed our race. He hand makes each of us!

You and I want to do God's will. Despite our lapses and *longings-for-other-things*, we keep coming back to this most-basic premise for our life—we are His! But what, exactly, does it mean to surrender to His purposes? How do we live out our bond-service to Christ? How do we fulfill our ministry-destiny?

Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it. ~Colossians 4:17

I want to introduce you to another way to glimpse God's intentions for your life. As part of His glorious designs on your earthly life, God set you up with a particular component of being, an element in your make-up as an individual. It's a specific aspect of your personhood that you've probably never heard about. How you operate as a *ministry-agent*, doing the *this* we're talking about, is unconsciously influenced by the 'body part' you are. He shaped you as an eye or an ear when you were in the womb.

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. ~Jeremiah 1:5

Eyes perceive by seeing; noses by smelling; ears by hearing. I call that assignment your *Ministry Gift-Mix*. It's a fundamental part of His design for you, a calling from the God who tools you appropriately and adequately to do/be what He wants. Your *Ministry Gift-Mix* influences you to function in certain ways and, ultimately, to fulfill the role that He intends for you on earth. You live your life, and think in a way that is slightly different than your friends and other members of Jesus' Church largely due to your *Ministry Gift-Mix*.

Because the various *Gift-Mixes* are not precisely defined in the Bible, it isn't possible to precisely define them here. But to get started in our study, think of *Gift-Mixes* as basic colors: brown, greens, yellows, etc. Even those of us who are color-challenged can distinguish reds from blues. It becomes trickier differentiating between purples, violets and lavenders.

For style-conscious people, picking the "perfect" color to paint each room in the house isn't as simple as deciding on blue, white or yellow. First, they resolve to look within a *family* of colors, as my wife did when we repainted our home. She chose browns, grays and tans, "probably something approaching *straw* for the living room, and with a hint of *greenish tones* for the bedrooms." Next, she and a friend scoured pages and pages of custom paint colors from a top-quality paint company, and settled on six or seven to sample on our walls. I had never heard of Norwich Grey, Soft Slate (who coins these names?)

While your basic *Gift-Mix* may be Exhorter, you have a special tone and hue that sets you apart from other Exhorters. "Sunshine Yellow" and "Lemon Yellow" are similar, but not identical. So, as you read about the basic colors on God's palate, do not insist on qualities that describe you precisely. Look, instead, for affirmation of God's intentional touch on who and what you are. The whole goal of this book is to give you fresh perspectives on the timeless picture of God's creative and love-filled decision to make you, you.

Your *Gift-Mix* is but one of the God-ordained elements, one of the factors entwined in your soul that accounts for why you live your life and think the things that you think in a way that is slightly different than others. Much of who you are as a person is because of God's design—not because of your inability to be like others you admire in the Body of Christ.

Your *Gift-Mix* isn't a particular job or role in a church structure, or a series of numbered steps like instructions for assembling an IKEA cabinet. You cannot discover our ministry without doing ministry.

In other words, your calling won't come in isolation. The more you serve (and lead) others, the more refined and precise your ministry calling becomes. While you step up more and more as a *people-leader*, God reveals more of you to yourself. The individuals who seem to you to be really good at leading are actually just people whose *service-to-others* has taught them how to function best as themselves.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries [Gift-Mixes], and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. ~1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Knowing your primary *Gift-Mix* helps you understand how the Lord is most likely to use you. Also, when you see these *Gift-Mixes* in the people you touch, you will better understand how to help them be themselves. The list of *Gift-Mixes* can be found in several Bible passages (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4). These brief descriptions of some of those *Gift-Mixes* can begin your personal discovery:

- **EXHORTERS**—Find it easy to get close to people and their situations—usually by relating a similar personal experience—in order to help them move ahead or break through. Like expert mountain guides, exhorters can point out loose stones and shortcuts. And they make fabulous storytellers.
- **TEACHERS**—See lessons to be taught in almost every situation, and they want everyone to be secured and well-grounded in truth. As tireless mentors, teachers take special delight when others gain a new or deeper awareness of truth. Their organized touch brings simplicity and beauty to almost anything.
- **SERVER-HELPERS**—Derive the most satisfaction and fulfillment from being invisible, behind-the-scenes parts of a larger “team effort.” Using their know-how, skills, time and talents, server-helpers undergird people and churches, relieving them of their burdens and workloads. They toil with eagerness and endless stamina.
- **MERCY-SHOWERS**—See beyond people's sin and move toward their hurt with gracious sensitivity and compassion. Filled with great wisdom and strength, mercy-showers believe the best of others, and want the best for them—regardless of what may have caused their present circumstances. They can reach those who are deep in pain or shame.
- **APOSTLE-PIONEERS**—Lay foundations of truth and understanding upon which others in the

church build. As pioneers moving into spiritually uncharted or underdeveloped arenas, apostles rarely function conventionally or according to the status quo. Their trail blazing tendencies and their keen sense of direction inspire followers.

- **GIVERS**—Experience an almost irresistible desire to meet the physical and financial needs of anyone they meet. Compelled by cheerful generosity, givers invest in kingdom enterprises and facilitate others’ vision. Having usually suffered several financial reversals, they have little worry about parting with more of their money voluntarily.
- **EVANGELISTS**—Continually “find themselves” in the middle of incredible opportunities to tell people about Jesus, and they do—with an eagerness to explain how people’s life situations can be made so much better by the Lord. Not easily discouraged by roadblocks in life or in conversations, evangelists keep pressing ahead as carriers of the “good news.”
- **PROPHETS**—Carry messages in their own hearts (like letter pouches) that come from the heart of God about His plans and purposes for people or churches. Wanting to counsel people according to God’s revealed word, prophets are focused on one question: “What is God saying right now?” They act as excellent compasses in the woods.
- **LEADER-CHAMPIONS**—Rise up on behalf of people or causes with a combination of strength and initiative in order to establish lasting change for the better. Stepping up in support or defense of those in need, leader-champions assume responsibility for getting things done. They lead by taking care of anything that needs doing.
- **PASTOR-TEACHERS**—Seek out, gather and watch over other people with a strong desire to see each one of them flourish. Wanting to make sure everyone has whatever they need to grow, pastor-teachers “go over” the particulars of people’s lives like someone counting loose change in their pocket. They lead and feed their sheep.

EXERCISE #6:

Since all the Gift-Mixes are aspects of Christ, every believer will function to some extent in all of them. But which of these seems to describe you best (1-2)? Why?

#2 YOU AS A PEOPLE-LEADER

As a young man eagerly sitting under the teaching/instruction of my pastor (Jack W. Hayford), I was repeatedly struck by how deeply his words about God's word went into my soul. I found myself asking, continuously, *How does he know these things?* I couldn't wait for the next opportunity at church to listen and learn. One day Pastor Jack made a casual observation, in question-form, that changed how I think about ministry for the past 40 years. He asked, "Why does the Church confine its thoughts about being Christian (Christ-like) primarily to character and behavior? We teach people to be like Jesus in every way except in ministry..."

In that instant, something huge shifted in my belief about people—and what God wants for them! Everyone accepts that the more mature in Christ people become, the more their character and behavior will be like Jesus. We believe everyone is capable, by God's power, of becoming more righteous in their thoughts and actions. Temptations will always exist, but spiritual maturity means being better at saying no to wrong things.

But we don't generally believe the same possibility for their ministry skills. We don't assume that greater maturity leads to greater spiritual *know-how*. I do. I believe people can become better and better at *ministry-to-others*. Every *made-righteous* person can feed other people with wisdom that will help them on their journey.

God's plan isn't to provide *ready-made* leaders to churches; rather, He wants leaders *made ready*! The Bible truth is simple and unequivocal on the subject: though believers have different roles within the whole Body, every member of Christ's Church is intended by God to be a vital, ministering person who disciples and leads others in Kingdom life.

DID SOMEONE MISCAST YOU?

Uh-oh. Here you are attending a gathering of *already-identified-leaders*. Who made *that* mistake? Suddenly being or not being a leader isn't just theory or theology because someone thinks you are one—or, someone is trying to make you into one! If you're normal, your thoughts sound something like this:

- *Should I wait until I'm found out as a fraud, or should I quit before I do real damage in someone's life?*

- *If I am as inconspicuous as possible, not disturbing anything or drawing any attention to myself, maybe nobody will challenge my (non-existent) leadership credentials.*
- *If I stick with leader-things that don't require ministry-to-others (running meetings, organizing events, receiving more training, etc.), I won't make mistakes that really make a mess of things in people's lives.*

EXERCISE #7:

In what way(s) do you think of yourself as a "leader"? And in what ways do you think you are not a (good) "leader"?

God doesn't think like we think; He doesn't see things the way we do. It shouldn't surprise us, then, that His plans and intentions for us are not what we would map out for ourselves. We think we need to be something else or someone else for God to use us. He says, "Nope. I'm the One who designed you, and you're just the tool I want to use."

We imagine we need to know more if we're going to help others grow in their walk. He says, "No, if you will just pass along what I've already taught you, that will be enough."

If we define a spiritual *people-leader* as someone with a Hollywood personality and a commanding stage presence, then I concede we are not all leaders. But if spiritual leadership is more akin to being a parent than a performer, I rest my case in saying that every believer is capable of becoming an excellent *people-leader*—just as sincere people can become more effective parents.

Interestingly, spiritual leadership—as seen in Scripture—doesn't focus on leadership traits, personality types or stage presence. What we learn, instead, is that spiritual leaders accept responsibility for others' spiritual growth and development. People still make their own decisions, so how much progress they make isn't completely up to leaders. But without trail guides who have walked this way before, people don't make as much progress. Too much of their time is spent relearning lessons that people have learned before.

If you have made any progress in your walk with Jesus, you can guide (lead) people who will soon be passing where you've walked. As with all ministry, people-leading is far more about willingness than giftedness. Helping others, not impressing them—that's what spiritual leaders do.

A Span of Care

Spiritual leaders care about and care for people in their sphere of influence (2 Corinthians 10:13). God never intended His people to all be cared for by one person. A leader's 'span of care' begins with just a few other people; the size of the group isn't important, but what matters is a leader's willingness to serve the purposes of God by aiding others.

The Church world goes through fashion seasons when one emphasis or the other becomes more or less popular. We sing the same 'new' songs until newer ones replace them in worship sets across the country; preachers stride across the stage or sit on stools or stand immobile—often depending on currently popular speakers. Even teaching themes spread throughout the Body as God addresses His Church.

But some elements and themes are timeless—whether or not they're currently fashionable.

Limiting the 'span of care' is one such principle. In my first years of ministry, as I tried to get a handle on what my 'job' as a leader entailed, I figured that the way God dealt with His people would be a good model for how I ought to deal with sheep in my care. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, gave straight-forward advice: "Don't try this on your own!" "You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people... for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Select out of all the people able men... and you place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times... So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you." ~Exodus 18:18-22

Solo operators aren't very biblical; the larger the group of people, the larger the number of additional leaders needed. Moses paid attention to the advice, and chose individuals to fill several layers of sub-leadership, ultimately ensuring that every person had easy and uncrowded access to spiritual guides and mentors. No leader directly cared for more than 10 individuals/couples. I had seen the advantage of smaller Bible studies in my university days, and determined our church would go through the many necessary steps to develop vibrant cell groups.

It's easier to just lead and teach large groups, and it's messier as well as riskier to entrust ministry authority to people with several layers less of spiritual experience and seasoning. But doing ministry alone is NOT good. Period. That absolute declaration left me little choice except to go through the difficulties and messes of empowering newer leaders. Congregations need several layers of *people-leaders*, just as Jethro counseled Moses.

Remember Peter, who thought he was too evil and unspiritual for Jesus to use—and who later denied he knew Jesus? The Lord gave Peter the same assignment He gives us: *Use even the mistakes you make to strengthen others* (Luke 22:31); and, *show your love for Me by tending My sheep* (John 21:15-17). Paul felt inadequate and nervous about such an assignment (2 Corinthians 3:5-6). Though he had a terrible, terrible past, God gave him grace—as He will give you grace—to carry out his spiritual assignment (1 Timothy 1:14):

*And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”
Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses,
so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
~2 Corinthians 12:9*

Neither Paul (1 Corinthians 2:3), nor any ministry leader I esteem, is confident in themselves—no matter how much experience or training they have. Spiritual leadership is a step into uncertainty, with faith that God will supply what’s needed.

God intentionally designed spiritual *people-leading* to be done by unworthy, unspectacular and unqualified men and women like us. The purpose is to display God’s great power, not people’s giftedness and talent.

PEOPLE-LEADING SCRIPTURES

Since the Bible is the only authoritative source for all things in the kingdom, let's look at a few key passages to highlight the nature and purpose of spiritual *people-leading*—remembering that God chose people like Moses, Gideon and Peter to be *people-leaders*.

EXERCISE #8A:

As a group, read any two Bible passages below, and answer the questions together.

EXERCISE #8B:

With one other person (not in your group), share what you personally learned and/or found most interesting about spiritual leadership from the Scripture passages your group studied.

I. NUMBERS 11:14-17

- What does it mean to “carry” (*lit. lift, accept, advance, help, regard, set up*) people? Are people light or not-so-light?
- Do you see any similarities between Moses’ thoughts about being a leader, and your thoughts? Read the story of God recruiting Moses for more comparisons(Exodus 3-4).
- What special provision does God promise to leaders like you? How do we express that in New Testament terms?

II. NEHEMIAH 2:11-18

- What did Nehemiah have to do in order to reach Jerusalem?
- The “hand of God” gave a special grace for Nehemiah to do what?
- What two things does Nehemiah tell the people of Jerusalem?

III. ISAIAH 60:22-61:6

- What is the context of this passage (read 60:15-21)? What final proof does God offer of His transforming work among His people?
- For what purposes are we *anointed* by the Spirit?
- What is the evidence of someone's *anointing*; in other words, what happens to people who have been ministered to by an *anointed* servant (v. 3)?
- What do those *ministered-to* people do, after they have been transformed (v.4)?

IV. EZEKIEL 34:2-6 AND 11-15

- God wants what for His flock? Make a simple list, and translate what spiritual leaders should do for people in their 'span of care.'
- Jesus, the Good Shepherd, grieved that His people didn't have what in their lives (Matthew 9:36)? Why?
- Read John 10:11-18. Instead of categorizing people as *leaders* or *non-leaders*, use Jesus' distinction between *shepherds* and *hirelings*.
- If we are Christ-like, what do we do?

V. MATTHEW 20:20-28

- From what Jesus says, would it be fair to translate *leader* as *servant*?
- Does it seem reasonable for someone to say, "I'm unqualified to be a servant. I don't know enough or have enough experience"?
- How do we become 'great' in the Kingdom?

VI. EPHESIANS 4:7, 11-16

- Who has been gifted by Christ as *ministry-agents*?

- *Equip* means to *mend, repair, reframe, reconstruct*. If the apostles, prophets, etc. are doing their job, what do the saints begin to do?
- What then happens to the whole body?

VII. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:3-13

- Make two short lists of what true spiritual leaders *do* and *don't do*.
- Which of the *don't-do* items sometimes tempt you? Which ones have you seen leaders do?
- Which *do-do's* are difficult for you? Are there any that you believe you will never be able to do?

VIII. 1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16

- Is spiritual leadership more connected with spiritual *age*, or with spiritual *example*?
- What three things should someone do for the small group of fellow-believers in his/her 'span of care' (verse 13)?

#3 YOU AS A DISCIPLE-MAKER

EXERCISE #9A:

In your small group, write a definition of what it means to make disciples.

EXERCISE #9B:

On a scale of 1-10, tell each other how capable and qualified you personally feel as a disciple-maker.

Please don't judge yourself or decide you aren't qualified to be a *disciple-maker* before we even look at the biblical explanation for what it is—and who can do it. Since Jesus told all of us to “go and make disciples,” then, at least in His mind, you and I can do it. He would not have told you to something you can't possibly do. He has much more confidence in you than you do. If Jesus intends all His fol-

lowers to make disciples, but few of His followers are actually doing so, is it possible that our idea of *disciple-making* isn't the same as His?

Whatever you think you're unable to do probably isn't *disciple-making*.

Or, what you worry about not being able to do isn't the way in which you are meant to disciple others. For instance, my wife and I approach almost everything in life quite differently—including how we influence people. She is more of an introvert who likes to think about things before she offers input to people. She does far more for, and goes far deeper into people's pain to 'get to' where they live. I'm not insensitive to people's pain, but I generally talk to them about their future. If *disciple-making* involves spending 2-3 hours absorbing and embracing people's life-stories, I couldn't be an effective *disciple-maker*; if *disciple-making* didn't happen as a result of such deep and comforting probing, my wife couldn't do it.

Good *disciple-makers* are true to themselves. They don't try to be something they're not. They don't wear a 'Christian' mask to cover their features, and they fully acknowledge God still has lots of work to do on them. Shy people will be shy people when they share their life-lessons; humorous folks will be a bit funnier than not-so-humorous folks; exhorters are supposed to use the many stories (about themselves) that come to mind when they disciple; teachers will likely wrack their brain trying to come up with stories to accompany their nicely outlined *disciple-making*.

My point is simple: no aspect or unique quality of *you-as-you* makes you less suited than anyone else for *disciple-making*. The lie tells you that you need to be like someone else before you can begin influencing fellow believers. That is like a saw being told it should be a hammer. Your personality neither qualifies nor disqualifies you; what you are like has no bearing on your ability to advantage others' spiritual journey.

Disciple-Maker Qualification Test

If you believe you are not qualified to be a good *disciple-maker*, may I test you to find out? Please answer a few questions:

1. ***Have you been forgiven much? Can you keep that in mind when others need forgiveness? Are you grateful that you've been forgiven much many, many times since you first opened your life to Christ? Can you keep that in mind, too?***

EXERCISE #10:

In your small group, describe something God has forgiven in your life that gives you extra mercy for other people.

- 2.** *Has God done things for you that you'd like to see done for others? Has He changed your world by changing how you think? Has He done more than you expected and imagined? Could you tell an interested friend in your own words?*

EXERCISE #11:

Tell your small group about something significant that God has changed in your life.

- 3.** *Do you celebrate when people recover from their past brokenness or bondage? Would you like to learn how to do that sort of restoration in people's lives in a way that suits your individual make-up—shyly, boldly, humorously, reflectively, nontraditionally, systematically, etc.?*

EXERCISE #12:

Is there someone you've known and seen in pain/bondage, and you didn't know how to help? Describe the person's brokenness, and what you wish you would have known to help your friend.

- 4.** *Can you love and accept people where they are, but hold out high hope for their future?*

If you answered “NO” to any of the questions, then you are disqualified as a *disciple-maker*. I recommend that you reread the Believer's Manual to become more familiar with the terms of your agreement with the Lord of Creation. But if you answered “YES” to each question, you already understand the most vital aspects of *disciple-making* far better than you realized.

EXERCISE #13:

Describe a situation when you believed the best of someone—even though others 'gave up' on the person—and the person changed for the better.

Disciple-making is not making people into something *different*, but rather discerning the heart of God for His purposes in their lives. The essential patterns of people's soul were fixed long ago. But just as Jesus had eyes for what Peter would become instead of what he was at the time, so effective *disciple-makers* see who and what individuals were designed to be. *Love-for-others* enables us to see what God has in mind for them. Love is God's motive and means for everything, and He has always been concerned about people in their affliction (Exodus 3:7; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Disciple-making mends people from the ravages of sin and satanic assault, and equips them to mend others (Isaiah 61:1-4; Ephesians 4:12). Only through the eyes of love can we glimpse the masterpieces as originally painted—before they were scratched and gouged and covered with obscene graffiti. Good *disciple-makers* ask over and over, *What would you look like, restored and repaired?*

As a youngster I lived in a new housing development that grew larger, street by street, over several years. The never-ending new construction provided my older brother and me with plenty of discarded boards and 2x4's to construct at least three 'new forts' in our large backyard each year. Though we could scavenge an endless supply of wood, the builders rarely left new nails behind; 95% of the nails we used to build our forts were used—bent or twisted and dropped by workers.

We learned how to carefully tap, tap, tap bent nails into serviceable nails. I don't think we ever restored an old nail into its pristine, original lines, but not-so-bent was good enough for building forts of uneven boards. That is *disciple-making*. We pick up people from where they were dropped after being bent, and we still see them as nails; we see what they were meant to be. After tapping on their life for a while, we put them back into service to do what they were designed to do.

The rewards of *disciple-making* almost defy description. Imagine the satisfaction of smiling and nodding knowingly in your heart, thinking back on how far a friend of yours has come since those 'early days,' and how many things are now 'right' in their life.

5. *Do you want the special joy that comes from seeing your friend walking and choosing well (3 John 1:4)?*

Disciple-making is not a project or an assignment in somebody's life. We are not drill sergeants shaping people up and getting them to toe the line. Do we teach guidelines for their attitude and behavior? Do we alert them to the dangers of disobedience to God's word? Yes, of course. But explaining those physical, mental and emotional boundaries is like driver's education teaching traffic rules. *Disciple-making* adds so much more to the equation. It is like repairing someone's car—and describing incredible des-

tinations where they can drive after the repairs. Yes, yes, obey the traffic signs. But God wants to fix engines, do body work *and* plan itineraries with drivers. You and I get to work at His one-stop shop.

6. *Can you tell stories about God's dealings with you—to restore, correct, affirm, instruct, tool, build, amaze, change, confront, deliver, comfort, restrain, motivate, heal or bless you?*

Disciple-making is not essentially an academic activity; nor is it something Jesus entrusts to just a few, special believers. For the most part, *disciple-making* is unstructured and episodic—meaning it happens best during the course of lives lived in relationship with one another. I disciple people mostly by talking about lessons or truths I have learned—and ones I'm in the process of learning today. Let me give you an example:

Samuel selecting David as the next king shows how God looks at the heart, not outward appearance. Decades ago, during my first year as an instructor at a Bible college, I was tempted to prove my spirituality. I was hired to replace the English/Composition instructor who unexpectedly returned to pastoring. Though I led numerous Bible studies at UCLA and engaged in lots of missionary-type ministry, I had no formal theological training. The Academic Dean of the college told me I would *never* teach a Bible class! [Translate that: *You are not a spiritual influencer.*]

That offended my pride.

About 2-3 weeks into my subversive campaign to prove my spirituality—by punctuating lectures/lessons with Bible verses and stories—God arrested me with a simple question as I read 2 Corinthians 5:12: *We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.*

God asked, “Do you want to appear spiritual, or actually be spiritual? For now, you cannot have both the appearance and the substance of spirituality.”

Silly as it sounds all these years later, I hesitated awhile over the choice. Eventually, I said I'd take the substance rather than the appearance. What ensued over the following 2 years is another story, but I'll summarize those brutal, gut-pounding, keep-my-mouth-closed months by saying I learned how to affect people without words. And I'm convinced that my words today have far more impact due to that season of silence.

We make disciples mostly by retelling the things He has told us. We advance others' journey with God by sharing lessons He has taught us. From one generation or person to another, God passes along a good portion of His counsel and truth through a glorified "bucket-brigade" made up of a whole string of people transferring to the next in line what they received from someone else.

The bucket you hand to someone might be filled with what you're learning now (about God), what's currently on your mind (about Him or His Kingdom ways), and/or truths He is reminding you of *again*. You will discover that the truths He reminds you of regularly are truths that greatly benefit other people. Curiously, when we don't pass on lessons we've learned, we don't retain much of those lessons for our own future.

EXERCISE #14:

*Tell a story about God instructing, changing, motivating or correcting you.
How did you feel when He was 'done' with you?*

7. Have you been a slow-learner or a repeat-offender of Kingdom ways? Can you acknowledge that to others?

I admit, being a slow-learner and a repeat-offender is a bit embarrassing. On the other hand, since every temptation "is common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13), my story of repeated failure is guaranteed to speak meaningfully to others. I have dozens and dozens of lessons I've been slow to learn. For instance,

God worked for decades to help me produce KINDNESS, a 'fruit of the spirit' that I don't grow well without significant intervention. He says I need much more of it in my life. I don't know if I need a bumper crop of KINDNESS because my yield is below average, or because His assignment for me calls for an extra supply. Whatever the reason, He has pruned and trained and fertilized my soul along those lines for a long time.

He first got my attention in the 1980's when I was in Texas speaking at a church. In the midst of my Bible reading one morning, God spoke to me. Not audibly, but clearly—an unmistakable impression framed in simple words from Proverbs 3:3-4: "*Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.*"

"You have them backwards... You put truth before kindness..."

Ever since that day, He reminds me of my need for KINDNESS by asking questions like: *Do you call that being kind?; Would you like it if I was that kind to you?; Is that the most kindness you can show?* Other people don't necessarily know why I revisit situations, change decisions or restart conversations. But the Hound of Heaven has been after me to produce vats of kindness. It took years to get my produce level up because I was broken and rigid (the two tend to go together) in my perspective. I thought God would discard kindness in order to preserve truth, and I failed to understand that God uses TRUTH as a tool of KINDNESS, in order to preserve and bless His children.

I'm not claiming I do it well, but at least I understand my assignment: extend mercy, love steadfastly, and use what I learn from God's word in a way that convinces people of His enduring lovingkindness toward them.

In a religious culture, everyone pretends that they no longer struggle with 'stuff,' and that they've learned every lesson they need to learn (Praise-the-Lord). Interestingly, though, those same mature and practiced saints rarely recall any life-lesson or ministry-boost in specific or practical enough terms to help anyone else. They aren't living examples; they are wax models pretending to be flesh. It's why many churches don't do well at *disciple-making*—they offer doctrines to learn, but never talk about Kingdom lessons; few people honestly admit they're having trouble.

In such religious cultures/mentalities, judgment replaces discipleship; instead of learning from their own experiences and the mercy they've received for wrongs in their lives, religious people try to secure themselves by highlighting other people's shortcomings. They foolishly imagine that spirituality is a skill for spotting others' sins. Any fool with a sledge hammer can tear a house down. Demolition work isn't skilled labor.

Don't imagine others are free from their long-time struggles. You are not alone fighting wayward tendencies, or struggling with persistent problems. Jesus doesn't want Pharisees; He wants disciples. True spirituality recognizes—in the struggle points of others—scuffles and brawls we've had with sin, and offers them lessons-learned. It takes tremendous skill to build someone up.

Disciple-making doesn't always require a long story—simply acknowledging lessons or realizations tied to Scripture. Tell others what God is working on in your life, even when you don't seem to make much progress. My experience has been that unless/until I have a Bible verse/passage in my mind that speaks to my challenge, I'm not really fighting it as well as I could. The key is speaking the truth (Scripture) that pegs your brokenness. For instance:

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” ~Proverbs 12:18

Throughout my life/ministry, I’ve battled with a “rash tongue” that can be too quick to speak, too fast to judge situations/people. My fast-draw statements, commentaries, judgments and rebuttals have not served people or the Kingdom well. I’ve made lots of progress taming it, but I still have quite a ways to go. The goal is to ask myself—before I speak—“Will this heal or hurt others?”

EXERCISE #15:

Choose one Kingdom principle that you’re still in the process of learning, and share it with the members of your small group. If you can, connect what you’re learning with a Bible verse.

8. *Have you ever ‘connected the dots,’ or put 2+2 together, seeing patterns or principles in the Kingdom? Did the revelation excite you, and did you want to share it with other people?*

Truths of the Kingdom are timeless, and they work in any culture or any era. But in order to ‘work’ in those different settings, the truths need to be translated. That’s another way of thinking about *disciple-making*—using your life to translate truth into others’ life. God’s words are meant to be incarnated, taken in by people like us, then lived out and spoken in the presence of others. When Jesus’ words abide in us, when they take up residence in our heart/mind, they impact people far more than if we just repeat them like a parrot. What He whispers in our ear, we proclaim on the rooftops (Matthew 10:27).

As a *disciple-maker*, you give God’s word a personal slant. I don’t mean you change or distort His word, but when you express truth—in your own words and with your own understanding—it becomes spiritual advice-to-others. Good *disciple-makers* just talk about the things they’ve learned through a combination of Scripture and personal experience. When you tell others what you have discovered, you are *disciple-making*. Again, people misunderstand *disciple-making* primarily as teaching doctrine and correcting bad behavior. The most exciting aspect about influencing people is getting to share how we navigate our life. What have you learned, lately, that has helped?

If something has given you a *boost-up*, a *heads-up* or answered a what’s-up, it’s invaluable for others, too. Here are two recent examples of mine:

Hearing and Following the Spirit's Promptings—Probably the most difficult part is discerning when the Holy Spirit is urging us to respond. It can be hard to tell the difference between our own thoughts and the Spirit's instruction. Perhaps this will help... It's what I do.

- *Listen for echoes of Bible verses that come unbidden to your mind. By far, the most frequent way the Holy Spirit leads is by reminding us of Scriptures.*
- *Expect a nudge, rather than a lightning bolt. The Spirit prompts, urges, draws, woos, whispers and nudges far more than He orders, commands, shoves, insists, shouts or yanks.*
- *Pay attention to what seems "faint, feeble and far away." Almost everything spiritual begins at the size of a mustard seed, and "natural" perception usually misses those little things.*
- *Be prepared for what makes no sense. I'm not talking weird, crazy or spooky, but always remember that God doesn't think along the same lines as us.*
- *What the Holy Spirit lays on your heart won't be the result of a long thought process; it's usually a simple, stand-alone, where-did-that-come-from idea.*

Pressing Ahead—I've found several keys to moving forward in the Lord, and resisting the 'dullness of spirit' that weighs us down into apathy or discontent. Here's what I've learned may help...

- *An eager posture of repentance (expecting to discover areas of wrong in my life);*
- *Avid—or at least diligent and consistent—Bible reading;*
- *Intimate, but not necessarily long, prayers directed to the Lord many times each day;*
- *Singing worship songs (or, at least phrases from songs) to God throughout the day;*
- *Thinking primarily about other people—and serving them.*

EXERCISE #16:

What breakthrough realizations or revelations have you had about ‘normal’ daily challenges like anxiety, self-forgiveness, submission, fear of the future, regret, etc.?

With your small group, share something recent that has helped you.

Was the pivot-point tied to a Bible verse?

What helps you walk with God, helps others. *Disciple-makers* believe that truth, and put it in loving action by sharing what they found helpful. What makes good *disciple-makers* isn't necessarily how much they know—but how much they share of what they know! If you feel disqualified from being a *disciple-maker* because you don't *know* enough, you aren't thinking about making disciples the way Jesus thinks about it.

You might only have known Jesus for one year, so you obviously can't know as much as someone who has walked with Him for a decade. The amount of knowledge isn't the key. You will keep learning more as the years pass. The amount you put into words and pass along to others—that's what determines how much of a *disciple-maker* you are.

DISCIPLE-MAKING SCRIPTURES**EXERCISE #17A:**

Individually, select and read one of the passages below, and answer the questions.

Exercise #17B:

Then share with your small group what you learned about disciple-making from the passage you studied.

I. MATTHEW 28:18-20

- Put v. 18 in your own words by translating **authority** as *expertise, capacity, mastery, rightful place and jurisdiction*.
- Why is *baptism* so central to *disciple-making*? [Hint: don't think of baptism as a sacrament but as a statement.]

- The word ***obey/keep*** means *guard from loss by watching over, keep your eyes on and pay attention*. Now translate v. 20 in your own words.
- Is the curriculum of *disciple-making everything Jesus taught* or *everything Jesus taught you*?

II. MARK 3:13-19

- Who did Jesus select for discipling? What did His choice do for them?
- Where did He invite them—and would He have disciplined those who refused His invitation?
- What privilege prepared them for what future? In other words, what was the ‘program’ and what was the goal for the 12 trained ones?
- Following this pattern, describe the *disciple-making* process.

IX. ACTS 1:1-3

- Who will be completing the work Jesus began (v. 1)?
- What did Jesus tell His disciples during the 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension (v. 3)?
- After raising from the dead, why do you think Jesus still wanted to say so much to His disciples? What more did they need to know than the miracle of the resurrection? Why?

X. 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

- How does Paul use his authority (v. 8)?
- How does that relate to the first five verses in this chapter?
- What is Paul’s “sphere” of influence—and how do you think he developed such a large one (v. 13)?

XI. COLOSSIANS 1:25-29

- Picture Paul as a waiter serving his station of tables in a restaurant. Put v. 25 in your own words, but connect it with *disciple-making*.
- Good *disciple-making* proclaims Jesus. What else does it do?
- What is the point for *disciple-making*? Why not just let people develop and grow on their own; why did Paul labor and strive on their behalf?

XII. 2 TIMOTHY 2:2 AND 3:14-17

- What qualification should our audience have? To whom should we entrust what we know?
- Both (1) what we learn, and (2) from whom we learn are crucial in discipleship. Why?
- What does the Bible do that no other source can do?
- How much Scripture ought we to use to make disciples?

#4 DISCIPLE-MAKING COMPONENTS

Principles and Practices to Develop Others

At a pastors' seminar years ago, a troubling yet revealing question was put to me by a gentlemen in the audience. I do not know if he was a pastor, but I assume he had at least a close relationship with church leadership. That is why the question floored me: "You use the word *disciple* in a manner unfamiliar to me," he began. "I've only heard it used as a noun before today. What do you mean by the verb *to disciple*?"

I thought, at first, he was joking. However, he looked too puzzled and sincere to have a hidden agenda. Hopefully, my shock at his question did not register on my face or in my voice. I knew first-hand how easy it is to neglect *disciple-making* in favor of the more pressing demands of public ministry, but I never imagined that our primary call, to make disciples (*to disciple*), would slip from an *activity* to a *designation* in church vocabulary.

I could not help wondering if the lack of *disciple-making* we all acknowledge in the Church of Jesus is due to a fundamental misunderstanding of more than terminology. *How* we think about something determines, to a large extent, *what* we end up thinking about it—and what we do about it. Thinking about *Disciple* as a noun, rather than a verb, concentrates our point of view on the completed traits of a disciple, not on how they acquired those traits. Endless discussions attempt to identify the qualities of a fully disciplined follower of Jesus, but little talk is devoted to the ways in which those attributes and understandings actually get added to people.

That's why I prefer to replace the word *discipleship* with the more active description *disciple-making*. It is a process—an active on-going shaping of one person by another—enabling the disciple to develop in ways he or she probably could not develop alone. "Making" disciples implies that something gets *done* to someone by someone, and doing those things builds a disciple. What are those things? What can we each do that doesn't require us to be other than who God designed us to be?

I'm not offering you a "quick fix," a follow-the-formula type of solution. Making disciples is an engrossing, all-engaging activity of the heart and of the mind. It forces shifts in priorities, time allocations and basic orientations towards ministry. But once you grasp the basic thrust of *disciple-making*, and identify many simple-to-do ideas that fit with who God designed you to be, you will be amazed at how much more influence you have in people's lives, and how much more impact you have on their spiritual development.

Most people assume that to become a disciple-maker, they need to be more/better than they are right now. That belief gravely hinders the Church, and our simple obedience to Jesus' *disciple-making* command. Yes, of course, He and we both want us to keep maturing and growing in spiritual understanding and depth. But in the meantime, along the way, He wants to use us to shape others.

MORE THAN CURRICULA

We unintentionally equate discipleship with a curriculum—and someone teaching 'lessons' to others. Consequently, most *disciple-making* ideas concentrate on developing a good curriculum and arranging for it to be taught in classes, small groups or one-on-one. Effective discipleship certainly includes a teaching element or a curriculum, but *disciple-making* involves much, much more than just a curriculum or a program. Because the Church has subscribed to an Academic training model for so long, it's difficult for us to consider non-academic aspects.

Expanding our thinking beyond the academic model seems illegitimate or unnecessary to people who think discipleship is a curriculum for new believers. This highlights one of the challenges for explaining *disciple-making*. We don't really have adequate language to identify other elements in successful *disciple-making*. When I say there is much more to *disciple-making* than teaching doctrine—but can't articulate precisely what that more is called—it's not very convincing.

One of the first thought-changers I offer you is that **curriculum/teaching/modeling is only one of three essential parts to discipleship**. *Disciple-making* is a posture of our heart toward and for others, not a standardized syllabus or a course outline.

Perhaps it will help to offer an analogy. What are the necessary elements for good child-rearing? If we agree that the goal is to make adults out of children, would we suggest that such a transformation is done primarily through a curriculum? Of course not. There is much more to parenting than teaching life-skills. Would it be safe to say that good parenting is closer to a way of being than it is to a list of behaviors?

Good parents have several things in common: they love their kids; they celebrate each child's uniqueness; they set boundaries and consequences; they watch for dangers that threaten their children's future well-being; they are "there" when needed, etc. But it isn't a step-by-step, follow-the-numbers process. In the same way, it would be difficult to write a manual on the exact steps to take in order to become someone's best friend. Best friends don't go by the book. But as different from one another as our best friends

have been, what made the friendships so good were things like, “We trusted each other”; “We ‘got’ each other”; “We were ‘there’ for each other”; etc.

I believe we will understand *disciple-making* better if we associate it more with friend-making and child-raising, rather than just school-attending. Like good parents and good friends, good *disciple-makers* are selfless. They think about and do for others. As parents can improve their child-raising skills, and we can get better at friend-making, so we can get better at making disciples. There is no one-size-fits-all method for discipling. *Disciple-making* is a way of living, not an just activity confined to weekly or monthly meetings.

Before we get to the specific assignment Jesus gave us to make disciples, may I change the wording of the *Great Commission* slightly to give you a better idea of what He commanded? GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES is better understood AS YOU ARE TRAVELING ABOUT IN LIFE, GOING HERE AND THERE, BE INSTRUCTING, SHARING AND RELATING TO OTHERS THE LESSONS, GUIDELINES AND LIFE-KEYS I’VE TAUGHT YOU. Jesus wasn’t telling His disciples to set up lectures or classrooms; He was telling them to do to others what He had done to them—use any and every opportunity to talk about the Kingdom and Truth of God.

THREE PROCESS GOALS

Highly effective *disciple-making* isn’t a formula or an outline to follow any more than parenting or friend-making are. Nevertheless, a few simple perspectives on *what* you are trying to do for people—and *how*—will help you be a better *disciple-maker*. My observation from Scripture, and my own experiences as a *disciple-maker*, lead me to identify three major facets in the *disciple-making* process. Even though I have labeled the process parts, I quickly admit they are not really pieces, as much as phases or fluid elements that merge, feed into and off one another.

To begin our conversation, I will suggest **Reach** out and get to people; **Model** Kingdom living and thinking for people; and, **Utilize** these equipped and reformed people as workers doing ministry. All three are intentional and continual activities of effective disciple-makers. Any given day, you might ‘do’ all three at once with someone you’re discipling; the next time you’re with that person, you might only do the first... or the third. The clearest example of Jesus using this process is found in Mark—

And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.

~Mark 3:13-15

When you initiate a discipling relationship with people, you will only be able to begin *reaching, modeling* and *utilizing* them, but as your connection with them increases and deepens, so, too, does your *reaching, modeling* and *utilization*. Don't be in a hurry. Don't expect people to be eager for more from you before you supply proof that you have truly (1) touched their heart, mind and situation; (2) demonstrated the kind of Kingdom life and understanding they would like themselves; and, (3) helped them discover and experience satisfying ministry.

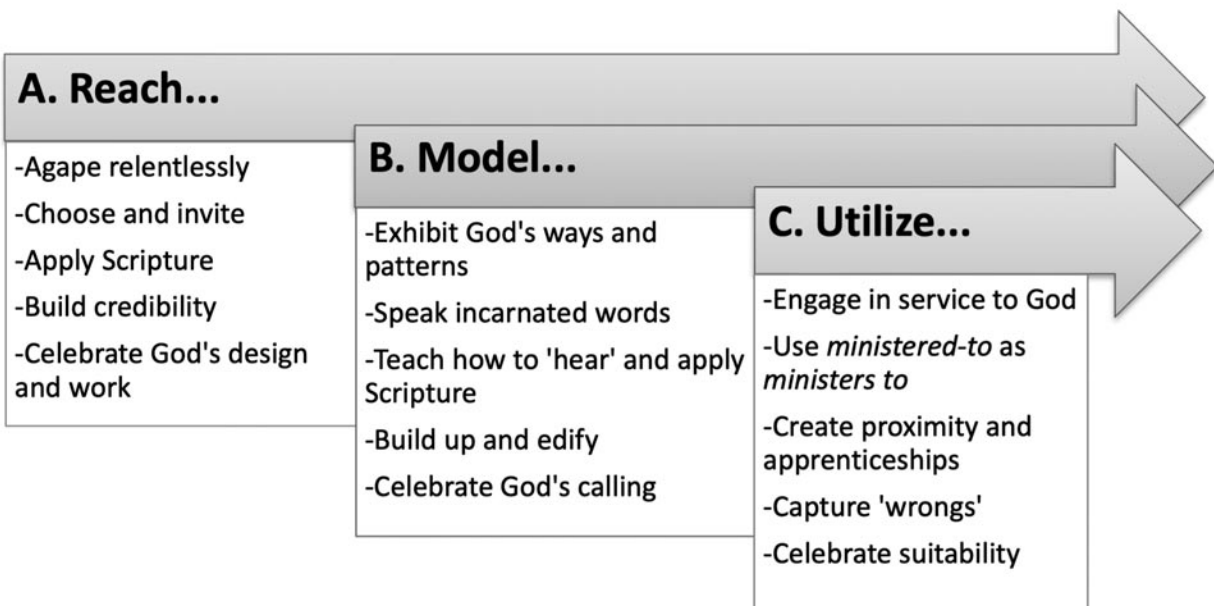
Keeping these goals in mind, and asking yourself over and over how you can do them, is like reminding yourself to keep heading in a general direction. Because we're more accustomed to directions that tell us specific trails to take, we might feel a bit lost just being told to 'head north.' But that is actually part of the beauty of *disciple-making*. The specific ways you 'head north' with people, and model the things of God for them, will be as unique as you. Remember, you are God's tool of choice. From whatever point where you stand now, coming from any history or past geography, you can begin to think and act like the *disciple-maker* God always intended you to be. Presuming you know where 'north' is, heading that way is as simple as facing the correct direction—and starting to walk.

An academic or more structured model of *disciple-making* leads people to ask, "How many people can I disciple?" I believe the Church doesn't do more *disciple-making* because most believers do not feel personally qualified enough to 'have' disciples. It's an awkward phrase, but you will understand what I mean if I change the wording of the question: "Toward how many people can you act like a follower of Jesus?" I can act like a Christian to everyone I meet; I can be loving to everyone, as well. Agape love is more than thoughts, feelings or words (1John 3:18). It acts and does things. In the same way, *disciple-making* is a way of behaving toward people, more than a program offered to people.

Disciple-making, as a way of relating to people around you, can affect almost anyone you meet, but the people with whom you spend the most time will benefit most from your loving example. Likewise, those whom you most intentionally choose to do things to/for will end up the most 'discipled' (shaped/influenced) by you.

Start with three easy-to-remember goals, and you will be surprised at how easily you come up with steps that suit your ministry makeup and where you currently are in your life.

The Disciple-Making Process



#4A GET TO PEOPLE—NEHEMIAH 2 AND PHILIPPIANS 2:1-18

Everything God does is rooted in profound love, so anything He tells us to do ought to have that same foundation and motivation. God so loved, He gave of Himself (John 3:16), and that is the simple beginning of *disciple-making*: compelled by love, get to people, reach out to them, walk beside them and speak to them about their life. Extend an ongoing invitation for them to open to you because you have been so open and welcoming to them.

Draw close—or, at least, move toward—people in every way you can. Let me stress, again, that you are wired differently and uniquely. Natural extroverts, fueled and recharged by a room full of strangers, are nothing like natural introverts, who feel drained and exhausted by that same room of people! To become better disciple-makers, extroverts likely need to resist their talk-to-everyone impulses, in order to get a bit closer to a few; introverts may need to stretch themselves to at least look for other shy-ones in the crowd, and find a safe way to identify with them. It takes effort to move toward people. And when we do the initiating, there is always a chance our reach will be rejected.

Usually, getting to people begins by simply seeing them. God has eyes for us (Psalm 32:8 and 33:18). That means we ought to have eyes to see others. When you are chatting with a parent and a child, ‘get to’ the child (and thereby to the parent) by addressing the youngster in a way that makes sense to a not-old person. Look for those who are left out or neglected. Notice little things about what people do or say, and let them know—not to embarrass but to feature them as special—that they have been seen.

Offering to help, asking follow-up questions and genuinely being interested in people’s situation—these are everyday examples of getting yourself to others. It’s the most foundational element of good *disciple-making*. Instead of requiring people to do the work of getting to you, you initiate and perpetuate the getting closer process. And it is a process. It begins with noticing and appreciating people; with enough time and opportunity it gradually progresses to the point where the people you’ve reached out to begin approaching you for advice and help. That takes time.

Just like we have been disappointed or hurt by careless people who failed to establish trust before they launched into us with advice or criticism, so have people around us. Remember the ‘Golden Rule’ and treat people the way you’d like to be treated. Don’t barge into their life without being invited, but don’t wait around for them to invite you without any history with you. Notice people’s uniqueness and situation; extend warmth, greeting or understanding their way; move toward them sensitively in kindness; and be winsome in your interactions with them.

Your goal is to gain a place/relationship that allows you to speak lovingly and knowingly into their life/ministry. Ultimately, you simply follow the pattern God uses to woo us, and to begin His work in our lives. Just as Jesus came to “seek and save the lost,” not waiting for them to take the initiative (Luke 19:10), so we go to others. That pattern isn’t limited to evangelism; it is the basis of ongoing influence in people’s spiritual life. Every act or gesture when we reach out to others, and move toward them, opens possibilities to touch them with God’s love and kindness.

EXERCISE #18:

What makes it hard for you to initiate engagement in people’s lives? Do you fear rejection? Are you worried that your interest will be misinterpreted? Do you worry you won’t know what to say? Have you had a bad experience trying to reach out to someone?

What additional factors in your life make this so challenging (e.g. time)?

What can you begin doing to get yourself moving in this direction to reach more toward people?

BIBLE STUDY FOR FURTHER INSIGHTS ABOUT ‘GETTING TO’ PEOPLE

Since the Bible is our handbook for living, we ought to find principles and patterns to support anything we claim is part of God’s intention for our life. That’s why I want to draw your attention to so many Bible verses and passages. If you take time to read and think about the following scriptures, you will, I hope, be able to see the *disciple-making* elements. Each section begins with the conclusions I’ve drawn from the verses. I elaborate them to explain my thinking, but you may wish to remember them (as I do) with a single word/phrase like those I’ve highlighted.

- **Love, love, love people—wherever they are and however well or not well they’re doing.** Love without judgment or expectation. I translate *Agape* with two concepts: (1) welcome, invite near and call out to; plus (2) value, prize and honor. I try to love people relentlessly and selflessly, relating to them as God relates to me. It’s my job to convince them it’s not a burden but a delight to be with them, and to communicate my appreciation for their value by the way I treat them.

- **John 15:12-13**—Can you see ways to lay your life down in order to love those around you? Be as specific as possible for yourself, and the sort of person you are.
- **Romans 13:8-10**—How/why does “love your neighbor” fulfil the Law? Why does Jesus describe Agape as a debt we owe to others?
- **1 Corinthians 13:1-8**—This is quite a list of several different ways love manifests in action. Think of people who make you feel welcome and special—how did their love manifest toward you?
- **Colossians 3:12-14**—How does love sustain unity? Can it be used to draw closer to people with whom you don't yet have a bond? Does verse 12 give you any ideas for things you can do to reach toward people?
- **Intentionally ‘choose’ people.** God chose me long before I was aware of Him. He set His affection on me first—only after a while did I respond. Make ‘little’ choices about individuals to pursue— who you greet and chat with in a room to who you invite for coffee. Each choice you make and act on invites them closer and closer.
 - **Deuteronomy 7:6-8**—The world's competitive mindset picks the best and most accomplished, in order to ‘win’ with them on our team. Who/What does God seem to choose to be with Him?
 - **John 15:16, 19**—Did you pick God, or did He choose you? Following His selection pattern, should disciple-makers wait to be chosen as mentors, or should they choose the people in whom to invest themselves?
 - **Mark 3:13-19**—Who did Jesus chose to spend more time with? After choosing the disciples, He invited them to respond. How? If someone He chose had chosen not to respond, would that person have become one of Jesus' disciples?
 - **1 Peter 2:9-10**—Before God chose you, were you already what Peter describes in verse 9? Or did your identity and destiny change as a result of being chosen? Can you begin to sense the potential your choice of others could have in their life?

- **Draw near to people by explaining and applying Scripture** to their past, present and future. The Bible is the best mirror on the planet, so holding that mirror to reflect people to themselves is the best way for them to gain a true picture of who they are. Likewise, nothing describes God’s heart and ways more completely than His word. It makes sense out of life. If you want to help people grow into the image of Christ—and understand their unique calling as members of His Body—you cannot rely on my natural understanding.
 - **Deuteronomy 4:1-8**—Scripture-taught wisdom and understanding sets us apart from all other peoples, and God’s words give us necessary insight to ‘come into our inheritance. Are we supposed to be impressed by the world’s knowledge, or is the world intended to marvel at what happens when we pay attention to God’s words?
 - **2 Timothy 3:14-17**—Nothing in all the libraries (digital or hardcopy) of humankind will we find wiser or more powerfully life-shaping words than we find in the Bible. In order to make others “adequate” and framed for meaningful ministry-to-others, how should we use Scripture?
 - **Hebrews 4:12-13**—In your own words, how “deep” does God’s word penetrate in people? What does that mean to you, and how might you use scripture verses to address issues in people’s lives?
 - **2 Peter 1:2-4**—Promises in God’s word have a unique power to affect people’s nature—making it more and more like God’s nature. What else does His word do for us? If people have been rendered a debased and spoiled version of themselves, and as a *disciple-maker* you want to see them renewed, how important is the Bible in that restoration process?
- **Build credibility through a meaningful history** by offering sympathetic and helpful counsel. People want to know if you have been in similar situations—and if your “answer” helped you. The more you embrace the answers of God, found in His word, in prayer or through the godly counsel you have received from others, the more answers you have to offer others. Credibility opens people to the advice and answers embedded in your life. You gain more credibility each time the counsel you offer helps the people you serve.

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- **Hebrews 13:8**—Jesus remains the same, always. What hope/confidence does His unvarying character give you? Can you see why a steady and consistent approach to people is necessary if we want them to trust in and turn to us?
 - **Psalms 62:8 and Zephaniah 3:2**—Trust enables us to pour out our heart. What leads you, personally, to trust someone enough to open yourself? Can you be that way to others over time?
 - **2 Corinthians 10:12-18 and 12:16**—What purpose does true spiritual authority serve? When credibility becomes a convenience to us (*Nobody will question my decisions*), or when it produces self-righteous satisfaction and pride (*I know what I'm doing*), we have missed the whole point. Is it fair for people to evaluate the extent of our spiritual understanding/authority by how helped and built up they are from listening to us?
 - **1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 2:7-13**—Paul “proved to be” a trustworthy person. That process wasn’t quick. He lived his life openly, and the people around him gained evidence about his credibility. What sort of person are you “proving to be,” and to whom?
 - **“See” and express interest in others as unique children of God.** Help them discover the unique ways they work best as individual members of Christ’s Body, and help them discover God’s intentions for using them. When they experience your kind, helpful encouragement and interest, they will think more highly of your advice. Intentionally celebrate God’s design and work in them, and convince them you do not want them to be your clone.
 - **Genesis 1:11-12 and 27-31**—Trees reproduce “after their own kind.” What safeguards can you put in place to prevent you from unintentionally shaping people into your image?
 - **Psalms 139:13-16**—“Fearfully and wonderfully made” best translates as *so unique and distinctive, no one better mess up the wonder each individual has been made by God*. How important is it for disciple-makers to be aware of individuals?
 - **Jeremiah 1:5 and Galatians 1:15**—At least one portion of people’s being was set before their birth. Using what you’ve learned about Ministry Gift-Mixes, discuss the implications for our efforts to influence people to be themselves.

- **Ephesians 2:10 and 4:11-16**—Every member of Christ’s Body works differently. If our goal is to raise people into ministry-service, contributing what they can for the sake of others, how careful ought we to be with their make-up? Does one-size-fits-all work in *disciple-making*?

#4B MODEL FOR PEOPLE—1 TIMOTHY 4

Jesus emphasized again and again that neither His words nor His actions originated with Him; instead, He spoke and did according to what He received from the Father. He modeled His Father for His disciples, claiming, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus is “the exact representation,” the perfect earthly profile and image of His Father (Hebrews 1:3). He is God-like, just as we are supposed to be Christ-like. After developing and deepening relationship with people, *disciple-making* simply displays the heart and ways of God to them.

Acknowledge, as often as you can, that your natural reactions to things have been (or are being) replaced with *learned-from-Jesus* responses: putting others first, instead of yourself; forgiving to the extent you want to be forgiven; refusing to let fear, lust or pride hijack decisions; etc. Pass along appropriate lessons-learned, and convince them your spiritual *expertise* will advantage their life/ministry. Show them how Scripture informs and speaks to you, and use any challenge they face as an opportunity to tell your story of being helped/changed.

Your goal is to model the process of being renewed into the likeness to Christ—stretching from “You should have seen me before” to “Here’s what I’ve learned thus far.” At its core *disciple-making* isn’t about information you teach, but about transformation you exhibit. Effective *disciple-making* offers a progress report on your own life to people around you, and retraces the steps you took to get here. Because you present yourself as a work-in-process, people around you gain hope that they, too, can be reformed.

BIBLE STUDY FOR FURTHER INSIGHTS ABOUT ‘MODELING’ LIFE IN CHRIST

- Be ‘Exhibit A’ for the *counter-intuitive* ways and ministry patterns in the Kingdom of God. Live your life as openly as you want people to open theirs to you.
 - Exodus 25:9; 1 Chronicles 28:19 and Acts 7:44
 - Psalm 25:4-5 and Isaiah 55:8-9
 - Mark 8:27-35 and John 13:15
 - Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 and Hebrews 11

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- Speak *incarnated* words—testimonies and stories of God’s dealings with you that explain, inform or give guidance to them in similar situations.
 - John 1:14
 - Matthew 10:27
 - Philippians 3:1-14; 4:9-13 and 1 Timothy 1:12-17
 - James 5:7-11

 - Teach them to *apply* Scripture to themselves and others, looking for principles, truths and understandings for what is going on. Help them discover the power in God’s word.
 - Psalm 19:7-14 and Psalm 119 (especially vs. 98-105)
 - John 17:17
 - Romans 10:8-18
 - Colossians 1:3-8

 - *Build* them *up* with *authority* (spiritual expertise), increasing their spiritual girth and staying-power, strengthening their walk and adding to their ministry capability.
 - Romans 14:9 and 15:2
 - 1 Corinthians 14:3-5
 - 2 Corinthians 10:8-12 and 13:7-10
 - Ephesians 4:11-16

- As an editor not an author, celebrate God’s design/calling for their life—especially their *Spirit-giftedness*—and help them stay true to the original text God wrote.
 - 1 Corinthians 3:4-10 and 9:1-2, 16-23
 - 2 Corinthians 3:1-6
 - Colossians 1:24-29
 - 2 Timothy 4:1-8 and 2 Peter 1:12-15

#4C MAKE USE OF PEOPLE—ISAIAH 61 AND JOHN 17

[Psalm 105: 17, 26; Isaiah 6:8; Isaiah 19:20; Matthew 9:38; Luke 10:1-3; John 4:34-38; John 5:22-23; John 14:26; John 20:21; Acts 9:10-16; Acts 15:22-25; Romans 12:1-8; Philippians 2:19-25; 1 Timothy 1:12-17]

God sent Jesus to the world, and He sends the Spirit to ‘help’ us do what He has engaged us to do for Him. God does intervene sovereignly in the course of human history, but a close reading of the Bible reveals how much He favors using His children to do His work. We are the *sent ones*—equally bond-servants and children, called to do in His Name. Much of what happens on our spiritual journey is to make us “useful to the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21). Without this commissioning element, *disciple-making* is incomplete.

Engage people in serving the people/purposes of God, and send them to do unto others as they have been done-to. Like Paul, share ministry with those whom you bring with you, leave behind and send elsewhere. Believe in them more than they believe in themselves—and have ministry ambition for them that exceeds any ambition for yourself. Remember, though, that you cannot legitimately mobilize or deploy people until after you begin *getting to* and modeling for them.

Your goal is to enlist influenced-and-equipped-by-you people to retrieve (Jeremiah 16:16), repair (Isiah 61:4), and care for others (Isaiah 60:22). Like Jesus’ disciples, the people we send out almost always return with more questions about how things work in the Kingdom. Placing them in ministry settings for which they are not completely adequate brings them to their knees, and it also creates gratitude for the honor of being used. Eventually, shared ministry and mutual respect change the relationship from disciple to friend (John 15:15).

BIBLE STUDY FOR FURTHER INSIGHTS ABOUT ‘MODELING’ LIFE IN CHRIST

- Use *gotten-to*, *modeled-for* and *done-to* people to *get to*, *model for* and *do unto* others in increasing measure.
- Create *proximities* and *apprentices* to press people together in service. Without constant reminder, people tend to act more like molecules and solo-operators than like Christ-followers.

- Challenge any wrong thoughts/attitudes that begin to show up in the press of service. Keep leading them to repentance as they grow in ministry responsibility.
- Limit their span of care (i.e., the number of people they are spiritually responsible for), and reduce the number of assignments they carry.
- Celebrate people's suitability for ministry by linking who they are with aspects of what needs doing.
- Send people into more ministry than they, themselves, originate. In addition to giving them input and the benefit of your experience, also set them up with ministry opportunities that stem from your wider connections. [Romans 10:11-15; Philippians 2:19-30]

Grace and Spiritual Formation

Gary Matsdorf

OUTLINE

I. **Course Description:**

This is a study and discussion of Spiritual Formation, also known as Christian Spirituality. It explores the goal of Spiritual Formation, how it begins with an awareness of our brokenness, how it is developed in partnership with God, why it must be developed by walking in the Spirit through grace and not by “check list Christianity,” its relationship to trials and tribulations, the importance of loving others well (including family relationships) and of godly character, and resistance to Spiritual Formation.

II. **Course Objectives:**

- A. To define and understand Spiritual Formation
- B. To understand the relationship between Spiritual Formation and sanctification (wholeness)
- C. To understand the relationship between faith and our responsibilities and how Spiritual Formation is a partnership between God and believers
- D. To understand the relationship between Spiritual Formation and walking in the Spirit vs. “check list Christianity”
- E. To understand Spiritual Formation and trials and tribulations
- F. To define and understand the significance of loving others well as part of Spiritual Formation
- G. To define and understand the significance of the fruit of the Spirit as part of loving others well
- H. To understand the importance of Spiritual Formation and family relationships
- I. To understand the nature of resistance to Spiritual Formation

II. **Course Outline:**

- A. Introduction to Spiritual Formation.
 1. The goal (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:28)
 2. Spiritual Formation is the renewal of God’s image in Christ-followers (Colossians 3:10)
 - a. The foundation for Spiritual Formation is the new heart God gives believers at conversion (Ezekiel 36:26; Romans 2:29; Colossians 2:11)
 - b. This renewal includes an awareness of our brokenness (Romans 3:23; 7:24; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2)
 - c. God’s part in the Spiritual Formation process (Hebrews 10:10; Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 3:18)

- d. The believer's part in the Spiritual Formation process (Romans 6:13; Romans 12:1; 2 Peter 1:5-7)
- e. The place of community in Spiritual Formation (Hebrews 10:24; Proverbs 27:17)

B. Spiritual Formation and walking in the Spirit (Romans 8:1-17A).

1. Necessitates understanding “check-list Christianity,” characterized by fulfilling our responsibilities with wrong motives, with thinking such activities are “an end in themselves,” with the assumption that fulfilling our responsibilities excuses us from personal transformation of character and how we treat others and with a works’ righteousness approach.
2. Necessitates remembering the importance of living according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4) and having our minds set on what the Spirit desires (Romans 8:5).
3. Necessitates learning to pray a prayer of surrender, asking for the Spirit to work spiritual maturity in us.

C. Spiritual Formation and trials and tribulations (Romans 8:17B-39).

1. To be a disciple is to share in Christ's sufferings (Romans 8:17B).
2. We must remember that the Spirit is interceding for us toward spiritual maturity (Romans 8:26-27).
3. We must focus on God's five-fold commitment to us—He foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us and sees us as already glorified (Romans 8:29-30).
4. We must remember that nothing can separate us from **the love of Christ** and remember God's will for our lives...namely, that we be spiritually transformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29, 35).

D. Spiritual Formation and loving others well.

1. Disciples are to **walk in the way of love** (Ephesians 5:2). To do this we must develop an awareness of how we're treating others, of what is going on inside of us and of ways to examine how we behave “at home behind closed doors” and not just in public.
2. Such is sometimes termed, “Emotional Health.” Emotional Health is “loving others well because we know ourselves well” (Peter Scazzero).
3. Emotional Health recognizes and manages feelings and breaks from self-destructive patterns.
4. Emotional Health prioritizes healthy relationships.
5. Emotionally healthy disciples recognize and resist being compulsive, narcissistic, paranoid, codependent or passive-aggressive.

6. Loving others well includes knowing how to **serve one another humbly in love** (Galatians 5:13). **The fruit of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22-23) helps define how to fulfill Paul's command, especially relationally.

E. Spiritual Formation and family relationships.

1. Spiritual Formation involves walking in the way of love with our family.
2. Loving our family well is a result of being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
3. Spiritual maturity leads to mutual submission among family members, love and respect among spouses, and children who honor their parents (Ephesians 5:21-6:2).

F. Resistance to spiritual formation.

1. Disciples can self-resist becoming fully mature in Christ through spiritual apathy (1 Peter 4:7); through denial of personal brokenness (Mark 4:10-12); through failing to count themselves dead to sin (Romans 6:11); through lack of accountability to others for spiritual growth (Proverbs 27:17); etc.
2. There are also spiritual forces marshalled against Spiritual Formation—the sinful nature, the world, legalism, and the devil/demons.
3. Disciples who want to become fully mature in Christ must properly respond to each spiritual enemy by—
 - Counting themselves dead to sin if it's the sinful nature resisting (Romans 6:11)
 - Overcoming the world by believing Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 4:5) if it's the world resisting
 - Realizing they died to the law through the body of Christ (Romans 7:4) if it's legalism resisting
 - Resisting the devil (James 4:7) if it's the devil's schemes resisting
 - Rebuking demonic presence and influence (Luke 10:17-21) if it's demonic possession or influence resisting

Essential Course Bibliography—

McIntosh, Gary and Rima, Samuel, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership—Revised Edition*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2007.

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Grace and Spiritual Formation

Gary Matsdorf

INTRODUCTION and PURPOSE—

The purpose of this DLT module is to define Spiritual Formation and address key areas of understanding regarding this vital discipleship topic. It is our hope that those who process this material will allow Jesus to thoroughly work its truths into their “heads, hearts and hands.”

Spiritual Formation, also known as Christian Spirituality, relates to how we become **fully mature in Christ** (Colossians 1:28); for purposes of Foursquare’s DLT material, we can also refer to such a disciple as a “Four-Stage Person.”¹ “The saving work of the Holy Spirit in an individual does not end at conversion. The event is only the beginning of a process of transformation into Christ-likeness which extends throughout our days. We speak of this ongoing process as ‘sanctification’.”² “Christian formation does not imply that one is to flee this world to find God, but that one must find God and grow in grace in this world, even discovering avenues (such as Christian disciplines) in and through the physical realm for spiritual growth...it is not a human self-help program or a means to justifying ourselves (Gal. 2:15-21). It begins with rebirth and conversion followed by water baptism.”³

When discussing Spiritual Formation, we must remember that the entire process of spiritual growth assumes that an inner change has taken place through one being born-again.

Because Spiritual Formation is closely linked with sanctification, its end is “holiness or wholeness,” whereby “the human person is restored to what he or she was created to be...the recovery of wholeness—the integrity of our lives as they are being restored by the Spirit.”⁴ Therefore, the sanctification process is intended to transform every aspect of what makes us human—our thinking,⁵ emotions, dis-

¹ Please see “Four Stage Nations, Churches and Disciples/Leaders” in Addendum for an understanding of this term.

² Grenz, Stanley, *Theology for the Community of God*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000, pg. 440. Paul also terms the sanctification process that of **being saved** (1 Corinthians 1:18). “It is highly characteristic of Paul’s soteriology that he does not speak of ‘the saved’ but of those who are being saved. Salvation is not yet gained in its totality” (Hering quoted in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians—The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Thielson, Anthony, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000, pg. 156).

³ Okholm, Dennis, *Spirituality in Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Elwell, Walter (Editor), Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000 printing, pg. 746.

⁴ Okholm, *op. cit.*, pg. 747.

⁵ Paul speaks of this transformation of thinking in Romans 12:1-2 where “his meaning here would appear to be that believers are to allow their way of thinking to be renewed by the Spirit of God in the light of the gospel. This will mean the reversal

position, priorities, will, relationships, families, etc. It renews the image of God within us (Colossians 3:10), as we are gradually **being conformed to the image of His Son** (Romans 8:29). “In this world where believers groan inwardly as they await their adoption they may experience suffering and persecution, but God in his sovereign power makes even these things serve the end of their conformity to Christ...for believers to be conformed to the image of Christ will involve transformation (2 Corinthians 3:18).”⁶

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds and as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another remind us that sanctification happens in part in community.

The foundation of this transformation is a miracle that God performs in the human heart at conversion. As Ezekiel says, God removes a “**heart of stone**” and gives a “**heart of flesh**” (Ezekiel 36:26). Paul describes this same miracle with a different metaphor. He speaks of a **circumcision of the heart** (Romans 2:29), and notes it is a **circumcision not performed by human hands** (Colossians 2:11), meaning it is performed by God without human assistance. Though much personal growth is still needed after this initial miracle takes place, conversion brings a fundamental change of disposition toward God and His ways. Converts now love Him and desire to please Him. When discussing Spiritual Formation, we must remember, therefore, that the entire process of spiritual growth assumes that an inner change has taken place through one being born-again. Without this personal salvation and inner attitude change, the disciplines of Christian morality tend to produce legalism and pride rather than true Christlikeness.

Spiritual Formation includes an awareness of our brokenness⁷ (**all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God** [Romans 3:23]; and **what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?** [Romans 7:24]). There is also the example of brokenness within the Corinthian church as a whole which they unfortunately failed to recognize—it is actually reported that **there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man⁸ has his father’s wife. And you are proud!** [1 Corinthians 5:1-2, emphasis mine]).

of the effects of the fall that resulted in humanity being handed over by God to a ‘depraved mind’ (1:28)” (Colin Kruse, *Paul’s Letter To The Romans—The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2012, pg. 465). See also Titus 3:5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 355-356.

⁷ Integral to awareness of one’s brokenness is learning to hear and discern God’s voice as He notes aspects of our life that need attention, especially unhealthy areas of the heart (Proverbs 4:23) and unhealthy relational dynamics (Romans 12:10b). This brokenness may be so severe that it requires demonic deliverance and/or professional Christian therapy as part of one’s discipleship.

⁸ A believer in the Corinthian church.

Spiritual Formation develops as a partnership with God. “Sanctification is a work in which *God and man cooperate*, each playing distinct roles....in this we are not saying that we have equal roles in sanctification or that we both work in the same way, but simply that we cooperate with God in ways that are appropriate to our status as God’s creatures.”⁹

On God’s part, He has made us **holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all** (Hebrews 10:10); Christ alone earned our sanctification for us. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit then work within believers to supernaturally appropriate this provision (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Romans 15:16). **We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit** (2 Corinthians 3:18).

...live according to the Spirit...
references how we go about our life-style daily—a life-style that is to be within the realm of the Spirit, clearly recognizing that He is also its Source.

In noting our part in the process, Mullen reminds us that “faith is ‘the’ means of sanctifying grace,”¹⁰ but we do have responsibilities such as—**do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life** (Romans 6:13); **offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God** (Romans 12:1); **flee from sexual immorality** (1 Corinthians 6:18); **for this very reason make every effort¹¹ to add to your faith goodness...knowledge...self-control... godliness...love** (2 Peter 1:5-7).¹² There is also the role of Christian disciplines as mentioned above.¹³

⁹ Grudem, *op. cit.*, pg. 746. “The use of the passive imperative, ‘be transformed’ (Romans 12:2), suggests both that the transformation is effected by God, and that believers must cooperate in order that it take place” (Colin Kruse, *op. cit.*, pg. 464).

¹⁰ Mullen, Bradford, *Sanctification* in Elwell, *op. cit.*, pg. 712.

¹¹ **Make every effort** must not be confused with “works righteousness.” We are not “doing good to make ourselves righteous,” but rather responding to what Christ has given us in saving us (**for this very reason** [vv. 3-4]). “Growth in virtue is of utmost importance and deserves utmost effort” (Peter Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1990, pg. 179). Note also Paul’s similar exhortation to the Corinthians regarding separating themselves from anything that would make them morally unclean—**since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God** (2 Corinthians 7:1).

¹² Paul makes it clear in Romans 7 that in so fulfilling our responsibilities in the sanctification process, we will find a repeated clash between what we *want* to do and what we often find ourselves actually *doing*. In Galatians, he likens it to an internal war (Galatians 5:17). “On the one hand, we will never be able to say, ‘I am completely free from sin’...but on the other hand, a Christian should never say, ‘This sin has defeated me. I give up’” (Wayne Grudem, *op. cit.*, pg. 747).

¹³ This particular DLT session will not give instruction on the historic and important Christian disciplines, nor will it cover the important Spiritual Formation aspects of knowing one’s spiritual gifts, understanding one’s temperament and defining one’s ministry passion as part of becoming **fully mature in Christ**.

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24) and **as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another** (Proverbs 27:17) remind us that sanctification happens in part in community. “Today’s leaders...must be persons always willing to confess their own brokenness and ask for forgiveness from those to whom they minister. Christian leaders are called to live the Incarnation, that is, to live in...the corporate body of the community, and to discover there the presence of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Nouwen, Henri, *In the Name of Jesus*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, NY, 1989, pp. 64, 68.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- Define “spiritual formation” and what we mean in Foursquare by “a four-stage person.”

- Do you agree that identifying one’s brokenness is important to spiritual growth and transformation? Why or why not?

- The module states, “Spiritual formation develops as a partnership with God.” Discuss what this means and how you might explain it to a newer convert whom you’re discipling.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND WALKING IN THE SPIRIT—

Although Spiritual Formation involves partnering with God and fulfilling our responsibilities in the partnership, we must avoid what is sometimes termed “check list Christianity.” With “check list Christianity,” we participate in the disciplines/responsibilities—

- With wrong motives (such as impressing people or trying to satisfy one’s conscience).
- With the thinking that such activities are “an end in themselves” rather than means to the end of being fully mature in Christ. For example, we don’t read our Bible to check off “devotions done for the day,” but to encounter the living God behind the Bible and allow Him to use the Word to change us.¹⁵
- With the assumption that doing these activities excuses one from personal transformation of character, disposition and how we treat others.
- With a works’ righteousness approach, rather than a grace-based¹⁶ walk in the Spirit.

“I am Yours,
Lord. Reflect
Yourself in my
thoughts and
inner attitudes.”

All disciples are called to live a life cultivated and formed by the Spirit, so that all they are and do is from the overflow of that intimate and on-going relationship which manifests itself in power and in a practical presence in the world (especially relationally). “The Christian is learning Christlikeness by sharing Christ’s life in an organic way (John 15:1-17; 17:20-24).”¹⁷ Paul addresses this organic walking in the Spirit in Romans 8, saying that we are to **live according to the Spirit** (vs.

4). He is referencing how we go about our life-style daily—a life-style that is to be within the realm of the Spirit, clearly recognizing that He is also its Source.¹⁸ “It is clear that Paul conceives of the Spirit as a new indwelling power that manifests itself in conduct. The new life is the gift of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:25), and this life evidences itself in the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:20), which Paul interprets in terms of Christian virtues.”¹⁹ “The Christian is not a man who adds a number of good deeds to his life, he is a man who has received the gift of a new life which then grows and develops.”²⁰

¹⁵ These disciplines are not merely things to “do” but the call to “be” in the presence of God’s transformative love and grace.

¹⁶ Grace is best defined as the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ inexhaustibly meeting you at any point of need (John 1:16).

¹⁷ Okholm, *loc. cit.*,

¹⁸ At the risk of sounding overly basic, let’s remember that to walk in the Spirit is the same as to live in Christ Jesus. **Fixing our eyes on to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of faith** (Hebrews 12:2) is a reminder that we must never separate a walk in the Spirit from the Person of Jesus Christ, whose earthly life perfectly modeled this life-style for us.

¹⁹ Ladd, George, *A Theology of the New Testament—Revised Edition*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000 reprint, pg. 562.

²⁰ Lloyd-Jones, D.M., *Expository Sermons on 2 Peter*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA, 1999 reprint, pg. 229.

Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds²¹ set on what the Spirit desires (vs. 5) gives us a basic truth we must practice if we are going to **live in accordance with the Spirit** daily—namely, setting our attitudes in the direction of the Spirit...fully embracing His life and perspectives. This is not a static (positional) state like our justification, but rather a fluctuating condition. Having your mind set on what the Spirit desires comes through the study and meditation of His Word, through engaging the gifts (manifestations) of the Spirit, through prayer, and through accountability to others who are invited to speak into our lives. It is characterized by a humble heart as disciples come to Him and say—

“Our walk in the Spirit... includes trials and tribulations... one of God’s greatest tools in our discipleship journey.”

- *I am Yours, Lord. Reflect Yourself in my thoughts and inner attitudes. Help me to know Your Word and Your thoughts, that I might think like You think. Let me draw today on the powers of the new self within. Let me remember the truths I know, that I might practice them. Let me think and act like what I truly am—a child of God, whose life is hidden in Christ.*²²

Because having one’s mind set **on what the Spirit desires** can fluctuate, we must be aware of the fact that the opposite state is also possible in the life of a believer—**those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires** (vs. 5)—and ask for His help when we wander to this level.

²¹ Or **inner attitudes**.

²² Having a mind set on the Spirit is also affected in part by what one reads and listens to, by the people with whom one associates, by one’s life activities, and by what one loves and hates. “Hate is one of the most important aspects of being human. It is one of the most crucial ingredients of a good person’s character. *What we hate* says a lot about who we are, what we value, what we care about. And *how we hate* says much about how we will succeed as leaders...you can tell a lot about people by what they love...likewise, we can know a lot about people by what they hate...*character is in part formed by what we hate, because we move to be different from whatever that is*” (Henry Cloud, *9 Things A Leader Must Do*, Integrity Publishers, Franklin, TN, 2006, pp. 75-77).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- Discuss the concept of “check list Christianity”? Have you seen it or perhaps even participated in it?

- What does Paul fundamentally mean when he says we are to “live according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4)? Discuss what this means practically in your life, and how you might disciple someone to “live according to the Spirit.”

- What role does having our “mind set on what the Spirit desires” (Romans 8:5) play in our “liv[ing] according to the Spirit”?

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS—

Paul states in Romans 8:18-39 that this walk in the Spirit...this pathway to Spiritual Formation...includes trials and tribulations...one of God's greatest tools in our discipleship journey—**we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory** (Romans 8:17b). “In a sense, what Paul is saying in vv. 18-30 is that the Christian must go the way of his Lord.”²³ Again, it's how disciples are in part matured.

But how do we process these struggles and not become unduly discouraged or bitter? Paul begins by noting that “the present and visible can be understood only in the light of the future and invisible”²⁴—**I consider that our present sufferings²⁵ are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us** (vs. 18). Furthermore, we are reminded that in this process of Spiritual Formation through **present sufferings...the Spirit helps²⁶ us in our weakness** (vs. 26). **The Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans²⁷** (vs. 26). He gives us this needed aid to see us through sufferings because **we do not know what we ought to pray for** (vs. 26). “Paul is referring to the fact that we who are Christians are not the spiritual giants we would like to be (and sometimes imagine we are). We are weak, and left to ourselves we will always be in trouble.”²⁸

During times of suffering we not only have the Spirit interceding for us, but we have God's plan and purpose working on our behalf.

What makes His interceding both different and effective? **The Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God** (vs. 27). “The Spirit's groan is a highly successful one...He groans according to the will of God. This puts us ‘right on target.’ He moves us in the direction of glory. We are not headed only for suffering; we are being led on to glory through the suffering!”²⁹

²³ Moo, Douglas, *The Epistle to the Romans—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996, pg. 509.

²⁴ Leenhardt quoted in Moo, *op. cit.*, pg. 511.

²⁵ **Sufferings** “are not only those ‘trials’ that are endured directly because of confession of Christ (persecution), but encompass the whole gamut of suffering, including things such as illness, bereavement, hunger, financial reverses, and death itself” (Douglas Moo, *op. cit.*, pg. 511). See also 2 Corinthians 4:17.

²⁶ **Helps** connotes the idea of helping carry the load imposed by our limited ability to pray.

²⁷ **Wordless groans** has been variously interpreted throughout Church history; regardless of how it is interpreted, the metaphor's intent is clear—just as **the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time...[and] we ourselves groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption** (Romans 8:22-23), so also **the Spirit** is involved in this groaning, as He intercedes **with wordless groans**.

²⁸ Morris, Leon, *The Epistle To The Romans—The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988, pg. 326.

²⁹ Pickerill, Donald, *The Reign of Grace*, unpublished manuscript, New Hope Christian College, Eugene, OR, 2003 edition, pg. 100. “There is also, Paul asserts in these verses, an intercessor ‘in the heart,’ the Spirit of God, who effectively prays to the Father on our behalf throughout the difficulties and uncertainties of our lives here on earth” (Douglas Moo, *op. cit.*, pg. 527).

Spiritual Formation must include addressing our emotional health.

Vv. 28-30 are continuative, showing that during our time of suffering we not only have the Spirit interceding for us, but we have God's plan and purpose working on our behalf—we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called³⁰ according to His purpose (vs. 28). All things is generic, referencing anything that happens in our life. The good is best understood as “redemptive good,” that is, our further maturation as God uses sufferings to conform us to the image of His Son (vs. 29).

As the Author of our salvation, the depth of God's purpose for believers is then reiterated; Paul describes His commitment to us and His process of working in all things using five important verbs—foreknew...predestined...called...justified...glorified (vv. 29-30).

- *Foreknowledge is simply the design of the eternalness of God's plan. The fact that God has foreknowledge means that He knows everything and He has a plan...predestination means that God guarantees the plan. He not only knows the eternal purpose, but He guarantees that it is carried out...called...God's call in our lives is the temporal execution of the eternal plan...hence, the call is basically the definition of our condition as God currently sees us...we are saints (holy ones) in virtue of our call...justification basically means that God wants to reverse everything that is against us. It means that we stand in a right relationship with God. We have been made accepted in the Beloved. We are acquitted...and glorification. The most interesting aspect about glorification in this passage is that the Greek verb is in the past tense. He glorified us. Why the past tense? The answer is simple—God is eternal; there is no beginning or end with Him. He is Alpha and Omega. We pass through these various stages in our experience, but in God's sight all is complete. We are already as it were glorified in His mind.³¹*

Then (vs. 31) indicates Paul is drawing a conclusion, a conclusion most scholars feel summarizes the entire epistle to this point. And what is his conclusion? **If³² God is for us, who can be against us?**³³ (vs. 32). The implied answer to this rhetorical question is, “No one or no thing.”³⁴ This confidence includes the assurance that nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ (vs. 35) and that in all

³⁰ That is, born again.

³¹ Pickerill, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

³² If translates the Greek, *ei*. “The *ei* here states what Paul is altogether convinced is a fact as the ground of the confidence expressed in the following rhetorical question” (C.E.B. Cranfield, *op. cit.*, pg. 435).

³³ That is **against us** with any degree of success in terms of thwarting our salvation or God's ultimate purpose for our lives. See also vs. 33.

³⁴ This is the intent behind the list of specifics in vv. 35-39.

these things³⁵ we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (vs. 37). “Nothing in the course of time, nor in the expanses of space, nothing in the whole universe can sever the children of God from their Father’s love, secured to them in Christ”³⁶

³⁵ All these sufferings and distresses.

³⁶ Bruce, F. F., *Romans—Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2008 reprint, pp. 169, 171.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- What is the purpose of trials and tribulations in Spiritual Formation? Talk about how this purpose has worked in your life and how you'd disciple someone so that the trials produce growth and not bitterness.

- Why is the Spirit's intercession for us successful? Have you ever experienced Him interceding in your life through "wordless groans"? If so, describe the experience.

- Review the theological definitions of "foreknew...predestined...called...justified... [and] glorified" as defined by Pickerill. What is Paul's intent in listing these five verbs? Talk about how you've experienced this purpose in your journey of Spiritual Formation.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND LOVING OTHERS WELL—

Paul notes that we are to **walk in the way of love** (Ephesians 5:2). It is a further elaboration of Jesus' statement, "**Love your neighbor as yourself**" (Matthew 22:39). One aspect of Spiritual Formation, then, is developing an awareness of how we as individuals are impacting those around us; how we are treating people in our lives. Are we cooperating with the Holy Spirit as He develops **love...patience, kindness, goodness...gentleness** (Galatians 5:22-23) in us toward others...and then practicing such? This cooperation with the Spirit, so as to best **walk in the way of love**, involves several factors, one of which is an awareness of what is going on "inside of us...especially at home behind closed doors." This is often referred to as monitoring one's *Emotional Health*.³⁷

Spiritual Formation MUST include addressing our emotional health. We must develop self-awareness of where we are unhealthy in our thinking about others, in how we respond to them, and in how we treat them.³⁸ Then, we must wed the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the practice of historic Christian disciplines and contemplative spirituality with seeking needed help and accountability for dealing with the unhealthy aspects we see in ourselves.³⁹ Disciples cannot ignore what is going on inside them or "behind closed doors," while presenting a certain public image. If we do, we will never be **fully mature in Christ**.

- *Pretending was safer than honesty and vulnerability. The reality was that my discipleship and spirituality had not touched a number of deep internal wounds and sin patterns—especially those ugly ones that emerged behind the closed doors of our home during trials, disagreements, conflicts and setbacks.*⁴⁰

In their book, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership*, Gary McIntosh and Samuel Rima remind us that even as Christians our "dark side" occasionally manifests and has a negative impact on people in

³⁷ American pastor Peter Scazzero defines emotional health as primarily "loving others well" because we know ourselves well. It concerns itself with such things as "naming, recognizing and managing our own feelings; initiating and maintaining close and meaningful relationships; breaking free from self-destructive patterns; and accurately self-assessing our strengths, limits and weaknesses and freely sharing them with others...it [also] impacts our image of God, our hearing of God's voice and our discernment of his will" (Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality—Updated Edition*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2017, pg. 212).

³⁸ "Self-awareness—knowing what is going on inside of us—is indispensable to emotional health and loving well" (Peter Scazzero, *ibid.*, pg. 215).

³⁹ Contemplative spirituality focuses on classic practices and concerns such things as "awakening and surrendering to God's love in any and every situation; positioning ourselves to hear God and remember his presence in all we do; communing daily with God; practicing silence, solitude, and a life of unceasing prayer; finding the true essence of who we are in God; loving others out of a life of love for God; and living in committed community that passionately loves Jesus above all else" (Peter Scazzero, *ibid.*, pp. 212-213).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 12.

An interesting dynamic of the fruit of the Spirit is how several of the fruit are relationally defined, articulating how we in part fulfill Paul's earlier command to **serve one another humbly in love.**

our lives. "The 'dark side' refers to our inner urges, compulsions, motivations, and dysfunctions of our personality that often go unexamined or remain unknown to us until we experience an emotional explosion...or some other significant problem that causes us to search for a reason why."⁴¹ They go on to describe five "dark side personalities"⁴² which often emerge in all Christians during our lifetime and affect how we treat others—

- **THE COMPULSIVE PERSONALITY**—persons with a need to maintain absolute order. They are highly controlling people and must control others. They are extreme perfectionists who tend to be hard on themselves, pursue excellence to an extreme and are constantly seeking approval. We see aspects of this in Moses (Exodus 18).
- **THE NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY**—persons for whom the world revolves on the axis of self. They are self-absorbed, are often given to grandiose fantasies and are driven by an over-dependence on acclaim. They use others to advance their goals or to feel good about themselves. They feel they're indispensable and are given to denial and self-justification. We see aspects of this in King Solomon (Ecclesiastes 2:4-10).
- **THE PARANOID PERSONALITY**—persons who are desperately afraid of anything or anyone and are pathologically jealous of other gifted people. They micromanage, limit people's autonomy, are suspicious, hostile and fearful, are driven by insecurity and limit "letting others in." We see aspects of this in King Saul (1 Samuel 18).
- **THE CODEPENDENT PERSONALITY**—persons whose emotional, psychological and behavioral condition is unhealthy as the result of prolonged exposure to and/or practice of oppressive rules. They cannot express feelings well and tend to react rather than initiate. They are given to self-destructive behavior, have a deep need to please others, cover-up the bad behavior of others and often have repressed anger and frustration. We see aspects of this in Samson (Judges 14:1-4; 15:1-8; 16:1-20).
- **THE PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE PERSONALITY**—persons with a tendency to resist demand to adequately perform tasks. They are given to procrastination and dawdling, and are stubborn, forgetful and intentionally inefficient. They usually display patterns of erratic emotional behavior, are complainers and are given to anger and bitterness. We see aspects of this in Jonah (Jonah 4).

⁴¹ McIntosh, Gary and Rima, Sr., Samuel, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership—Revised Edition*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2007, pg. 28.

⁴² These exemplify aspects of the maladjusted personalities that Paul addresses in Colossians 2:16-23—**those who delight in false humility...[whose] unspiritual minds puff them up with idle notions.**

In Galatians 5, Paul lists **the acts of the sinful nature** with several examples that show how the sinful nature can manifest itself (vv. 19-21). Such acts harm those around us, much like the negative personalities listed above. He then contrasts such negativity with **the fruit of the Spirit**, another list that examples what the Holy Spirit produces in Christ-followers as part of the Spiritual Formation process.⁴³ An interesting dynamic of the fruit of the Spirit is how several of the fruit are relationally defined, articulating how we in part fulfill Paul's earlier command to **serve one another humbly in love** (Galatians 5:13).⁴⁴

“Such lists as the fruit of the Spirit...explain how the new life in Christ is to express itself...the new life is the gift of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:25), and this life evidences itself in the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:20), which Paul interprets in terms of Christian virtues.”⁴⁵ Though not intended to be exhaustive in defining godly character,⁴⁶ Paul's list in Galatians 5:22-23 summarizes Jesus-like character (what it looks like to be **fully mature in Christ**).

- **Love** (Greek, *agape*)—“*Agape* denotes an undefeatable benevolence and unconquerable goodwill that always seeks the highest good of the other person, no matter what he/she does. It is the self-giving love that gives freely without asking anything in return, and does not consider the worth of its object.”⁴⁷
- **Joy**—joy is found only in relationship with Jesus (Romans 5:11) and is the assurance that we are members of God's family regardless of what life brings (Luke 10:17-20; Romans 8:38-39). It is the ever-deepening awareness that our lives are hidden in Christ and that we can be led by God's Spirit through anything.
- **Peace**—peace references personal wholeness and beneficial relationships. It has its roots in the Old Testament concept of *shalom*—well-being in all areas of life. “Peace is a state of rest, quietness, and calmness; an absence of strife; tranquility. It generally denotes a perfect well-being... harmonious relationships between God and men and men and men.”⁴⁸

⁴³ The fruit contrasts with the toxic attitudes of the sinful nature and human ego (being spiritually, relationally and emotionally immature) that form barriers to healthy relationships. It is interesting to note that in Galatians, Paul lists three barriers to dynamic relationships, to loving others well—the *external* barrier of people's false opinions and advice (Galatians 5:7-9); the *internal* barrier of egocentricity (Galatians 5:19-21); and the *emotional* barrier of discouragement brought on by trying to get along with difficult, toxic people (Galatians 6:9-10).

⁴⁴ **To serve one another humbly in love** is conceptually synonymous with **walk in the way of love** in Ephesians.

⁴⁵ Ladd, *op. cit.*, pp. 556, 562.

⁴⁶ See for example Matthew 5; Romans 12:9-21; Ephesians 4:25-6:9, et al.

⁴⁷ Mills, Dick, in *Spirit Filled Life Bible*, Hayford, Jack (General Editor), Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1991, pg. 1694.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 1510.

- **Patience**—related to the Hebrew word for grace, steadfast or covenant love and lovingkindness, patience here refers to exercising as much grace toward people as God exercises toward us. It is closely related to *agape*, for **love is patient** (1 Corinthians 13:4). “The word denotes lenience, forbearance, fortitude, patient endurance, longsuffering...the ability to endure persecution and ill-treatment. It describes a person who has the power to exercise revenge but instead exercises restraint.”⁴⁹
- **Kindness**—kindness references acting with godly graciousness toward others, even if we are inclined to do otherwise. It describes someone with a gentle disposition and a benevolent attitude; someone from whom the Holy Spirit has removed abrasive attitudes.
- **Goodness**—the opposite of envy, goodness is the trait of demonstrating acts of generosity towards others; of giving both verbal and practical affirmation. It describes “a bountiful propensity both to will and to do what is good,”⁵⁰ even as God demonstrates toward us.
- **Faithfulness**—faithfulness refers to a person who is steadfast and trustworthy. It focuses on one’s reliability—a reliability modeled after God’s.

It is of paramount importance that we remember that God’s call to walk in the way of love begins in the home.

- **Gentleness**—gentleness references a disposition that is balanced, tranquil, considerate, unpretentious and has its passions under control. “The person who possesses this quality pardons injuries, corrects faults, and rules his own spirit well.”⁵¹
- **Self-control**—self-control references being able to morally restrain oneself when tempted by evil and being able to voluntarily abstain from anything which might hinder experiencing God’s purposes in life or bring destructive harm to another.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 1878.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 1713.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 1847.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- How would you summarize the above section of this module?
- What is the core definition of “emotional health” as defined in the module? Do you agree that it is vital to “walk[ing] in the way of love?” Why or why not?
- What do McIntosh and Rima mean by “our dark side”? Is this applicable even to Christians? IF you have the freedom, talk about how you’ve dealt with aspects of your personal dark side in your journey of Spiritual Formation.
- Which of the five “dark side personalities” do you find it most difficult to interact with (work for/minister with/ live with) and why?
- Choose one or two of the fruit of the Spirit and talk about how you’ve seen Jesus develop this fruit in your life.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS—

As obvious as it may seem to many, it is of paramount importance that we remember that God's call to **walk in the way of love** begins in the home. The home is a sort of "proving ground" of our maturity in Christ.⁵² Fully mature disciples must have the respect of their family and treat family members in such a way as to be above reproach at home. This maturity at home is one of the results of being **filled with the Spirit** (Ephesians 5:18), and why the often referenced "household relationships" in Ephesians⁵³ are so important—**submit to one another out of reverence for Christ** (5:21); **the wife must respect her husband** (5:33); **husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her** (5:25); and **children, obey your parents... "Honor your father and mother"** (6:1-2).

The forces of evil do not want Christ-followers fully mature in Christ.

The fact that Paul begins the household relationships section of Ephesians 5 with his exhortation to everyone to **submit to one another out of reverence for Christ** (vs. 21) "is a reminder that, whatever roles are appropriate because of the structures imposed by the household, there remains the overarching demand that in all lowliness and meekness with patience believers should bear with one another in love (4:2)."⁵⁴

⁵² This is Paul's intent behind one of his qualifications of a Christian leader—**if anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?** (1 Timothy 3:5).

⁵³ Note also Paul's parallel statements in Colossians.

⁵⁴ Lincoln, Andrew, *Ephesians—Word Biblical Commentary*, Word Books, Publisher, Dallas, TX, 1990, pg. 385.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- Chose the “household relationships” listed above that applies/apply to you and discuss how the Spirit has developed this in you as part of your Spiritual Formation.

RESISTANCE TO SPIRITUAL FORMATION—

The forces of evil do not want Christ-followers **fully mature in Christ**. They resist the development of Four-Stage people. “For those who take the task of Spiritual Formation seriously...spiritual attacks are inevitable. It becomes not a question of *if* we will face spiritual attacks but a question of *when* and *how*.”⁵⁵ Jesus noted this in the Parable of the Soils (Matthew 13:1-23), and the New Testament is replete with examples and explanation.⁵⁶

Resistance to Spiritual Formation is on two fronts—**1)** one’s personal resistance as a Christ-follower to becoming **fully mature in Christ**, and **2)** resistance from “spiritual warfare forces” which are relentlessly opposing disciples. Regarding personal resistance, it can come in the form of spiritual apathy (1 Peter 4:7); of denial that you’re broken and in need of transformation (Mark 4:10-12); of failing to **count [yourself] dead to sin** (Romans 6:11); of not seeking input and accountability of others for spiritual growth (Proverbs 27:17); etc.

With reference to spiritual warfare forces that oppose a disciple’s growth, spiritual warfare refers to the struggle with four primary enemies—**1)** the sinful nature/flesh; **2)** the world’s systems; **3)** legalism;⁵⁷ and **4)** the devil/demons. As part of their discipleship, disciples must learn how to discern which of these identified enemies...or a combination thereof...they are facing at any given time; this is paramount because overcoming these forces varies from **counting yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus** (Romans 6:11) if it is one’s sinful nature/flesh...to **[overcoming] the world [by believing] that Jesus is the Son of God** (1 John 4:5) if it is the lure of the world’s systems...to knowing that **you also died to the law through the body of Christ** (Romans 7:4) if it is legalism...to the call to **resist the devil** (James 4:7)⁵⁸ if it’s a satanic scheme...to rebuking demonic presence and influence (Luke 10:17-21) if it is direct demonic opposition. Regarding the latter two, White notes—

- *This level of spiritual warfare manifests as the tempting and trying, the taunting and haunting of kingdom servants. This involves both direct and indirect spiritual warfare. The direct warfare is precisely what Paul describes so vividly in Ephesians 6 with the imagery of “flaming arrows”. Direct warfare can also involve the tangible presence of a demonic spirit assigned to carry out “influence” or “oppression” against a believer—an alien pressure that makes the normal challenges of life more*

⁵⁵ Friesen, Aaron, *Spiritual Warfare in NHCC Spiritual Formation Cohort*, unpublished Course Syllabus, New Hope Christian College, Eugene, OR, 2011.

⁵⁶ The correlation between spiritual warfare and Spiritual Formation is also clearly stated in Judges 3:1—**these are the nations the Lord left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan**.

⁵⁷ Legalism is a term coined by theologians to define what the Bible terms, **living under law** (Romans 6:14).

⁵⁸ This includes the proactive putting on of the armor of God described in Ephesians 6.

*difficult than they should be. Indirect warfare is dealing with Satan's strategy to undermine values, promote godless ideologies and moral decay—anything that pollutes human minds and perverts their will.*⁵⁹

⁵⁹ White, Thomas, *The Believer's Guide To Spiritual Warfare—Revised Edition*, Chosen Books, Bloomington, MN, 2011, pp. 38-39.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- On what two fronts will we encounter resistance to Spiritual Formation?
- What are our four primary enemies listed above? Which have you personally found to cause you the most resistance?
- According to the module, what is vital if we are to effectively counter enemies of our Spiritual Formation?
- Discuss White's quote. Which have you personally encountered the most...direct or indirect spiritual warfare?

CONCLUSION—

The purpose of this module is ultimately experiential. We want this material to be personally and prayerfully processed by individuals studying it, so that it leads to further Christ-like maturity in their lives. We also hope that it will be used to disciple one another, as each disciple engages in disciple-making.

ADDENDUM—FOUR STAGE NATIONS, CHURCHES, AND DISCIPLES/LEADERS—

In the 1980s, Foursquare Missions International (United States) gave definition to elements of the Great Commission *at the National Church level* through of a Four Stage National Church Development process, which was also visually depicted through a “wheel” (see below). “Each stage in the cycle has the goal of reproducing what is infinitely reproducible.”⁶⁰

- **Stage 1—Initiate**—to make **responsible, reproducing disciples**...and begin a local fellowship of believers; **Stage 2—Nurture**—to make **responsible, reproducing leaders**...of godly character...who mentor...and become leaders of leaders; **Stage 3—Expand**—to make **responsible, reproducing congregations** who multiply culturally appropriate churches that together become a regional or national church movement; and **Stage 4—Send**—to make **responsible, reproducing missionary-sending national churches** who make disciples of the nations.⁶¹

In order to have a healthy Four Stage National Church, you must first develop individual “**Four Stage Churches**” that **1)** communicate the gospel to people who are without Christ and after they’re born again intentionally disciple them from converts to fully devoted Christ-followers; **2)** make responsible reproducing leaders who are trained and mentored into reflecting godly character and sound theology and are released to minister; **3)** send out trained leaders to plant responsible reproducing congregations; and **4)** develop and network in sending responsible reproducing leaders (missionaries) across cultures to open countries/people groups/cities.

BUT even more fundamental is the fact that “**Four Stage Churches**” are planted and led by “**Four Stage Disciples/Leaders**”; therefore, *every local church leadership team* must train and release disciples/leaders—**1)** who value evangelism and discipleship, are committed to God’s mission, live an intentionally missional life and multiply healthy-reproducible disciples; **2)** who are committed to personally knowing Jesus passionately and to personal growth in the Lord (being life-longer learners; being

⁶⁰ Amstutz, *op. cit.*, pg. 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-33.

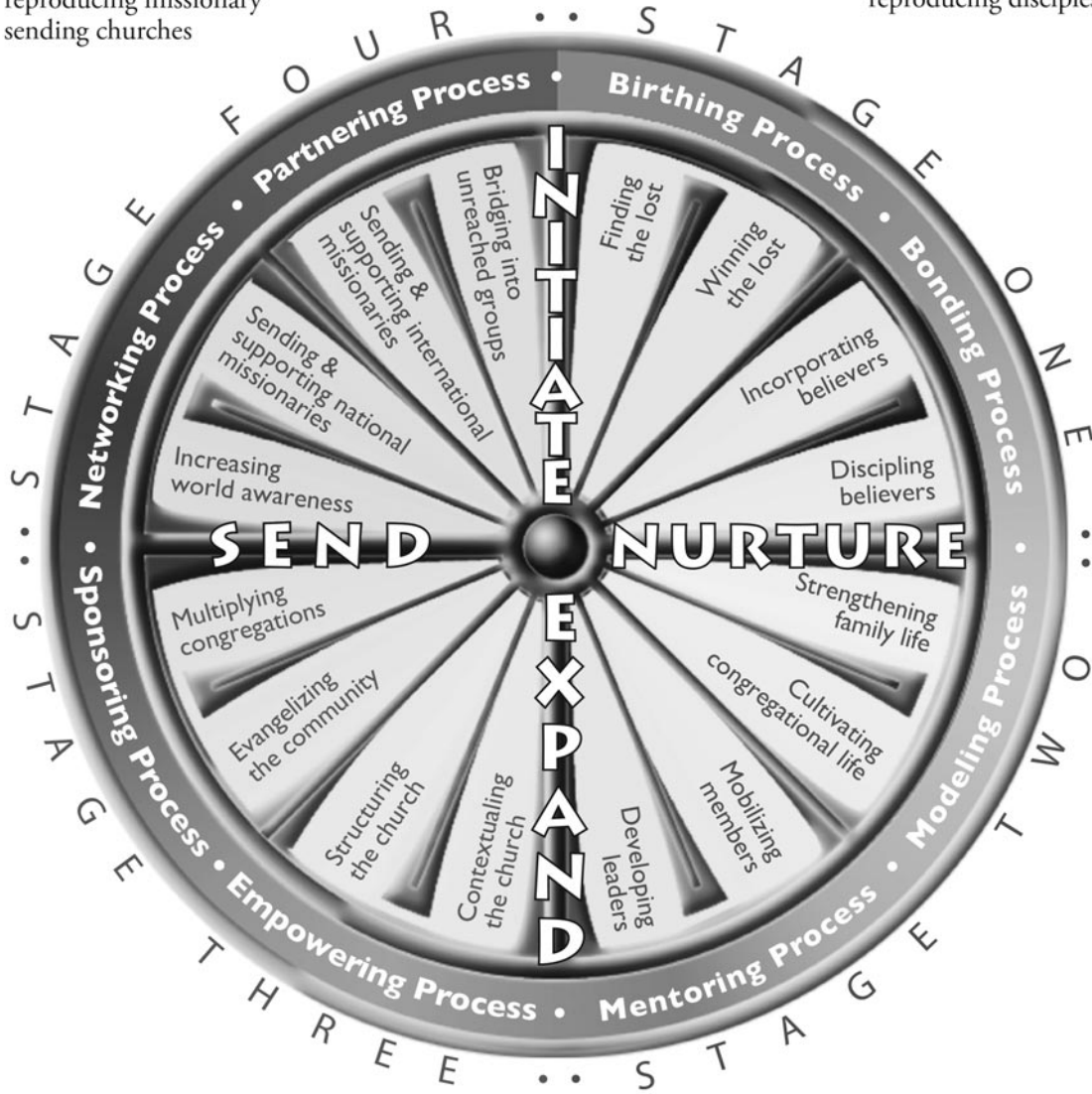
committed to God's life and to being Spirit-filled and moving in kingdom ministry; being healthy in their personal life, their family and their relationships; displaying the fruit of the Spirit, etc.); **3)** who serve the Lord according to their gifting and calling; and value the local church as a community of faith and mission and **4)** who influence others for Christ (committed to the Great Commission) and who value training and releasing (sending) the next generation of leaders and planting viable indigenous churches.⁶²

⁶² See Scott, James, *Towards Intentional Discipleship*, unpublished manuscript presented to the Eastern Council of Foursquare Churches, Perth, Australia, October 2016, who terms intentional discipleship, "A way of thinking about discipleship as 'Personal Formation,' 'Life-Skill Formation,' and 'Ministry Formation' through coaching and mentoring."

National Church Development – Four Stages

Stage 4 - Send - extending
 Goal: to make responsible, reproducing missionary sending churches

Stage 1 - Intitiate - evangelizing
 Goal: to make responsible, reproducing disciples



Stage 3 - Expand - multiplying
 Goal: to make responsible, reproducing congregations

Stage 2 - Nurture - strengthening
 Goal: to make responsible, reproducing leaders

Family

Kim Cecil, Roger Gbelia, Jim Haw, Chrishani Hulugalle, Cletus Orgu, Obed Sanabria Jaimes, Gary Matsdorf, and Jeremy Wallace

I. Course Description:

This is a study and discussion of the nature and the purpose of the family. It will show how family and marriage are earthly representations of the relationships between God the Father and His children, and between Christ and the Church. It will detail God’s design for marriage, and present the biblical understanding of husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, and children within the family unit, while at the same time upholding and affirming the value of singlehood. It will also touch on the devastating impact the Fall and the forces of evil have had on the family and how the Church should respond. Finally, this study will offer guidance for disciples trying to balance their family lives and their work.

II. Course Objectives:

- A. To understand the family from a biblical and theological perspective.
- B. To understand the biblical definition and basis of marriage.
- C. To understand the biblical view of “the family of God” (the Church).
- D. To understand the biblical view of singlehood.
- E. To understand the biblical instructions for husbands and fathers.
- F. To understand the biblical instructions for wives and mothers.
- G. To understand the biblical instructions for children.
- H. To address the consequences of the Fall as they impact families and how salvation aims to restore these fractures.
- I. To provide perspective for balancing family life and career.

III. Course Outline:

- **A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY—**
- God, the Creator of heaven and earth, completed the creation events with His ultimate creation—two human beings (Genesis 1:27), both of whom were created **in the image of God** (Genesis 1:27).¹ Adam’s ecstatic poetic response to Eve’s creation

¹ Although both Adam and Eve individually embodied the image of God, Genesis 1:27 states, **male and female He created them**. This references the fact that it is in community that we experience and reflect God’s image in greater fullness, and one such community is the family, especially the inter-action between a husband and wife (Genesis 2:18).

(Genesis 2:23), affirms that Eve is actually part of him and together “they share the entire spectrum of human characteristics, from strong to weak”² and that “man and woman [are] on equal footing as regard their humanity.”³ This “entire spectrum” and “equal footing” should be reflected in the family.

- Although God is unique in many ways and any analogies with reference to Him have definite limits, the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Trinity) model healthy family relationships. Thus, God’s intention for the family includes what we see modeled between members of the Trinity, namely, self-sacrificing love, unity, equality, harmony, and mutual submission and respect.
- The first human family—Adam, Eve and their children—were a prototype of God’s pattern to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 2:18-25; 4:1-2).⁴ Hence, a significant ongoing aspect of this initial pattern is one man and one woman in covenant relationship (marriage) producing children.
- Through the first human family, all humans find their origin (Genesis 3: 20). Note also Ephesians 3:14-15—**for this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.**
- Historically, Christians have defined “family” in terms of “immediate family” (husband, father, wife, mother, and children) and “extended family” (one’s **relatives** or **household** [I Timothy 5:8])⁵. In many of today’s cultures, Christians generally embrace a broader definition of “family” to include not only that noted above, but single-parent families, blended families, families by adoption or “foster parenting.” “A family is a group of people linked by a relationship. The quality of this relationship determines the quality of the family.”⁶

² Jewett, Paul, *Who We Are: Our Dignity As Human*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996, pg. 180.

³ Wenham, Victor, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1991 reprint, pg. 70.

⁴ “God’s plan for humanity unfolded with Adam and Eve responding to God’s directive to ‘be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it’ (Genesis 1:28). Composed of husband, wife and then children, this first family became a prototype for future family relationships” (Diane Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness*, IVP Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2014, pg. 108).

⁵ See also **clan** (Joshua 13:15) or **tribe** (Joshua 21:4). Similarly, there are two main Greek words used in the New Testament which can refer to *family*. “The first is *patria*, which signifies family from the perspective of historical descent, i.e., its lineage...the second word, *oikos* (plural *oikia*), is much more common and signifies family as household...in the Greco-Roman world, the *oikos* (Latin, *familia*) was a comparable social unit to the Israelite *bêt ‘ab* [Father’s house]” (C.J.H. Wright, “Family” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary—Volume 2*, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1992, pg. 768).

⁶ Sanabria Jaimes, Obed, *Hogar, Un lugar para amar*, Publicaciones Kerigma, Bucaramanga, Colombia, 2018. “Today, not all ‘families’ have a father, mother and children. Some families do not have a parent present and grandparents raise the children. In other families, there is only one parent present or there aren’t any children at all. Also, in many cultures today, functions historically performed by the family (education, religious training, socialization, etc.) are in most cases now performed by specialized institutions, the State and social media” (Obed Sanabria Jaimes).

- Christian families are to be centered around the Lord and a love for Him. **Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain** (Psalm 127:1).⁷
- The family is an important element in God’s story of salvation; examples include God sparing the human race through Noah and his family (Genesis 7:1); God promising to bless **all peoples on earth** through Abraham’s family (Genesis 12:1-3); God promising an eternal kingdom and everlasting Ruler through David’s family (2 Samuel 7); and God establishing a new covenant people through **adoption to sonship**, all of whom know Him as, **“Abba, Father”** (Romans 8:15).
- One effect of the Fall upon humans was fractures in the family. These fractures in families show up in part in “blame-shifting” (Genesis 3:12); in husbands and wives attempting to dominate and usurp authority, rather than maintaining equality and mutual respect (Genesis 3:16);⁸ and in anger and malice among siblings (Genesis 4:6-8).⁹
- God’s plan of salvation offers to restore these fractures (Ephesians 5:21-6:4). The divine design of the family provides a setting within which one may encounter God’s heart and undergo personal and character formation.¹⁰
- The Church and its relationships are spoken of in family terms—**you are no longer slaves, but God’s children** (Galatians 6:7); **Paul to Timothy, my true son in the faith** (1 Timothy 1:2); **I urge you, brothers and sisters** (Romans 12:1). Christ-

⁷ “In its immediate context in Psalm 127, *house* in v. 1 most likely refers to the Jerusalem temple...but the polyvalent nature of ‘house’ in the Hebrew Bible allows for a wide-ranging understanding of the words of v. 1” including a reference to families (Nancy de Claisse-Walford, et al, *The Book of Psalms—The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, deClaisse-Walford, Nancy, Jacobson, Rolf and LaNeel Tanner, Beth, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, MI, 2014, pg. 918).

⁸ **“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”** (Genesis 3:16B) is exegetically difficult, but likely references the fracture of co-equality in God’s original design of marriage. “This consequence of the Fall deals with a marriage relationship that will go askew: the woman shall desire her husband but he shall lord it over her...the desire of the woman for her husband is akin to the desire of sin that lies posed ready to leap at Cain. It means a desire to break the relationship of equality and turn it into a relationship of servitude and domination. The sinful husband will try to be a tyrant over his wife. Far from being a reign of co-equals over the remainder of God’s creation, the relationship now becomes a fierce dispute, with each party trying to rule the other. The two who once reigned as one attempt to rule each other” (Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17—The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1990, pp. 201-202). “The Fall brought dire consequences to the couple’s relationship, resulting in parts of today’s world in a ‘machismo’ attitude among men and a ‘feminist’ attitude among women, both of which are contrary to God’s plan” (Obad Sanabria Jaimes).

⁹ See Addendum for additional specifics with regard to the impact of the Fall on families.

¹⁰ “God’s intention was clear. The family was to be an incubator of godly love and the primary conduit for Christian formation” (Diane Chandler, *loc. cit.*). “In the New Testament, Paul has much to say about family life. He stresses the need of bringing all family relationships under the principle of Christian love” (Steven Barabas, *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1967, pg. 276). Additional specifics of how God restores these fractures through relationship with Christ are addressed below under **Husbands and Fathers, Wives and Mothers** and **Children**.

followers, therefore, are to intimately connect to their “spiritual family” (1 Corinthians 12:12-26); it is also important to recognize that for some believers “the family of God” is their most significant family unit (see Mark 3:31-34).¹¹

¹¹ Some see the place of Christian family implied in Psalm 68:6, **God sets the lonely in families.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- Take time to read Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-25 and write down what the Holy Spirit shows you or emphasizes to you. Take time to share with the group what you observed.

- Why do you personally think it is important to start talking about family from God's perspective rather than society's perspective? What is your personal understanding of God's purpose for the family?

- How does Foursquare in your nation define family? Does society at large have a different definition of family than Foursquare?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- Read Obed Sanabria Jaimes' statement in Footnote #6. What do you think of his statement that “specialized institutions, the State and social media” have largely taken over responsibilities once entrusted to the family? For those who agree with him, what can we do pastorally to help Christians regain some of these responsibilities within the family context, and what specifically would some of those responsibilities be?
- Read the bullet points that begin, “One effect of the Fall...” and “God’s plan of salvation...” including reading the Scriptures that are referenced. Discuss how you see some of these “fractures” within your society. Do you also see them in the church?
- Discuss how the church might use discipleship to address some of these fractures, so as to see restoration of God’s original design. Include some “success stories” that you have seen, whereby family fractures have been mended by the Lord. NOTE—BE SURE to include Victor Hamilton’s and Obed Sanabria Jaimes’ observations on Genesis 3:16B (Footnote #8) in your discussion.
- Discuss how you personally relate to other believers as “family.” Do you personally think it’s OK to sometimes view one’s “spiritual family” as closer than one’s “blood family”?

- **MARRIAGE**–

- Marriage was instituted by God (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:6-7). God alone, therefore, has the right to define and regulate marriage (Mark 10:9).
- Marriage is a covenantal commitment before God and witnesses between one husband and one wife.¹²
- Marriage is the union of one man with one woman for life and is the preeminent relationship in a family (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9; Romans 7:2; Ephesians 5:31; 1 Timothy 3:12).
 - o One reason for marriage is that God determined that **“it is not good for man to be alone”** (Genesis 2:18).
 - o The man is to **leave his father and mother and be united to his wife** (Genesis 2:24).¹³
 - o In marriage, **they will become one flesh** (Genesis 2:24).¹⁴
- Marriage is the God-ordained relationship for sexual relations and procreation (Genesis 1:28; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5).¹⁵

¹² “A covenant is a pledge that is binding. The marriage covenant requires death (1 Corinthians 7:39) or a legal certificate of divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1) to dissolve” (Gary Matsdorf, *Whose Wife Will She Be in the Resurrection? How Should We Respond Pastorally to Divorce and Remarriage?* unpublished manuscript, 2018, pg. 2 [available in PDF from gmatsdorf@foursquare.org or from Foursquare Missions International {United States}]). Unlike Roman Catholicism, Foursquare does not believe marriage is a “sacrament.” “The foundation of marriage (and therefore of the family) has to be laid in something more than a passing emotion; it has to be built upon the Lord through covenant...entering into a covenant means dying to independent living” (Obad Sanabria Jaimes).

¹³¹³ The Hebrew word for **united** in Genesis 2:24 is *dabaq*. It has the sense of “clinging, sticking to, or joining.” The New Testament Greek equivalent is *proskollao*, which has the idea of “adhering closely to” or “being devoted to.” “Both passion and permanence should characterize marriage. Shechem’s love of Dinah is described as ‘his soul stuck to Dinah’ (Gen 34:3)” (Gordon Wenham, *op. cit.*, pg. 71).

¹⁴ **One flesh** “does not denote merely the sexual union that follows marriage, or the children conceived in marriage, or even the spiritual and emotional relationship that it involves, though all are involved in becoming one flesh. Rather it affirms that just as blood relations are one’s flesh and bone, so marriage creates a similar kinship relationship between man and wife” (Gordon J. Wenham. *Word Biblical Commentary—Volume 1, Genesis 1-15*, Word Books, Waco, TX, 1987, pg. 71). This may account for the growing popularity in much of the Western world of referring to one’s spouse as, “My best friend.”

¹⁵ W. White, among others, has pointed to the significant way in which God instituted the creation ordinance of husband/wife relationality. He writes, “The unity of male and female in the marriage bond is set down on two levels, the fulfillment of man’s need for companionship and the sexual relationship for the procreation of the race” (William White, *Nelson’s Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Unger, Merrill and White, William [Editors], Thomas Nelson Publishers, New York, NY, 1980, pg. 497). “The design of God in joining two complementary sexes in a holy marriage bond accomplishes three valuable functions. First, it affords a procreational means through which the image of God may be perpetuated. God could have designed humans to generate through alternative means, but He did not. He designed the flourishing of the human species to flow from humanity, through humanity, in a procreational machination. Second, the joining of husband and wife through sexual intimacy constitutes a recreational enjoyment, a pleasure-laden experience that did not have to be the case. God intended sex and sexual play in marriage to be pleasurable and, hence, a means by which a husband and wife may grow more intimately united. That God included *Song of Songs* in Scripture affirms this. Finally, the complementarity of a husband and wife being united is reveling in character. God created both Adam and Eve **in the image of God**. Scripture is clear: **male and female He created them** (Genesis 1:27b). Again, the complementarity of maleness/femaleness, man/woman, husband/wife denotes something of the divine nature. In Paul’s teaching, marriage is both **mystery**

- o **Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure** (Hebrews 13:4).
- Marriage is to be patterned after the relationship between Christ (husband) and the Church (bride) (Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 19:7; 21:2,9; 22:17).¹⁶
- Scripture sees marriage as good, as a reason to rejoice, and as a means whereby marrieds **receive favor from the Lord** (Proverbs 5:18; 18:22).

and revelation of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:28-32). That is, the creation ordinance of marriage is revelatory of divine Creation and human creature” (Jeremy Wallace).

¹⁶ “The noteworthy aspect of this command [for husbands] to love is the subsequent definition of love as modeled in the self-sacrificial love of Christ, which led him to die by crucifixion. If Paul were consistent with his times, he would have asked for the wife to sacrifice herself (body) for her husband, her head. But Paul turns social convention upside down, in line with the gospel message that those who are given honor and privilege are to lay it aside in service of others” (Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2020, pg. 361).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- What is your personal understanding of the purpose of marriage? What do you personally think is “most important” to see in a marriage?
- What differences do you think we would see in Christian families if spouses truly understood that marriage is built on a biblical covenant?
- What do you think of the concept that your spouse should be your “best friend” and why?
- What problems have you seen created when with either the husband or the wife fails to “leave father and mother and be united” to their spouse, and how can we use discipleship as an opportunity to address this leaving?
- Read Genesis 1:28 and 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. What would you say to a young couple who does not want to have children, and how would you explain Paul’s statement in today’s society that sex in marriage is a “marital duty” (1 Corinthians 7:3)?

- **SINGLE PEOPLE—**

- Jesus affirmed the value of those who choose to be single and celibate for the sake of the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:12).¹⁷
 - o In addition to renouncing marriage for the sake of the kingdom of God, some are single because they choose to delay marriage to invest more ardently in their career, to gain more solid financial stability or to first deal with personal character issues they know could undermine a marriage.
 - o Some singles want to marry but do not feel they have yet found the right person.
 - o Some singles want to marry but cannot meet social requirements such as securing a dowry.
 - o Some are single because of same-sex orientation, realizing that as Christians they must remain chaste and celibate.
 - o Some are single due to circumstances over which they had not control (divorce by a spouse; death of a spouse; desertion of a spouse, etc.).
- Singles must never be viewed as “incomplete or broken because they’re single.” These are pagan concepts, not biblical concepts. Christians must respect singleness and not assume all Christian singles are “looking for a spouse or need a spouse to be complete.”
- The value of being single is affirmed in Paul’s statement, **I wish that all of you were as I am** (1 Corinthians 7:7).¹⁸ He encourages **the unmarried and the widows** by stating that **it is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do** (1 Corinthians 7:8. See also vv. 25-28). Paul views his own singleness as a **gift** from God (1 Corinthians 7:7).¹⁹

¹⁷ The third group mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 19, those who **have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven** (vs. 12), “...is to be understood in the sense of those...(such as John the Baptist and Jesus himself) [who] give priority to the work of the kingdom...the kingdom thus can take priority over the interpretation of Gen 1:28 as the obligation to marry and have children” (Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28—Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 33B*, Watts, John D.W. [Editor], Word Books, Waco, TX, 1995, pg. 550). Many feel that God’s command to “**be fruitful and increase in number**” (Genesis 1:28) finds fulfillment for singles in making disciples.

¹⁸ “[I]t is...likely that [Paul] is referring to his actual celibacy, which would mean celibacy in its true sense—not referring to singleness as such (after all many who are ‘celibate’ in this sense wish they were otherwise), but to that singular gift of freedom from the desire or need of sexual fulfillment that made it possible for him to live without marriage in the first place” (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians—New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Bruce, F. F. [General Editor], Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987, pg. 284).

¹⁹ The Greek word Paul uses here for **gift** is *charisma*. It is the same word he uses in 1 Corinthians 12:4 when referring to the manifestations of the Spirit; a *charisma* is that which is “freely and graciously bestowed by God...that carries responsibilities specifically to God and God’s people” (Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians—The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2010, pp. 285-286).

- Looking at the lives of key people in the Bible, we see that single people from multiple backgrounds are highly valued in Scripture: Jesus, Paul, Anna, Martha, Ruth, etc.
- Paul notes that singlehood—**1**) spares one from **many troubles in this life** that he saw as uniquely associated with **those who marry** (1 Corinthians 7:28); and **2**) enables one **to be free from [marital] concern**, to be more **concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how [one] can please the Lord** (1 Corinthians 7:32. See also vv. 33-35).²⁰
- Foursquare affirms that singles (male and female) can hold any ministry position in the Church to which they feel called and gifted and for which they are personally suited.
- **SPECIAL NOTE**—the sometimes-referenced idea that a single woman needs “a male covering” to minister does not reflect Foursquare’s understanding of biblical womanhood or headship. Her “covering” is Christ, exactly as He is for single males.
- Single people are not outside family. Most were born or adopted into a family, and often still relate to their family of origin. As noted above, Christian singles also **belong to the family of believers** (Galatians 6:10) and know God as, “*Abba, Father*” (Romans 8:15). They should, therefore, remain closely connected to the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:14-27).
- Single people, like all Christians, are to abstain from **sexual immorality** (1 Corinthians 6:18). **But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion** (1 Corinthians 7:9).²¹ Christian singles are often leaders in modeling sexual purity in the Church and society.

²⁰ Paul was not implying that married people should seek to divorce and become single. He encourages everyone to remain in their current state (1 Corinthians 7:17-20). His concern has to do with **the present crisis** (1 Corinthians 7:26). “The apostle explains that the time for doing the Lord’s work is short and coming to an end. This does not necessarily mean that he is speaking of the second coming of Christ, for Paul may have been anticipating severe persecution and a resulting curtailing of freedoms to witness. So, for the time remaining Paul admonished them not to be overwhelmed by the social and material problems of the world but to live for the Lord” (W. Harold Ware, *1 Corinthians—The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume, 10*, Gaebelien, Frank E. [General Editor], Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976, pg. 235).

²¹ See footnote #70 below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- How does the Foursquare church in your nation look at single people? Would you say they are valued as singles and their singlehood affirmed?
- Are singles in your church encouraged to minister in any all positions to which they feel called and gifted? What are your personal thoughts about Footnote #21 regarding single women in ministry?
- How often would you say that you hear a sermon or podcast that uses Scripture to affirm Christian singles in their singlehood? Do you think we could do better at lifting up singlehood as a biblical alternative for Christians? If so, why?
- What have you observed in your Christian community in terms of inter-generational fellowship between marrieds and singles? If fellowship exists between them, who would you say initiates most—the singles or the marrieds?
- What do you personally think of the fact that many young people today often delay marriage (or even see it as optional) in order to concentrate on career building and pursuing their dreams? How would you answer them if they asked you, “Is it wrong biblically not to marry?”

- **HUSBANDS**²²—
- **The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church** (Ephesians 5:23; see also 1 Corinthians 11:3). The meaning and practical implications of **head** are exegetically complex and debated.²³ In summation, it references a husband's obligations to his wife (such as providing for her well-being and protecting her), not his lordship or dominance over her.²⁴

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF “HEADSHIP”—Scot McKnight notes that Christian cultures (again, often influenced by human cultures) have generally practiced “headship” (and submission [see below]) from one of three approaches, each of which has implications not only for the home but for ministry in the church. “The *hard patriarchy* view believes...a woman must submit to her husband in all things, she must submit to male leadership in the church in all things, and she should also not find her way into leadership in society...the *soft patriarchy* view...while affirming the importance of submission and gender and roles...frees the woman to do more than the hard patriarchy view. She can work outside the home in any manner for which she is qualified and competent, always with her primary role being wife and mother...the *mutuality* view²⁵...knows the story of the Bible is one in which Jesus Christ makes men and women one again, in Christ and in marriage...[it] gives women the freedom to discern what God has called them to do.”²⁶

McKnight's quote does not address the *mutuality* view's understanding of “male headship in the home.” In general, *mutuality* scholars see both the husband and wife as mutual partners in all aspects of family life, including decision-making. (See resources under Footnote #23 for mutuality's understanding of **head**.)

²² The following descriptions have purposely not used the term “role,” as in “the role of husbands,” “the role of wives” or the “role of children,” as if to imply the Bible clearly defines each “role.” The Scriptures give great leeway for interpretation of roles in the family. Roles can differ greatly around the world, often showing up in the duties that husbands and wives take on: Who does the dishes? Who does homework with the children? Who cooks the meals? The minutiae of life are reserved for each family to decide on its own. Couples must do the hard work of deciding who will do what, with both human culture and biblical culture guiding the decisions.

²³ For a fuller discussion in English of the various understandings of **head**, see Cohick, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-132 and 350-358; Bruce, F.F., *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1984, pp. 382-396; or Jewett, Paul K., *MAN as male and female*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976 printing, Chapter III and pp. 149-159.

²⁴ Regarding the statement that **Christ is the head of the Church, His body, of which He is the Savior** (vs. 23), Bruce notes that “the conduct of husbands to their wives is to be ‘in some sense’ parallel to this conduct on Christ's part (i.e., self-sacrificing)” (F.F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, pg. 385).

²⁵ Also known as the *egalitarian* view.

²⁶ McKnight, Scot, *The Blue Parakeet*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018 2nd Edition, pp. 209-211.

- **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her** (Ephesians 5:25) implies he—
 - o Lays down his life for his wife.
 - o Treats his wife with the care he would himself.
 - o Enjoys and cherishes his wife (Proverbs 5:18; Ecclesiastes 9:9).
 - o Is considerate toward his wife, treating her with respect and as a precious gift from God (Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7).²⁷
- **FATHERS—**
 - **Fathers,²⁸ do not exasperate²⁹ your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord** (Ephesians 6:4) builds on God’s instruction in Deuteronomy 6:6-7.³⁰ See also Proverbs 4:3-4; 13:24; 19:18; 22:6, 15; and 23:13.³¹
 - **The training and instruction** of children should always have the primary purpose of developing in them a heart to love God and love people (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:35-40).
 - Deuteronomy 6 reminds us that the most consistent and fundamental discipleship and training of children is primarily the responsibility of believing parents within the community of the Church.
 - Colossians 3:21 adds the importance of not damaging a child’s spirit—**Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.** Parents are urged “not to be so unreasonable in their demands that the children lose heart and come to think that it is useless trying to please their parents.”³²

²⁷ These aspects of a husband’s love for his wife are part of the restoration the gospel brings to the fractured family first seen in Genesis 3-4.

²⁸ **Fathers** most likely refers to parents (see Hebrews 11:23).

²⁹ **Do not exasperate** and **do not embitter** (Colossians 3:21) carry the idea of persuading rather than threatening, of guiding children toward Christ and His ways rather than making them angry or resentful of correction. “It rules out excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting a child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child’s needs and sensibilities” (Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians—Word Biblical Commentary*, Word Books, Publisher, Dallas, TX, 1990, pg. 406).

³⁰ “The future of Israel [and of the Church] depends on the transmission of the experience of God’s mighty acts in history and his demands to each successive generation” (Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9, Second Edition—Word Biblical Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 2001, pg. 81).

³¹ The qualification for leaders in Titus 1:6 that their **children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient** provides a good goal to which all Christian parents should desire their discipline lead. “A father helps his children develop strong character, pursue healthy, godly values that will support them through the difficulties of life, and develop their individual personality and potential. This involves listening to them, observing them and helping them flourish” (Roger Gbelia).

³² Bruce, *op. cit.*, pg. 165. “Even though parents love their children, children sometimes do not feel loved. To help children feel loved, parents need to declare their love regularly to their children in both private and in public, to enjoy them and to express to them how proud they are of them” (Roger Gbelia).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- Take time to read Ephesians 5:21-6:4 and write down what the Holy Spirit shows you or emphasizes to you. Take time to share with the group what you observed.

- How does Foursquare in your nation understand Ephesians 5:23—“the husband is the head of the wife”?

- Re-read Victor Hamilton’s observations of Genesis 3:16B (Footnote #8), then discuss how the DLT material under, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her,” might be used to disciple husbands to mend the fracture referenced in Genesis 3:16B. Take time to read together all the Scriptures in this section, as well as read Footnote #25.

- Although the term “Fathers” (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21) applies equally to fathers and mothers (see Footnote #29), what practical advice would you give to a father regarding his responsibilities to “not exasperate or embitter” his children, but “instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”? (You might want to also re-read Roger Gbelia’s quotes in Footnotes #32 & #33.)

- In your culture, what percentage of Christian fathers would you say take the lead in the home to train and instruct their children in the ways of the Lord? Can you give some personal observations as to what such training and instruction looks like practically in your Christian culture?

- How much do you personally think that we should look at a potential ministry leader's "home life" before we put them in a position of ministry? Why?

- Does your church emphasize discipling people in terms of the truths discussed in this section?

- **WIVES**³³—
 - **Wives, submit**³⁴ **yourselfs to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord** (Colossians 3:18).³⁵ Although **submit** is also exegetically complex and debated, with human culture often being a factor in determining its practical implications, we must remember that biblically wives submitting is intricately connected to Ephesians 5:21 which governs all the specifics of the household code—**submit to one another out of reverence for Christ**.³⁶
 - 1 Peter 3:1-2 notes a practical effect that a Christian wife’s **purity and reverence** may have on her unbelieving husband—**so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over**³⁷ **without words by the behavior of their wives**. Much like Paul’s **husbands, love your wives** (Ephesians 5:25), Peter emphasizes the importance of a wife’s good behavior toward her husband.
 - A wife is to be **of noble character**,³⁸ which is said to be **her husband’s crown** (Proverbs 12:4). Such character **is worth far more than rubies** (Proverbs 31:10), gains her husband’s **full confidence** (Proverbs 31:11), and is built on her love for the Lord (Proverbs 31:30).
 - A wife brings her husband **good, not harm** and **watches over the affairs of her household** (Proverbs 31:12, 27).
- **MOTHERS**—
 - Mothers are to love their children (Titus 2:4) and help provide for their physical needs (Proverbs 31:15, 21).

³³ God’s designation of Eve as Adam’s **helper suitable for him** (Genesis 2:18) reinforces not only her equal value and dignity as a human being (*cf.* Genesis 1:27), but deems her an equal co-worker, a “helper matching him...expressing the notion of complementarity rather than identity...the help looked for is not just assistance...but the mutual support companionship provides” (Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-5—Word Biblical Commentary*, Word Books, Publisher, Waco, TX, 1987, pg. 68). And yet, “She is also *different* from him in that *she* is a *woman*” (Victor Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pg. 175). The Hebrew word for **helper** does not inherently reference subordination; it is used of God Himself in relationship to Israel (Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:29).

³⁴ Paul also terms this, **the wife must respect her husband** (Ephesians 5:33) and **love [her] husband** (Titus 2:4).

³⁵ “The New Testament throughout emphasizes the dignity of womanhood, and it is an indisputable fact that the example and teaching of Christ have lifted woman in one country and society after another to a position that she did not occupy before” (Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians—The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1991 reprint, pg. 155).

³⁶ See above on “Head” and “Headship.”

³⁷ Or **come to know Jesus personally** (see 1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

³⁸ **Of noble character** is sometimes translated by the hendiadys, “noble and virtuous” (Waltke). The Hebrew word “refers to a woman’s spiritual and physical strength, noble character, and competent strength” (Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15—The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, pp. 521-522). Proverbs 19:14 references a **prudent wife**. The Hebrew word translated **prudent** means to act circumspectly, to think about the consequences of one’s actions before acting, and to choose wise courses of action.

- Because **Fathers** in Ephesians 6:4 likely references “parents,” everything said above regarding fathers applies equally to mothers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- How does your culture understand biblical submission of the wife, and how would your culture understand that Eve was a “helper suitable for Adam” (Genesis 2:18)? (You might want to re-read McKnight’s quote above [Footnote #28] as part of your discussion.)
- Discuss what a wife “of noble character” (Proverbs 12:4) means in your culture. How would you disciple a wife to be of such “noble character”?
- Discuss what a wife “watching over the affairs of her household” (Proverbs 21:12, 27) means specifically in your culture.
- Discuss how you would disciple a mother to raise her children to know and love Jesus.
- How does your Christian culture view a wife who does not have children, especially if she and her husband choose not to have children?
- What are some primary concerns you have regarding wives/mothers in your culture? Would you say that your church is actively trying to disciple wives/mothers regarding these concerns?

- **CHILDREN—**
 - God’s design is that every member of the family has responsibilities to perform within the household. This makes for a harmonious and healthy family atmosphere. Expectations differ from culture-to-culture for children. However, Scripture gives a general blue print of the children’s responsibilities in the family. They are to **obey, honor** and **support** their parents.³⁹
 - The Bible clearly affirms the value of children to a family—**children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from Him** (Psalm 127:3).⁴⁰
 - In both the Old and New Testaments, God commands children to **obey** their parents (Deuteronomy 21:18; Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20- 21).⁴¹ **Obey** here means to carry out instructions from one’s parents, and in Ephesians and Colossians it is assumed to flow from the child’s submission to Christ (**in the Lord** [Ephesians 6:1]). Scripture asks for a child’s obedience because of the parents’ God-given responsibilities over their children and parents’ (presumed) knowledge and experience to guide children through various stages and phases of life.
 - To **honor** one’s parents is a responsibility with a promise (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3; Ephesians 6:2).⁴² **Honor** has the idea of having a respectful attitude towards one’s parents, even if as an adult you do not always agree with them. Obedience is required while the children are underage and under the leadership of the parents, whereas honoring parents is for life. It is clearly the right thing to do. To disrespect one’s parents is viewed as a grave sin (Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:19; Deuteronomy 21:18-21).⁴³
 - Scripture teaches children to **support** (provide for) their parents as a part of honoring them (Exodus 20:12, 17; Deuteronomy 5:16). Jesus highlighted the importance of taking care of one’s parents by criticizing Jewish leaders for using a

³⁹ Contrary to Cain’s attitude and behavior (Genesis 4).

⁴⁰ This does not preclude great sensitivity to couples who cannot conceive or who have lost a child. We must be very loving, understanding and sympathetic toward such persons, never exemplifying the attitude of Peninnah toward Hannah (1 Samuel 1:3-8). We must also realize that some couples choose not to have children, and they should not be condemned for their choice either.

⁴¹ **Children** in these contexts “has in view children who are in the process of learning and growing up” (Peter T. O’Brien, *op. cit.*, pg. 441). As adults, they become independent and may have different perspectives on issues than their parents (see Romans 14:4).

⁴² The promise in Exodus 20:12 (“**so you may live long in the land**”) is reapplied and made universal in Ephesians 6:3 (“**so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth**”). As with many Proverbs, this is a general maxim and not a guaranteed outcome.

⁴³ Part of honoring one’s parents (especially in certain cultures) is to behave in such a manner as to not shame them. In some cultures, parents will remind even adult children to remember whose children they are and to conduct themselves so as to bring honor and not shame to the family name. **A good name is more desirable than great riches** (Proverbs 22:1).

fabricated religious excuse not to support them (Matthew 15:1-6; Mark 7:9-13).⁴⁴ Paul directly states that **anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever** (1 Timothy 5:8).⁴⁵

- It is assumed that the extent of such support depends on both the parents' need and the children's ability to provide, with expectations often differing from one culture to another. For example, children in many African cultures are considered a huge investment, and parents invest in them (education, skill acquisition, etc.) with the expectation that the children will be able to provide for their parents later.

⁴⁴ Jesus saw such practice as a clear nullifying of God's Word and a valuing of manipulative tradition over biblical responsibility (Matthew 15:7). Regarding "**Corban (that is, devoted to God)**" (Mark 7:11), France states, "Just how this convenient device worked is not entirely clear. It appears that it was possible for the son's resources from which the parents might reasonably expect to receive support to be declared Corban with the result that they became technically 'divine property' and so were no longer accessible to the parents" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark—The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, pg. 286).

⁴⁵ The biblical seriousness of providing for one's family (including parents [**their own household**]) is emphasized by Paul's rebuke in the strongest of terms (**has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever**). "Followers of Christ in God's household should not do less than conscientious pagans...Christian confession that is genuine takes the form of lives that embody the concerns of the God in whom faith is purportedly placed" (Robert Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus—The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2018, pg. 271).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- Read the scriptures listed above on children obeying their parents, and discuss what that means specifically in your culture.

- Read the scriptures listed above on children honoring their parents, and discuss what that means specifically in your culture.

- Read the scriptures listed above on children supporting their parents, and discuss what that means specifically in your culture.

- How is your church discipling its members in terms of these truths about children?

- **BALANCING FAMILY LIFE AND WORK**—this section contains various quotes and perspectives designed to encourage dialogue among Christians in terms of “not sacrificing one’s family for the sake of work...even ‘the work of ministry’.” DLT notes that there is not “one simple answer” as to how to keep this balance but believes that God will give wisdom to those who ask for it through prayer, discussion and accountability.⁴⁶ This section does not have specific questions because its intent is to work through each bullet point with “personal reflection and introspection.” Hopefully, if you are studying this in a group, you will find courage to share personally that which is appropriate to share on this topic.
 - **A married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife...[and] a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband** (1 Corinthians 7:33-34) is not to be taken as negative statements against family life. Rather, these verses “validate the proper concern married Christians should have for the happiness of their spouses...a married person who neglects or alienates their spouse⁴⁷ by dedicating themselves solely to the service of God⁴⁸ has misunderstood what devotion to the Lord requires of them and fails to honor God.”⁴⁹ Therefore, balancing one’s family-life and work is of utmost importance.
 - It is perhaps best to begin by noting that there is a difference between “short seasons” of being extremely busy at work (whereby the family is asked to understand) and a life-style of “sacrificing family for work.” Examples of short seasons of being very busy at work in much of the world are Christmas and Easter for ministers or retail employment during holidays.
 - We must also be understanding of the *ongoing* situation of those whose financial reality requires long-term multiple jobs to provide for the family. Balancing family life and work for those in this situation requires great wisdom, prayer, support, and an intentional seeking of Jesus as to how to balance the two. There is not one simplistic answer. The church must also be intentional in providing help for such individuals, and the individuals must be willing to ask for help from the church when multiple ongoing jobs is detrimental to healthy family life.
 - The family is the smallest and perhaps the most important unit of society and of the church. It has been said that healthy families make a healthy society and a healthy church. Christians must, therefore, “do family life well” and “do work well.”

⁴⁶ Of particular concern are those in “bi-vocational or bi-occupational ministry,” and those who have to work “multiple jobs” in order to maintain a living.

⁴⁷ Or family.

⁴⁸ Or their career.

⁴⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *op. cit.*, pg. 351.

It is not a matter of either/or but both/and. This balance is seen in two of Paul's statements regarding leadership in the church, statements which easily extend to any Christian with a job and an immediate family to oversee—**the overseer... must manage his own family well...[and] the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor** (1 Timothy 3:4, 5:17).

- Many Christians focus on ministry at the detriment of their families.⁵⁰ Families are hurting, separating, divorcing and neglecting children (or one's spouse) in the name of "serving the Lord." Because a good home is the basis for one to experience fruitfulness in ministry, success in ministry without success at home does not matter before God to the degree it is often assumed.⁵¹
- The following suggestions may well aid Christians to achieve the needed balance.
- Spend both quality and quantity time with the family.⁵²
- If possible, delegate ministry responsibilities to others.⁵³
- Ask yourself, "Is it absolutely vital that I do this now rather than go home, or can it wait?"
- If your job allows you to occasionally include your family, include them.
- *The Church has not always done well in remembering the nuclear family in leadership development. In fact, there are many ministry contexts that have an unspoken expectation that you will lay your family on the altar of ministry, the reason being that the priority of souls is assumed to exceed the priority of family. However the high priority of souls might be, we are arrogant and unwise to think that the neglect of family ever increased the ministry of the Kingdom of God...fruitful ministry is the outflow of a healthy family life...you want your ministry to flow out of a healthy, intimate, distinct family home life...leaders must realize that their family is ministry, not a means to ministry, but ministry in and of itself for its own sake. In fact, your family is your primary calling and the training ground for all other ministries...the more I recognize this the less I feel guilty about taking time "away from ministry" to intentionally care for and build my home life. I also feel empowered to strategize ways to help my family grow and flourish in the same way I would a church or other ministry.*⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Although this and what follows examples balancing family life and vocational/bi-vocational/volunteer ministry for the kingdom, the same basic principles apply to balancing family life and any career.

⁵¹ "Pastors must manage their own families well. If a pastor is not respected by his family, he will not gain the respect of the church for which he is responsible" (Solomon Andria, *1 Timothy—Africa Bible Commentary*, Adeyemo, Tokunboh [Editor], Word Alive Publishers, Nairobi, Kenya, 2006, pg. 1472). "Success in a family may well indicate success in a church; likewise, failure in a home raises a red flag about one's ability to lead in a congregation" (A. Duane Litffin, *1 Timothy—The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament Edition*, Walvoord, John F. and Zuck, Roy B. [Editors], Cook Communications, Paris, France, 1983, pg. 737).

⁵² Some counselors suggest that we should spend at least fourteen hours (out of 168 hours) a week with family, plus meal times of ten hours.

⁵³ The counsel of Jethro to Moses becomes relevant here (Exodus 18). From all indications, Moses was so preoccupied with ministry that he hardly had time for himself and his family.

⁵⁴ Friesen, Aaron, *Family & Ministry in NHCC Spiritual Formation Cohort*, unpublished Course Syllabus, New Hope Chris-

IV. ADDENDUM—ADDITIONAL IMPACT OF THE FALL ON FAMILIES AND THE CHURCH’S RESPONSE—

- The Fall of Humankind (Genesis 3), aided by the spiritual attacks of the evil one, combine to distort God’s design for family, for marriage, for relating to others in the family and for sex in marriage. The Church must respond to these distortions with discipleship that exemplifies grace and truth, in part by championing the truth of God’s righteous standards and designs, and in part by instructing Christ-followers who deviate from His standards and designs with grace.
- In addition to the fractures and responses to those fractures that are noted above, here are some additional examples of areas of family life affected by the Fall, and how the Church should respond through discipleship. Each of these areas should be discussed and more fully developed by Regions/nations within our Foursquare family. The information here is but a pre-cursor to that fuller development.
- **Divorce**⁵⁵—God’s intent for marriage is that a man and woman be joined together in marriage for life (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9), but when such is not possible due to human frailty and sinfulness (“**because your hearts were hard**” [Mark 10:5]), God in His mercy allows for divorce under certain circumstances.⁵⁶
- *To see divorce as covenant-breaking is to see it as a serious and sinful act. It is arguable [however] that in circumstances in which sin traps us such that none of the ways open to us is good, divorce may in some circumstances be seen as a “lesser evil” choice. Taking the divine covenant as our guide, divorce is never obligatory; even the sin of sexual unfaithfulness (Hosea’s wife) can be an occasion for forgiveness and reconciliation.*⁵⁷
- Divorce was never God’s plan for marriage. He hates divorce because of the pain and violation of His ideal that it causes (Malachi 2:16), but He does not hate the people involved.
- Jesus acknowledged the Old Testament allowance for divorce. However, in doing so, He highlighted the original design of the permanence of marriage, so Christians

tian College, Eugene, OR, 2011.

⁵⁵ For a more thorough biblical, theological and pastoral examination of divorce and re-marriage, see, Matsdorf, *op. cit.* It is available in English, Spanish and French from gmatsdorf@foursquare.org

⁵⁶ The global body of Christ, including the global Foursquare family, is not in total agreement as to what “circumstances” God allows for the consideration of divorce (such as spousal desertion, domestic violence or abuse, child abuse by one of the spouses, addictive behaviors, etc.). Therefore, there will be different biblical understanding on this issue among Foursquare leaders and nations. Note, however, proposition nineteen of Foursquare’s *Creedal Statements*, “We believe in divorce on New Testament scriptural grounds.”

⁵⁷ Atkinson, D. J., *Remarriage in Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Elwell, Walter (General Editor), Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1984, pg. 325.

would do their best to preserve marriage and “seek healing for marital problems” as much as possible (Matthew 19:1-12).

- Jesus’ allowance for divorce is in the case of **sexual immorality** by one or both of the spouses (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).⁵⁸
- The Bible’s general principle regarding divorced Christians remarrying is, “If the Bible allows for divorce, it allows for re-marriage.”⁵⁹ However, if Christians divorce for reasons the Bible does not allow (such as “irreconcilable differences”), they **must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to** their former spouse (1 Corinthians 7:11). The person who divorces their spouse for other than biblically allowed reasons and then remarries commits adultery (Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18).⁶⁰
- Paul added another possible reason for divorce to Jesus’ reason of **sexual immorality, namely, if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so** (1 Corinthians 7:15). **Let it be so** is technically a command, what some scholars term “an imperative of resignation” (D. B. Wallace) or “an imperative of toleration” (Ciampa and Rosner).⁶¹
- When a spouse dies, the remaining spouse is permitted to remarry any believer whom he or she wishes to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:39).
- **The Church’s Response To Divorce and Remarriage:** the sinful nature can result in much brokenness and destructive behavior within marriages and families, often manifesting in physical, verbal and emotional abuse. Some marriages become so broken and dysfunctional that the only compassionate solution is divorce. In these cases, the Church should seek the protection of the weak and defenseless, even if that results in divorce. “Divorce is a tragedy, and often the Church’s confused response to it has only compounded the tragedy.”⁶²
 - Divorce is not the “unpardonable sin.”

⁵⁸ The Greek word translated **sexual immorality** is *porneia*. It refers to any kind of biblically unsanctioned sexual activity, including adultery, fornication, pedophilia, homosexuality, bestiality, rape, pederasty, sexual abuse, etc. Some scholars even include addiction to pornography or any form of sexual addiction. It is important to note that Jesus does not command the offended spouse to divorce when there is **sexual immorality**; He simply allows for it if the marriage cannot be healed and restored.

⁵⁹ As with the specific circumstances under which divorce is allowed (see above), so this conclusion is also debated within the Church, including within the Foursquare family.

⁶⁰ This is Jesus’ way of reinforcing the “inviolability of the marriage bond as intended and instituted by God” (James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark—The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, pg. 305).

⁶¹ Another basis for a biblically permitted divorce is *possibly* found in Deuteronomy 24:1—namely, **something indecent** is found in one or both of the spouses. This passage is admittedly a highly technical and difficult text, but can give some insight. See Matsdorf, *op. cit.*

⁶² Keener, Craig, *And Marries Another*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1991, pg. vii.

- Even though divorce should be the last option for a troubled and difficult Christian marriage, Christians who have been divorced need grace and compassion, not condemnation. They too hate divorce.
- Churches need to support and disciple couples and families by offering marriage and relationship training. For difficult marriages, Christian counseling and other support should be pursued to heal relationships and curtail divorce.
- Churches should encourage divorced Christians whom the Bible allows to remarry to not do so too quickly, and provide discipleship for their recovery from divorce.⁶³
- **Polygamy**—while not explicitly condemned in the Old Testament, neither is polygamy condoned.
 - It goes against the marital design found in Genesis 2:24.
 - Polygamy almost always describes a man who takes multiple wives. Such arrangement most often places wives in a subservient position, which goes against the Christian understanding that women are of both equal value as men (Genesis 1:27), and equal in how they are to be allowed to function within a family (Galatians 3:28).⁶⁴
 - Marriage is to reflect the relationship that Christ has with the Church. Christ has but one wife, the Church (Revelation 21:2, 9; 22:17).
 - Many scholars throughout Church history have believed that Paul “slowly addressed” the elimination of polygamy among Christians in listing “no polygamy” as a qualification of a leader in the Church—**the husband of one wife** (1 Timothy 3:2 [ESV]).⁶⁵
- **The Church’s Response To Polygamy:** in cultures where polygamy is legal and common, the Church can be salt and light, influencing the culture toward monogamy from the inside out. Change may take years, but within Foursquare we encourage taking this approach and practicing the following:
 - Women should be elevated as equal to men in all respects (as much as the human culture of which they are a part will allow).

⁶³ Those who can read English are encouraged to read, *Growing Through Divorce* by Jim Smoke, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR.

⁶⁴ See McKnight above for how this is variously interpreted and practiced globally, including within Foursquare.

⁶⁵ Other possible interpretations of this qualification are that leaders are required to be married, cannot be divorced and remarried, or are to be faithful and devoted in all aspects to their spouse. See Towner, Philip, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2006, pp. 250-251. Compare **married only once** (NRSV); **faithful to his wife** (TNIV).

- Unmarried Christian men should be taught to marry only one wife.
- Christian men who are already in polygamous marriages should not abandon their wives in order to become monogamous, but neither should they take more wives. The church should not condemn these men, but rather find ways to value the wives and elevate their status.
- Despite exegetical controversy of 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6, Foursquare recommends that those in polygamous marriages should not be put in leadership positions in the church.
- **Sexual Purity In Christian Marriages**⁶⁶—all sexual activity outside the context of the marital relationship between a husband and wife is contrary to God’s design for His people and is sin—**marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral** (Hebrews 13:4).⁶⁷
 - The Church must teach that it is possible to remain a virgin until marriage and to remain faithful to one’s spouse until death.
 - The New Testament assumes that when we come to Christ, we will seek change from any sexually immoral practices and will keep marriage sexually pure (1 Corinthians 6:7-11).
- **The Church’s Response To Sexual Purity In Christian Marriages:** the Church must uphold Christ’s sexual purity in marriage.
 - **Sexual immorality** in marriage (or in the family [such as sexual abuse of children]) must be taken seriously and addressed pastorally (1 Corinthians 5).
 - The goal of this response is restoration and transformation, not condemnation (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11).
 - Unmarried believers who are unable to control their sexual appetites should be encouraged to marry (1 Corinthians 7:8-9).⁶⁸

⁶⁶ This addresses only **sexual purity in Christian marriages**; the Church is not to judge **the people of this world** in terms of their sexual behavior (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).

⁶⁷ See above on *porneia* for more specific understanding of **the sexually immoral**.

⁶⁸ Although this is true biblically, we must pastorally help people see how sanctification can also bring control to unbridled sexual desires, and how marriage does not “fix unbridled sexual passion.” If one thinks it does, “It can bring all kinds of destruction to a marriage as one spouse uses their unbridled passion as an excuse or argument towards subjecting the other to an uncomfortable frequency or intensity of marital sex, or disagreeable forms of sexual activity” (Krzysztof Trochimiuk).

Ecclesiology

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I. Course Description:

This is a study and discussion of the fundamental nature and mission of the Church, particularly as it finds expression through the lives of individual disciples within the local church. It will **1)** examine the Church's nature and mission, **2)** how this overall nature and mission relate to the local church's nature and mission, **3)** implications of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), **4)** the correlation between the kingdom of God and the mission of the Church, **5)** who the people of the Church's mission are, **6)** the guiding ecclesiastical elements of Ephesians 4:7-16 and **7)** how to best encourage, prepare and release disciples to become disciple-makers as part of God's design that they are equipped **for works of service** (Ephesians 4:12).

II. Course Objectives:

- A. To discuss and understand the Bible's definition of the nature and mission of the Church.
- B. To discuss and understand how to practically implement the Church's mission at the local church level, including the correlation between the Church and the kingdom of God.
- C. To discuss and understand the people of the Church's mission.
- D. To discuss and understand what it truly means to "make disciples" and how the local church needs to strategically involve itself in doing so.
- E. To discuss and understand how to best equip believers to see themselves as ambassadors of the kingdom, fulfilling the mission of the Church in the power of Holy Spirit fullness.
- F. To engage dialogue with both Foursquare National Leaders and local church pastors on the practical implications of Ephesians 4:7-16 and what theological and/or practical changes need to be made to more effectively implement the passage's teaching.
- G. To engage dialogue so as to collaboratively discover how to best develop and deploy individual believers to do **works of service**, including seeing themselves as disciple-makers.

III. Foursquare Statement of Faith #16:

- **Church Relationship:** We believe that followers of Christ have a sacred duty to identify with the visible church of Jesus Christ and should meet regularly with fellow believers (Hebrews 10:24, 25).

IV. **Course Outline:**

A. **DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH**—a community of God’s people; those belonging to the Lord; the ones called out and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells; the congregation (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:27-28).¹ Church translates the Greek word *ekklesia* which “denotes in the usage of antiquity the popular assembly of the competent full citizens of the city.”² Thus, it always refers to the assembly of people and not to a building, activities, or services. When writing, Church (capital C) references the universal, unified body of Christ, whereas church (small c) references a local congregation.

B. **THE CHURCH**—

- Is the universal Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13-27; Colossians 1:24).
 - The Church is inter-denominational and world-wide,³ consisting of all **who belong to Christ...Abraham’s seed...heirs according to the promise** (Galatians 3:29).
- Is the universal “bride of Christ” lovingly and sacrificially chosen by the Bridegroom; she demonstrates her gratitude to Him primarily through faithfulness and spiritual fidelity (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:24-27; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:1-2).
- Is Christ’s “universal family” (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15). Believers are always first and foremost “brothers and sisters.”⁴
- Finds expression in a local gathering (Romans 16:1; Galatians 1:2).
 - Each local church is considered a **golden lampstand**, individually superintended by Jesus (Revelation 1:19-20). We must remember the value and importance of the local church, despite its obvious failures at time.⁵

¹ Jesus’ first designation of the Church is “**little flock**” (Luke 12:32), an expression carried over from the Old Testament and similar to Paul’s designation of the Church as **the Israel of God** (Galatians 6:16). “Despite stereotypical associations brought on by the word *church* in today’s society that often reference either a building or a (hierarchical) institution (which is either non-denominational or part of a denomination), with certain typical activities such as corporate meetings, Sunday school, age-specific groups, etc., the Bible, in part, brings light on these four definitions of church through the words that are used for ‘church’ in Greek and Hebrew” (Krzysztof Trochimiuk).

² Coenen, L., *Church in Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Volume 1*, Brown, Colin [Editor], Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1979 printing, pg. 291.

³ Foursquare encourages unity among all the members of the Foursquare global family and unity and a spirit of cooperation with other families in the Body of Christ, without compromising our values and distinctives. See Foursquare’s *Global Distinctives—Global Partnerships*.

⁴ Biblically, “*to be saved*” means to become part of the *people* of God, who by the Spirit are born into God’s *family* and therefore joined to one another as one *body*, whose gatherings in the Spirit form them into God’s *temple*. God is not simply saving diverse individuals and preparing them for heaven: rather he is creating *a people* for his name, among whom God can dwell and who in their life *together* will reproduce God’s life and character in all its unity and diversity” (Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit and the People of God*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1997 printing, pg. 72). Note also **Foursquare Global Distinctive #4: Family Relationships**: We will relate to each other with love in our Global Family. We acknowledge that relationships are the heart of God’s Kingdom and will extend grace to fellow believers through ministry, cooperation, and mutual submission in our global church.

⁵ It is vitally important that the Bible shapes our understanding of the local church and its practices rather than culture (be it syncretism, tradition, prosperity emphasis, modified Catholicism, a “professional clergy-laity distinction,” etc.).

- o Local churches in the earliest centuries of the Church often met in homes (Philemon 2; Colossians 4:15).
- o An unspecified collection of local churches can be referred to as **all the churches of Christ** (Romans 16:16), and they are to work together in advancing the kingdom (Romans 16:4; 1 Corinthians 16:19).⁶
- Is created by the reign of God (Exodus 6:7; Matthew 16:18).⁷
- Is **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets** (Ephesians 2:20).⁸ This refers to the Twelve plus Paul, and to an unnamed number of the Church's founding prophets, some of whom wrote the New Testament and whose authority was unique.⁹
- Exists to love God, honor Him, and give Him glory (John 5:23; Ephesians 3:20-21).
- Exists to love and serve others (John 13:1-17).
- Is to be submitted in all things to Christ, **the Head of the Body** (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23).
- Is **“not of this world”** (John 18:36).¹⁰
- 1 Corinthians 12, emphasizes that—
 - o Shared community, which comes from the Holy Spirit, is at the heart of the Church (vs. 13).
 - o Diversity in the Church is essential, with different functions and gifting both valued and celebrated (vs. 14).
 - o Each individual member is providentially placed within a local community of believers and each member's sphere of influence is to be celebrated (vs. 18).
 - o Members of Christ's community are to center on others rather than themselves (vs. 22).

⁶ **Foursquare Global Distinctive #6: Shared Mission:** We will focus our mission and ministry efforts on multiplying disciples, leaders, churches, and national movements. Holding to God's passion for the lost, we will seek a movement of evangelism, mercy ministries, contextualized church planting and mobilizing indigenous believers in ministry among all peoples.

⁷ “The kingdom creates the church...to display in this present evil age the life and fellowship of the Age to Come” (John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1981, pp. 111, 113).

⁸ Paul's statement is often considered an expansion of Matthew 16:18, whereby Jesus said He would build His Church upon the foundation of the Twelve of whom Peter was the initial confessor.

⁹ “The apostles and prophets are foundational in the sense of being primary and authoritative recipients and proclaimers of revelation...the apostles provided a foundational link with the risen Christ, and together with the prophets, gave foundational interpretation of what God had done in Christ for the edification of the Church” (Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians—Word Biblical Commentary*, Word Books, Publisher, Dallas, TX, 1990, pg. 153).

¹⁰ Although in John 18:36 Jesus states, **“My kingdom is not of this world,”** the same principles apply to the Church. It is a spiritual, not political, force and a moral authority which operates in freedom as people opt to individually accept its authority and living out its principles and priorities. . “The Gospel creates a new kind of person...which creates a new kind of community. The distinctiveness of the Church is its greatest evangelistic and missiological tool to reach the world” (United States Foursquare pastor, Brooks Rice).

- o Members of Christ's community are to reject division in the Body, including all forms of prejudice, jealousy, exclusivity or attitudes of superiority (vs. 25). The Church does not define itself in terms of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status or age (Galatians 3:28).
- o Members of Christ's community are to express concern for each other and experience the full range of life together in Christ (vv. 25-26).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH—

- Spend some time individually reading and reflecting on 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 and then share what God says to you personally from your reflection.

- QUESTIONS—why do you personally think it is important that Christians understand the fact that the Church is inter-denominational and world-wide, consisting of all who belong to Christ...Abraham's seed...heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29)?

- How do you see the Church working together in your community to advance the Gospel? What do you think personally about Foursquare Global Distinctive #6?

- How does your culture interpret the statement that “the Church is not of this world” (John 18:36)? Do you see different interpretations of this statement between older Christians and younger Christians?

- DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH (summation)—the Church is the community of God’s people, the universal body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13-27) which finds expression through local churches (Romans 16:1), each of which Jesus references as a golden lampstand (Revelation 1:19-20). The Church is created by God’s reign (kingdom) in the earth (Matthew 16:18).
- As Christ’s Church, the Church is to be faithful to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2); exists to love God, honor Him and give Him glory (Ephesians 3:20-21); and is “not of this world” (John 18:36), meaning, among other things, that it is not a political institution. It is to reflect the dynamics of a healthy family and its members are to interact on the basis of healthy family principles (1 Timothy 3:15).
- Christians not only belong to Christ (Galatians 3:29), but they share His life together through the local church where they honor diversity and the providential influence each member has in the church, center on others, and reject division, prejudice, jealousy or any expression of racism or bias (1 Corinthians 12:13-26).

C. THE CHURCH'S MISSION—

- Is to equip people to love God and love people (all humanity). The “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19-20) derives from the “Greatest Commandment and the second” (Mark 12:28-31).
- Is to be directed by God and is to follow His will (Acts 13:1-3; 15:28; 16:6-10).
- Is to preach the gospel to all nations (Mark 13:10).¹¹
- Is to **“go and make disciples¹² of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”** (Matthew 28:19-20).¹³ Article 21 of our *Statement of Faith* reads, **“Evan-gelism:** We believe that the church’s primary responsibility is taking the gospel to the entire world and making disciples (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20).”
- Is to lead disciples into the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:7-8).¹⁴
- Is to **wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ** (Titus 2:13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).
- Is to continue the mission of Jesus by proclaiming the kingdom of God in word and deed by demonstrating its power, including healings, exorcisms, good works, and involvement in social justice initiatives that work for equality and seek to identify, challenge, and overcome personal and systemic injustices in society (Matthew 4:23, 8:16 and 10:1; Luke 4:16-21;¹⁵ 10:8—9; 17:17-20).¹⁶ “The church was designed to serve people in the context of human history and in the real world...[and] Pentecostals affirm that the Holy Spirit is the agent who enables the church to become efficient in serving the community.”¹⁷

¹¹ Foursquare encourages our preaching be done with the same attitudes and motives as Jesus, using His methods and contextualizing the message as He did (and as Paul later did [see Acts 17:16-34]).

¹² This discipleship must be intentional and focused, seeking both the maturity of believers and equipping them for **works of service**. “Discipleship is in the contexts of love, correction and accountability (John 13:34-35; Hebrews 10:24-25; 2 Timothy 2:4); involves training in the charismata (nurturing disciples’ growth in ministry through being used in the manifestations of the Spirit [1 Corinthians 12, 14]); and focuses on sanctification (growth of character/spiritual transformation) [Galatians 5:22-23; Hebrews 6:1-3; 2 Peter 3:18]” (Krzysztof Trochimiuk).

¹³ See the DLT modules *Foundational Understanding*, *Developing Transformational Leaders* and *Disciple-Making Made Simple* for additional understanding into this Commission. See also Romans 6:3-4 on the importance of water baptism as soon as possible following one’s conversion **in order that we too may live a new life** (Romans 6:4).

¹⁴ See the DLT module *Holy Spirit Fullness*.

¹⁵ Jesus’ wholistic ministry as described here, which is also the Church’s, gives itself to bringing healing to the spiritual, physical, emotional, psychological and relational aspects of people’s lives.

¹⁶ “The very existence of the Church is centered around letting the world know about the good news of Jesus Christ, which offers eternal life, healing, restoration and wholeness—by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, it informs the world about the true state of the cosmos (1 Timothy 3:15) and about God’s plan of restoration (Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 3:10)” (Krzysztof Trochimiuk). See the DLT module *Kingdom of God* for additional understanding of this concept.

¹⁷ Alvarez, Miguel, *Theological Foundation for Pentecostal Holistic Mission in Pentecostal Education: A Journal of WAPTE—Volume 6, Number 2, 2021*, pg. 118.

- Is to worship God passionately and expressively (John 4:23-24; Hebrews 13:15; Revelation 4:9-11). This includes the regular partaking of Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).¹⁸
- Is to be devoted to prayer, both in known languages and in tongues/one's personal prayer language (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 18:1; 1 Corinthians 14:15;¹⁹ Ephesians 6:18²⁰).
- Is to teach the Bible with **fervor** (Acts 18:25), each member striving to be one **who correctly handles the word of truth** (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15).²¹ Its leaders are to devote themselves **to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching** (1 Timothy 4:13).
- Is to be involved in helping with the material needs of Christ-followers (Acts 4:32-37; Galatians 6:6, 10) and in looking **after widows and orphans in their distress** (mercy ministries [James 1:27]). Such involvement is part of God's purpose for each member of the church whom He **created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which [He] prepared in advance for [them] to do** (Ephesians 2:10).
- Is to make **the manifold wisdom of God...known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms** (Ephesians 3:10) and to be engaged in spiritual warfare against the adversary and his influences in this age (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7; 1 John 5:19).
- Is to take care of God's creation (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 8:6-8).²²

¹⁸ The worship of God may on occasion call for "church discipline" (1 Corinthians 5; 1 Timothy 5:20), whose redemptive goal is repentance and restoration (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

¹⁹ **I will pray with my spirit...I will sing with my spirit** (contrasted with praying and singing **with my understanding**) "means, as vv. 14 and 19 make certain, 'I will pray in tongues'" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987, pg. 670). See the DLT module *Holy Spirit Fullness* for additional understanding of "praying in tongues/in one's personal prayer language."

²⁰ **Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayer and requests** "is calling for prayer inspired, guided, and made effective through the Spirit...by those who are being filled with the Spirit (5:18)" (Andrew T. Lincoln, *op. cit.*, pg. 452). It is not clear whether Paul is referencing praying in tongues or in one's first language.

²¹ See the DLT module *Studying God's Word* (Hermeneutics) for understanding of how Foursquare approaches this correct handling.

²² This includes protecting creation from abuse (Deuteronomy 22:6-7), making sure that creation has the right conditions to flourish (Proverbs 12:10) and actively getting to know creation better (Psalm 8:3-4; Romans 1:19-20).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

THE CHURCH'S MISSION—

- Spend some time individually reading and reflecting on Luke 4:16-21 and then share what God says to you personally from your reflection. .

- QUESTIONS—in your opinion, what does it mean that the Church is to “be an influence for Christ” and how would you personally disciple someone to do that in their daily life?.

- What do you see as some significant differences between the Church’s call to “preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15) and to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19-20)...or do you see any difference? .

- In your opinion, why does Foursquare emphasize the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in terms of doing the Church’s mission?.

- As an ambassador of the kingdom, what would you personally tell an individual disciple about the importance of worship, prayer, time in the Word and Communion to fulfilling this ambassadorship?.

- How can we help a local church find the balance between sharing the gospel and “social ministries” such as looking after widows and orphans in their distress (James 1:27)?.

- If DLT says we must disciple and train leaders through a combination of formal, non-formal and informal venues, what, in your opinion, is the place of the public reading of Scripture, preaching and teaching in church services (1 Timothy 4:13)?

- THE CHURCH'S MISSION (summation)—the Church is called to “preach the gospel to all nations...and make disciples” (Mark 13:10; Matthew 28:19-20) in full submission to God’s leading and direction. We are to be about this commission throughout history, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).
- Fulfilling the Church’s mission involves both proclaiming the kingdom of God (preaching, teaching, sharing) and demonstrating its power; the proclamation is to be with fervor and with disciples doing their absolute best to correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Both of these commissions are most effective when disciples are baptized with the Holy Spirit, engage in regular worship, time in the Word, prayer and spiritual warfare, actively participate in the lives of other disciples (community) and uphold ethical principles by the Spirit’s empowerment.
- The Church is to be involved in meeting both people’s spiritual and practical needs (Galatians 6:6, 10; James 1:27).
- The Church is to be involved in fulfilling God’s original mandate to care for His creation (Genesis 1:28).

D. THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION²³—

- Are Christ's **chosen...in order that we...might be for the praise of His glory** (Ephesians 1:11-12); **those loved by God** (Romans 1:7); **God's holy people** (Ephesians 1:1); **those sanctified in Christ Jesus** (1 Corinthians 1:2); and **the faithful brothers and sisters** (Colossians 1:2).
- Are to be continually strengthened **with power through His Spirit in [their] inner being, so that Christ may dwell in [their] hearts through faith** (Ephesians 3:16-17).
- Are to be known by **"a new command I give you: Love one another"** (John 13:34).
- Are to **"be one as We are one...brought to complete unity"** (John 17:22-23).
- Are to be equipped **for works of service** (Ephesians 4:7-16).²⁴
 - o **Christ Himself gave the apostles,²⁵ the prophets,²⁶ the evangelists,²⁷ the pastors²⁸ and teachers²⁹ [whom] Christ Himself gave (vs. 11) to equip His people for works of service.**³⁰
 - o **Equip** has the idea of making disciples fit for a task, making them complete. It includes both training in knowledge and skills, and spiritual transformation that deals

²³ The primary purposes of this section are to further elaborate aspects of "making disciples" and of what it means for an individual disciple to carry out the privileged position of being a "custodian of the kingdom." All references to what "the people are" apply to both individual Christ-followers and to the Church collectively.

²⁴ These verses are part of a larger section (Ephesians 4:1-16). "Ephesians 4:1-16 may be divided into three distinct sections: section one comprises the grounds for Christian unity (vv. 1-6), section two unveils the divinely orchestrated means by which Christian unity is to be achieved (vv. 7-11), and section three underscores the purpose of (and rationale for) personal maturation in 'the faith,' the end toward which growth in Christ should culminate (vv. 12-16)" (Jeremy Wallace).

²⁵ Notes Wallace, "In the words of J. Rodman Williams, 'From the broadest perspective, apostles in the New Testament are those sent by God for whatever mission is required' (*Renewal Theology—Vol. 3*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992, pg. 168). Arnold states, "The 'apostles' he mentions here likely extend beyond the Twelve and Paul to include others whom the Lord Jesus has called to go, establish churches, and ground these new believers in the common faith" (Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2010, pg. 256).

²⁶ Although "God does gift certain people in 'the prophetic' (foretelling), New Testament prophets are often used of God to bring counsel, correction, comfort, edification and direction to the body of Christ (both locally and universally)" (Jeremy M. Wallace, *Serving God & Man: An Introduction to Christian Ministry*, Canby Bible College, Canby, OR, 2007, pg. 87).

²⁷ "*Evangelists* (εὐαγγελιστῶν) were those individuals within the churches whom the ascended Christ had especially gifted to make known the redemptive message of 'the gospel' (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον)" (Clinton Arnold, *op. cit.*, pg. 259).

²⁸ "Pastors are given by Christ to exercise special oversight of the souls of those who after conversion need to be nourished so as to grow more and more like Him" (J. Rodman Williams, *op. cit.*, 179).

²⁹ Although scholarship is divided when it comes to whether or not **the pastors and teachers** here are linked as one gift in light of the Greek construction, the two functions (pastors and teachers) should best be seen as distinct. "Many refer to the equipping gifts as office gifts, but the stress of Paul's demarcation is more functional than official. The equipping gifts are also commonly referred to as 'the fivefold ministry gifts' or 'the fivefold anointing gifts'" (Jeremy Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 66). **The teachers** are those divinely enabled "to understand, clearly explain, and apply the Word of God, thus causing greater Christ-likeness in the lives of listeners" (Bruce Bugbee, *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005 Revised Edition, pg. 51).

³⁰ "In sum, these five functions or tasks serve to equip the church for its ministry...this passage is not promoting a hierarchical structure as would later characterize the church, for 'each of the ministers takes a part in the integrated whole of the church'" (Lynn Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians—The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2020, pp. 269-270).

with any personal difficulties, dysfunction or immaturity that would hinder effectively performing **works of service**.³¹

- o **Works of service** is a generalized phrase referencing “being an influence for Christ...an ambassador of the kingdom...a disciple-maker.” It is much broader than the duties and responsibilities carried out in the local church and performed during church services. It emphasizes the fact that as Christ-followers we are **a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that [we] may declare the praises of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His wonderful light** (1 Peter 2:9). All Christ-followers have the potential of powerfully influencing the society in which they live by demonstrating the presence of God’s rulership and power over the works of the devil and the effects of the Fall.
 - o The result of this equipping and of believers doing **works of service**? **So that the body of Christ may be built up** (vs. 12).³²
- Will often be persecuted (Matthew 24:9-14; 2 Timothy 3:12).
 - Are to 1) be eager students of the Bible; 2) be actively involved in the lives of **others**; 3) open their homes for meals and hospitality; and 4) participate in regular individual and corporate prayer (Acts 2:42).³³ Why? Because each of these elements is an important contributor to disciples being transformed into the image of Christ (see for example, 2 Timothy 3:17).

³¹ See the DLT module *Grace and Spiritual Transformation* for additional understanding of being equipped in every area of our lives.

³² “Elaboration is given in verse thirteen, in which Paul presents a series of clauses, presumably the content of what needs to be achieved and maintained by all Christians: (1) unity of the faith, (2) knowledge of the Son of God, (3) mature personhood, and (4) the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah” (Jeremy Wallace).

³³ Acts 2:42 says we are to **devote** ourselves to these practices, meaning we are to pay persistent attention to them and diligently occupy ourselves with them.

QUESTIONS/SUMMATION—

THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION—

- Spend some time individually reading and reflecting on Acts 2:42-47 and then share what God says to you personally from your reflection.

- QUESTIONS—how important do you personally think it is that you emphasize to those whom you're discipling that they need to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in (their) inner being, so that Christ may dwell in (their) hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:16-17)? If important, how would you help them to realize this strengthening?

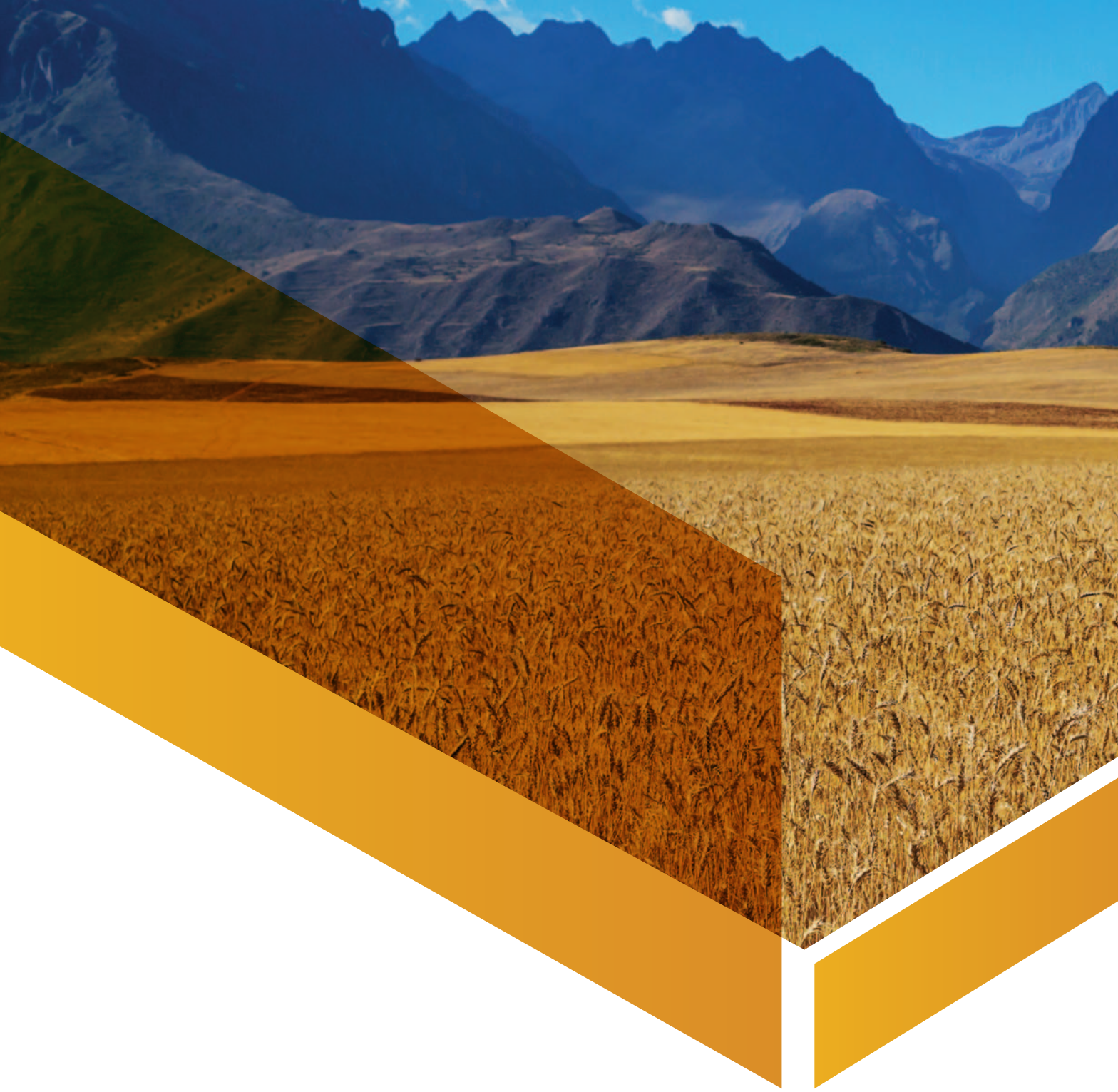
- What impact do you think it has on the Church's testimony when its members truly "love one another" (John 13:34)? Why? How would you help someone whom you're discipling assess their love for others?

- Looking back over your personal journey with Christ, what are some ways in which you were equipped for works of service (Ephesians 4:12) and what names come to your mind as involved in the equipping? Why these names? How do you see yourself reproducing the equipping you experienced?

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- If you have been personally persecuted for the Gospel, share what that persecution involved and how Jesus helped you.

 - THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION (summation)— each believer is chosen by Him (Ephesians 1:11-12); is to be empowered by His Spirit (Ephesians 3:16-17); is to reflect His love to others (John 13:34); and is to be transformed by His Spirit—largely through the ministry of the Body (especially the five-fold gifts of Ephesians 4), so as to be equipped for works of service (Ephesians 4:7-16).

 - Although the church gathers for such practices as teaching, prayer, Communion (worship) and fellowship (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 14), we must be careful to not equate the church with a building that meets in a certain location.



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