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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

LIFE COACHING TO ENCOURAGE THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES AT NORTH RICHLAND HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

Written by

MARK SPENCE

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

_____
Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: February 24, 2014

LIFE COACHING TO ENCOURAGE THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES AT NORTH RICHLAND HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MARK SPENCE
FEBRUARY 2014

ABSTRACT

**Life Coaching to Encourage the Practice of Spiritual
Disciplines at North Richland Hills Baptist Church**
Mark Spence
Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
2014

In order to provide a customizable approach to discipleship in a hectic and diverse environment, this project seeks to help the people of North Richland Hills Baptist Church grow towards maturity in Christ by learning and practicing spiritual disciplines within the context of life-coaching relationships. Dallas Willard argues that the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines is discipling. The results of this project demonstrate that life-coaching relationships are an effective methodology to encourage the practice of spiritual disciplines. Therefore, this project espouses a customizable process to make disciples for the members of North Richland Hills Baptist Church (NRHBC).

NRHBC is located in the suburbs of Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW). Overcommitted schedules crowd out church involvement. Substantial growth in DFW over the last decade created a demographically diverse community. NRHBC can no longer offer homogenous approaches to discipleship in order to effectively reach and make disciples in the surrounding community. As a result, this ministry focus paper proposes a customizable plan of making disciples, which accommodates different schedules and life patterns.

This project proposes making disciples through the practice of spiritual disciplines developed in life coaching relationships. As the coachee becomes familiar with spiritual disciplines, such as those described in the works of Dallas Willard and Richard Foster, the coachee determines which disciplines will be discussed and developed. Life coaching offers the ability to tailor discipleship through one-on-one meetings apart from the church calendar or campus.

A pilot group of coaches and coachees were enlisted from the membership of NRHBC. Coaching4Clergy provided life-coaching training for the coaches. After being matched together, the individual coaches and coachees met for six months. The Reveal Survey, taken by coachees before and after the program, and interviews of the participants were utilized to measure the ability of coaching to make disciples.

Content Reader: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Words: 294

To my wife, Janet Spence, who laughs with me and at me; I could not have asked for a better partner in life

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INTRODUCTION

It dawned on me that something is amiss in the disciple-making process at North Richland Hills Baptist Church (NRHBC) through a simple inquiry from Dan Graham, a well-intentioned church member.[1] Graham shared the Gospel with a friend, who made a decision for Christ. As a result, he asked how the church can help disciple this new Christian who has rarely stepped foot on a church campus.

I encouraged Graham to connect the new Christian with NRHBC on Sunday morning in order to find a service she might enjoy and to join an appropriate Sunday School class. In essence, my response revealed that NRHBC's discipleship plan hinges on participation in Sunday programming. Rather than going and making disciples, NRHBC asks people to come on campus in order to become a disciple.

NRHBC is a large church in a suburban community. Utilizing church growth tactics, NRHBC has become a regional church in the suburban community of Dallas/FortWorth (DFW). As a member of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), NRHBC is a traditional church focused on Sunday worship services and Sunday School. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that my response to Graham centered on programs available on the church campus rather than on the new believer.

This example is a microcosm of the problem faced by NRHBC in the disciple-making process. NRHBC retains many vestiges of a bygone era when the Church stood at the center of life and church members were expected to conform to the church calendar. Discipleship was measured by attendance in church activities and participation in

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[1] Dan Graham, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, August 2010.

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programs. Unfortunately, busy church calendars are not an effective disciple-making

strategy. As culture transitions, previous expectations are no longer reasonable and the

discipleship process is inadequate.[2]

Exacerbating these changes is the reality that American culture has become more

diverse and busy, which makes a one-size-fits-all method of disciple making obsolete.

NRHBC members are not immune to busyness and have increasingly diverse

backgrounds. In a post-Christendom society, the concept of centering life on the church

calendar is increasingly foreign. This diversity and busyness necessitates customization.

Due to its customizable nature, coaching has the potential to address the challenges that

face members of NRHBC in the twenty-first century.

Essentially, coaching is "an ongoing partnership between a coach and a (coachee)

that is focused on the (coachee) taking action toward the realization of their visions, goals

and desires."[3] The methodology employed in coaching includes deep listening and

powerful questioning. Furthermore, coaching is customizable to each coachee because

the focus is on attaining the "visions, goals and desires" of the coachee.[4]

A benefit of coaching that overcomes the problem of busyness is flexibility. A

coach does not need an office and is available beyond Sunday mornings and Wednesday

nights. In this respect, coaching has a customizable schedule allowing the coachee to

develop irrespective of the church calendar. Therefore, this project proposes to use

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[2] Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 1-2.

[3] Christopher McCluskey, "A Christian Therapist-Turned-Coach Discusses his Journey and the Field of Life Coaching," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 27:3 (Fall 2008): 266.

[4] Ibid.

coaching relationships in discipleship because their customizable nature overcomes obstacles connected to diversity and busyness.

Unlike typical coaching relationships, where the content of conversation is often open-ended, this project encourages the spiritual growth of the coachee through the development and practice of spiritual disciplines.[5] Dallas Willard contends that the Bible "informs us that there are certain practices—solitude, prayer, fasting, celebration, and so forth—we can undertake, in cooperation with grace, to raise the level of our lives toward godliness."[6] In other words, the practice of spiritual disciplines is discipling. Through the coaching process, the coach encourages the practice of spiritual disciplines thereby encouraging the coachee toward becoming a disciple of Christ. Thus, the thesis for this ministry focus paper is as follows: In order to provide a customizable approach to discipleship in a hectic and diverse environment, this project seeks to help the people of North Richland Hills Baptist Church grow towards maturity in Christ by learning and practicing spiritual disciplines within the context of life-coaching relationships.

The ministry focus paper is comprised of three sections. Part One addresses the context of NRHBC. Theological reflection, particularly regarding Baptist ecclesiology and discipleship methodology, forms the content of Part Two. The last part discusses the strategy of using life coaching to make disciples through the practice of spiritual disciplines. This project is based on the conclusion that there is disconnect between the current disciple-making methods employed by NRHBC and the environment in which NRHBC exists.

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[5] Encouraging content-rich conversations rather than content-free conversations does not infringe upon the integrity of the coaching process.

[6] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1998), 69.

The context of NRHBC is discussed in Part One, which is divided into two chapters. Chapter 1 explains the demographic context of NRHBC. NRHBC members are spread throughout Northeast Tarrant County, a region of DFW, thus making NRHBC a regional church. Historically, DFW is conservative with theologically conservative roots and a current concentration of mega-churches. The recent economic growth experienced in this region is a major factor in the creation of a culture of diversity and busyness.

The second chapter delves further into the specific context of NRHBC. Part of which recounts the history of NRHBC, starting with the founding of the church in 1956 and continuing to current day. The church mission statement, demographics, and discipleship ministry are examined with particular attention to a critique of the disciple-making process.

The second part is comprised of theological reflection. Chapter 3 focuses on a literature review of five books pertinent to the final project. Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* and Willard's *The Spirit of the Disciplines* are both examined and are crucial to understanding the role of spiritual disciplines in discipleship.[7] The chapter concludes with two works, a journal article explaining coaching and *The Present Future* by Reggie McNeal, which ties life coaching and disciple making together. The theological reflection section concludes with examination of Baptist ecclesiology and the missional movement, as well as a proposed theology of discipleship.

Chapter 4 looks at the strengths and weaknesses of Baptist ecclesiology. In contrast, Chapter 5 examines traditional Baptist methods of discipleship. Chapters 4 and 5 conclude with an alternative ecclesiology and theology of discipleship, respectively,

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[7] Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

which seeks to support the thesis of the final project, namely the development of spiritual disciples as a disciple-making endeavor through coaching relationships.

The third part of the paper centers on the strategy of the final project. Chapter 6 examines the theological implications of making disciples through coaching as well as the goals of the project and the content of the strategy. Additionally, Chapter 6 discusses the desired characteristics of coaches and of coachees who comprised the pilot group.

The final chapter describes the implementation and evaluation of the final project, which took place between September 2011 and March 2013. Other details such as leadership development and needed resources are discussed. This chapter contains an assessment of the project and reports the results. Essentially, the final chapter evaluates the effectiveness of coaching in the practice of disciple making at NRHBC.

I serve as the campus pastor of a satellite campus of NRHBC. My passion is making disciples of Christ. It is my hope that this project moves the locus of discipleship from the church campus into the daily life of NRHBC's church family. This movement into daily life will help facilitate making disciples rather than busy church members.

PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

NRHBC AS A REGIONAL CHURCH IN NORTHEAST TARRANT COUNTY

Since the history of Fort Worth is interwoven with Christianity, it seems divinely

inspired that the city was founded on a bluff overlooking the Trinity River. At the

beginning of the twentieth century, when Fort Worth emerged from its pioneer period and

was becoming a city, fundamentalism took root due to the influence of the fiery pastor of

First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, J. Frank Norris.[1] Fundamentalism continues to have a

lingering influence. As a result, Fort Worth, the largest city in Tarrant County, retains a

strong cultural identification with Christianity including a proliferation of churches.

In addition to the religious history of Fort Worth and Tarrant County, this chapter

is also concerned with the recent economic and population growth of the DFW area.

Economic growth has made a significant impact on the culture of DFW, creating hectic

schedules that often conflict with the church calendar. This new cultural milieu creates

the need to disciple people according to their life patterns. Additionally, the recent

population growth of DFW has brought greater diversity, which requires a customizable

method of making disciples. The religious history, economic growth and population

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[1] David Stokes, *Apparent Danger: the Pastor of America's First Megachurch and the Texas Murder Trial of the Decade in the 1920s* (Minneapolis: Bascom Hill Books, 2010), viii.

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growth have created a need for new discipleship methods in order to reach the community surrounding North Richland Hills Baptist Church.

The Conservative Culture of Fort Worth

Before there was even a hint of Fort Worth there was a church. Founded in 1846, Lonesome Dove Baptist Church was the westernmost Protestant congregation in the United States, as "no Protestant church existed between the Lonesome Dove Baptist Church and the Pacific Ocean."[2] Four years later, immediately north of the current city limits of Fort Worth, settlers established Mt. Gilead Baptist Church. Mt. Gilead Baptist Church was followed by the First Christian Church in 1855, which was the first church founded within the city limits of Fort Worth.[3] It is this "church first" mentality that created a strong Christian culture and fertile ground for fundamentalism in Fort Worth and the surrounding area.

As pastor of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth (FBCFW), Norris held a position within the city. In many ways, his theology set the theology of the early city. His influence continues to this day as Norris stands as the most prominent contributor to the fundamentalist history of Fort Worth.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the fundamentalist movement arose in response to the influences of theologians who called into question the accuracy of Scripture. Using modern techniques such as textual criticism, theologians influenced pastors in Europe and America away from an inerrant position on Scripture. This

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[2] James E. Carter, *Cowboys, Cowtown and Crosses* (Fort Worth: Tarrant Baptist Association, 1986), 1.

[3] Ibid., 7.

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liberalization of theology alarmed conservative pastors and theologians who responded with a call to return to the fundamentals of the faith. As a result, fundamentalism was born. It not only attacked liberal positions on Scripture, but also became known for attacking what fundamentalists believed were social sins.

C. Allyn Russell wrote, "Fundamentalism referred not only to an ultraconservative theological tendency, but to an intransigent attitude as well. In each instance—theology and attitude—J. Frank Norris fitted (*sic*) the mold. In fact, he helped to shape it."[4] Fundamentalists were known as much for what they stood against as for what doctrinal position they held. Norris, like every good fundamentalist preacher, wielded his pulpit as a weapon against the sins of the day. In his sermons, Norris berated the leaders of Fort Worth into rectifying the evils that arose from the city's position as a stop along the Chisholm Trail.

Beginning in the reconstruction period, Fort Worth became a prominent stop on the Chisholm Trail as cowboys drove their cattle from the ranches strewn across Texas towards the slaughtering houses in Kansas and Chicago. As these men arrived in Fort Worth, they sought to satiate their appetites. Businessmen and entrepreneurs began to meet the cowboys' needs by establishing the red light district of Fort Worth. This district earned the moniker, "Hell's Half Acre." By the time Norris took the reigns at FBCFW, Hell's Half Acre was akin to an institution in Fort Worth, as city leaders believed the notorious district was a necessary evil. Norris rose to fame, and perhaps infamy, by railing against the permissive attitude toward Hell's Half Acre.

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[4] C. Allyn Russell, "J. Frank Norris: Violent Fundamentalist," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 75 (July 1971 – April 1972): 277.

Norris became famous not just for the stance he took from the pulpit but the theatrics he utilized to make his point. According to one author, Norris "perfected sensationalism as an art form, and in fact, created controversy as a part of his showmanship."[5] Preaching against evolution, Norris "brought monkeys and apes into the pulpit to introduce his members to the 'kinfolk' of those who accepted Darwin's thesis."[6] It was this type of showmanship that made a name for Norris and enticed droves of people into FBCFW.

In 1909, Norris became the pastor of FBCFW. At that time, the church counted twelve hundred members on the rolls and averaged about five hundred in attendance. By 1928, the church grew to over twelve thousand members with an "average attendance of 5,200 on Sunday mornings."[7] This is an increase of 1000 percent over the course of seventeen years. Because FBCFW's attendance averaged over two thousand in attendance, Norris became known as "pastor of America's original megachurch."[8]

The influence of Norris's fundamentalism on Fort Worth is a result of his showmanship and ability to grow First Baptist into a mega-church. Mark Noll, in *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, lists characteristics of fundamentalism, some of which are still prominent in the pulpits of Tarrant County.[9] This list includes dispensational pre-millennialism, an aggressive stance against modernity that

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[5] Stokes, *Apparent Danger*, 6.

[6] Russell, "J. Frank Norris," 281.

[7] Ibid., 282.

[8] Stokes, *Apparent Danger*, 3.

[9] Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 376-386.

has morphed into anti-post-modernity, a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture, and vocal support for conservative, often Republican, politicians. The majority of preachers in this area continue to exude these fundamentalist characteristics in their preaching. Even though these preachers would reject the label of fundamentalist, the lingering impact from the Christian history of Fort Worth is fundamentalism.

As Fort Worth moves deeper into the twenty-first century, the city retains a strong cultural identification with Christianity. According to the results of the 2010 census, 69.4 percent of the population within a ten-mile radius of NRHBC is strongly or somewhat involved in their faith.[10] Additionally, 84.9 percent identify themselves as Christian with 64.5 percent of the population identifying with a protestant denomination.[11] Both of these are notably higher than the national average. The census also revealed a higher than national average increase in "involvement with their faith in the last 10 years" among those living within a ten-mile radius.[12] Each of these points provide empirical evidence that Fort Worth has retained a cultural identification with Christianity, which is significant when evaluating the ministries and programs of NRHBC.

Over eighteen hundred churches minister in Tarrant County. The proliferation of churches is a result of the higher than average involvement in faith compared to the national average. Not only is there a proliferation of churches, Tarrant County contains

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[10] PerceptGroup, *Ministry Area Profile 2010: Study Area Definition: NRHBC—10 Mile Radius* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group), 15.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

one of the highest concentrations of mega-churches.[13] While this concentration of mega-churches is a result of the culture, mega-churches in turn have an impact on the church culture of Tarrant County.

In *The Present Future,* Reggie McNeal critiques the impact of the church growth movement that became popular in the 1970s.[14] According to McNeal, the church growth movement resulted in a campus-centric philosophy of ministry in local churches. In other words, local churches attempt to outperform other churches in the quantity and quality of programming offered. When a church is able to provide a more dynamic worship service, a more entertaining youth ministry and a high quality children's ministry, that church is usually able to attract members from churches that are not capable of providing as high of a quality of ministry. As a result, the churches that are able to attract and retain members become mega-churches. Thus begins a circular process. High-quality programs attract more members; more members bring greater resources which in turn further increases the quality of programming a church is able to offer. As a result, the relationship between local churches becomes one of competition over members rather than cooperation for the advancement of the Gospel.

Unfortunately, the churches, particularly the mega-churches and near-mega-churches, in the Fort Worth area are susceptible to the trappings of competition.

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[13] Warren Bird, e-mail message to author, January 23, 2012. Warren Bird is the research director at Leadership Network. Leadership Network, in cooperation with the Hartford Institute of Religion Research, has extensively researched mega-churches, including mega-church concentration. From the email, Bird noted, "If you include Dallas and Fort Worth together, it would definitely be in the top 3 (of mega-church concentration), specific rank depending on where the 'area' stops."

[14] McNeal, *The Present Future*, 20-42. Referenced here is Chapter 2 of *The Present Future* in which McNeal discusses the impact of the church growth movement on the North American Church. He contends that the church growth movement over-emphasized the growth of the individual church against Kingdom growth resulting in the church culture critiqued in this paragraph.

Competition tends to fuel the current system rather than lend itself toward genuine innovation. The competitive process rewards originality and creativity within the system. However, it discourages churches from innovating outside the confines of improving programs. What may initially look like innovation is, in actuality, a mere improvement of the current program-based, campus-centric culture that feeds competition among churches. As a result, churches swap members and become vendors of religious goods and services. What is lost is genuine disciple making, which is the focus of this project.

Decade-long Growth of DFW

The recent economic history of DFW is one of growth. Richard Green refers to the growth in DFW from 1970 to 1998 as "spectacular," with "the number of jobs in the Metroplex, as the four county region surrounding (DFW) airport is known, has soared more than 148%, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce."[15] This period of growth occurred while "(nationally) employment over the same period grew 67%."[16] While DFW experienced spectacular growth from 1970 to 1998, economic growth continued into the 2000s, even in the face of national recession.

Over the course of the last decade, the percentage of households with a higher than national average income have increased among those located within a ten-mile radius of NRHBC's campus.[17] At the same time, in the same geographic area, the

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[15] Richard K. Green, "Airports and Economic Development," *Real Estate Economics* 35:1 (Spring 2007): 93.

[16] Ibid.

[17] PerceptGroup, *Ministry Area Profile 2010,* 5.

percentage of households with a lower than national average income decreased.[18] Households that make at least $75,000 per year now comprise 33.8 percent of the households within a ten-mile radius of the church according to the 2010 census.[19] In the same region, households below the national average in income have decreased by 7.2 percent, which demonstrates there are fewer households below the poverty level and more wealthy households.[20] Economic growth is not without problems. With economic growth, over the last four decades, materialism and busyness has become a part of the culture. Both of these characteristics are detrimental to making disciples.

The population of DFW has also grown significantly. More specifically, within a five-mile radius of NRHBC's campus, population increased by 14.5 percent between 2000 and 2010.[21] Since 1990, this same geographic area grew by a staggering 36.3 percent,[22] while the United States population grew by 23.3 percent.[23] While this gap of 13 percent is impressive, the gap grows to 22.2 percent by expanding the radius around the church from five miles to ten miles.[24] In the geographical area of a ten-mile radius around the church, the population grew by 44.5 percent from 1990 to 2010.[25] Essentially, this

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] PerceptGroup, *Ministry Area Profile 2010: Study Area Definition: NRHBC – 5 Mile Radius* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group), 4.

[22] Ibid., 1.

[23] Ibid.

[24] PerceptGroup, *Ministry Area Profile 2010- 10 Mile Radius*, 14.

[25] Ibid., 1.

demonstrates that Northeast Tarrant County doubled the growth rate of the United States between 1990 and 2010.

The sheer overall population growth around NRHBC's campus is an insufficient picture as the growth in diversity is particularly relevant to this discussion. In the five-mile radius around the campus, the minority population has increased from 28.4 percent of total population to 39.3 percent.[26] In the next five years, this segment of the population is expected to grow another 5.7 percent, resulting in 55 percent of the population comprised of those from the "White (Non-Hispanic)" ethnicity with the minority population increasing to 45 percent.[27] The largest minority segment, "Hispanic/Latino" will grow from 13.9 percent of the population living within 5 miles of NRHBC's campus to a projected 25.3 percent by 2015.[28]

Within ten miles of the campus, the population is even more diverse with minority groups comprising 46.6 percent of the total population in 2010.[29] Furthermore, in the ten-mile radius report, Hispanics are expected to consist of 30.8 percent of the population by 2015.[30] Both the five-mile radius and ten-mile radius around NRHBC's campus are more racially diverse than the national average of 35 percent in 2010.[31] As a result of an increasingly diverse community, NRHBC must ensure that the methods of disciple making are capable of discipling people from different backgrounds. The coaching for

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[26] PerceptGroup, *Ministry Area Profile 2010 – 5 Mile Radius*, 4.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] PerceptGroup, *Ministry Area Profile 2010 – 10 Mile Radius,* 4.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 1.

spiritual formation utilized in this final project has the capacity of customizing

discipleship to each individual regardless of background and religious history.

Cultural Impact of Economic Growth

With the advantages of economic growth come tangible consequences. While it is

difficult to pinpoint the exact moment that American culture, and DFW's culture as well,

became marked by materialism and consumerism, this reality exists in the twenty-first

century. Russell Belk, a professor of marketing, defines materialism as, "The importance

a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such

possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the

greatest source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction."[32] This definition reveals the primary

problem: when materialism is central in the life of a believer, idolatry ensues.

Jesus Christ speaks strongly of the potential pitfalls of economic success. In

Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where

moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal . . . For where your

treasure is, there your heart will be also."[33] Unfortunately, too many in the American

Church have embraced prosperity over devotion to Christ. David Platt, author of *Radical*,

laments that the Church in America stands "amid an American dream dominated by self-

advancement, self-esteem, and self-sufficiency, by individualism, materialism and

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[32] Russell W. Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," *Journal of Consumer Research* 12:3 (December 1985): 265.

[33] All Scripture quoted is from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Inc., 2011).

universalism."[34] Essentially, the argument is that economic growth can lead to prosperity. Prosperity can lead to materialism. Materialism is a form of idolatry in which worship is given to the attainment and enjoyment of material goods rather than to Christ. Therefore, the culture of materialism pervading American culture is a barrier to discipleship.

As America has developed a culture of consumerism, there has also been a rise in dual income households. While other factors are certainly involved, such as families below the poverty level that need both parents to work in order to meet the needs of life, the increase in dual income households among the middle class may reflect an overflow of materialism stemming from economic growth. The rise in materialism and the increase in two adults working outside the home are circular; the two concerns fuel each other. In an affluent culture there is a perceived status of living, that in order to be attained, one salary is often insufficient. The main issue is not whether both adults should work outside the home; rather the concern is one of motivation. If the motivation is that both adults have a career that they feel called to pursue, or the family needs two incomes in order to make ends meet, the motivation may not be for materialistic gain. If, however, the reason is materialistic, then both adults working outside the home becomes a deterrent to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Another cultural impact of economic growth in DFW is an increase in busyness. Busyness is closely related to the culture of materialism. Economic growth provides opportunities that are otherwise unavailable. For example, prosperity allows for parents to afford involving their families in a variety of activities like sports, music and

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[34] David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2010), 19.

entertainment. Economic growth leads to prosperity, which leads to materialism. Materialism can manifest itself not only in the purchase and consumption of goods but also in the desire to participate in as many activities as possible.

Often a busy schedule results from individuals or parents ensuring someone in the family does not miss out on a wide variety of experiences. Unfortunately, in the desire to ensure that one does not miss out, church attendance can be sacrificed. In a system where participation is a key component of discipleship, busyness has a significant and often detrimental impact on discipleship. Therefore, it is crucial for church leaders to create methods to disciple people in a manner that fits into a busy schedule.

The next two cultural impacts of economic growth are related: urban sprawl, which is the geographic growth of a metropolitan area as a result of suburban growth, and the lack of infrastructure to keep pace. As DFW has grown, resulting in urban sprawl, the lack of infrastructure has created significant problems. Urban sprawl often leads to a longer commute. Fort Worth and the surrounding suburban cities have not been capable of matching the rate of growth in regards to public transportation and in roads and highways. Both the longer commute, due to urban sprawl, and the deficient transportation system increases the length of time for commuters. A longer commute combined with greater distance from the church campus work together, resulting in less time for church members to devote to the church calendar.

There was a time in American history in which the typical church member was capable of devoting several hours a week, in addition to Sunday morning, to the church calendar. Maturity as a Christian was measured by participation. In the Southern Baptist tradition, a good Christian attended worship services on Sunday morning and Sunday

night, visitation during the week and the prayer meeting on Wednesday night. As culture

changed, the ability of church members to participate multiple times during the week has

decreased. Many churches, in turn, have decreased the number of programs and services

offered in a week. Unfortunately, the metric for Christian maturity has not changed. In

other words, many churches still use attendance and participation in on-campus programs

to measure spiritual maturity while church member availability and church programming

has decreased.[35] This creates a vicious cycle in which fewer and fewer disciples are made

because participation has decreased and many churches have failed to create new

discipleship strategies and methods.

Churches must rethink their disciple-making strategy by supplementing or

replacing the campus-centric method of discipleship that dominates discipleship

programs today. Each of these factors: both parents working outside the home, an

increase in busyness, urban sprawl and the lack of infrastructure to keep pace, cause

church members to have less time to devote to the disciple-making activities of the

church, particularly when those activities are located exclusively on campus. Churches

need to create systems that disciple people in a manner that fits in an already full

schedule.

Cultural Impact of Population Growth

Over the course of the past two decades, Northeast Tarrant County has grown

significantly. As was stated previously, in the radius of ten miles around NRHBC's

campus, this area has grown 14.5 percent in the last ten years and 36.3 percent since

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[35] McNeal, *The Present Future*, 67.

1990. In comparison to other regions of the US, DFW offers a low cost of living but a high standard of living.[36] Furthermore, Texas does not have a state income tax. The combination of these factors has enticed people to move to DFW.

The majority of international immigration to DFW is from Mexico. According to the 2010 census, 80.5 percent of the Hispanic/Latino population that lives within a ten-mile radius of NRHBC's campus is of Mexican origin.[37] By comparison, the national average is 58.6 percent.[38] After Latinos, the next largest immigration populations are Indian and Vietnamese.[39] In all likelihood, most immigrants from Mexico, India and Vietnam are not Baptist in their religious or denominational affiliation.

The racial diversity of Northeast Tarrant County is particularly relevant to this final project. Racial diversity enhances the likelihood that those NRHBC are trying to disciple come from increasingly diverse religious backgrounds. When the population was more homogenous, the culture was still marked by Christendom. In Christendom, people were more likely to identify with a particular denominational affiliation and remain in that denomination for life. At that time, NRHBC could effectively utilize one-size-fits-all methods of making disciples because church members shared not only a common religious history but a common denominational history as well. As the population becomes more diverse, both ethnically and religiously, a one-size-fits-all method becomes increasingly obsolete. Unfortunately, many churches are not prepared to tailor

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[36] City of Dallas. Office of Economic Development, *Economic Development Profile*: *Quality of Life* (Dallas: City of Dallas, 2012), 17.

[37] PerceptGroup, *Ministry Area Profile 2010 – 10 Mile Radius*, 7.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

discipleship methods, believing instead that discipleship through on-campus education is still effective. As a result, fewer and fewer disciples are made. In order to disciple those from an increasingly diverse background, NRHBC must create a method of discipleship that is customizable to each individual.

The demographics of DFW in general, and Northeast Tarrant County in particular, are changing dramatically resulting in the need for NRHBC to change the method of making disciples. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Fort Worth was a pioneer town with a legally sanctioned red-light district. However, Norris, wielded his pulpit to rid the town of the infamous district. In the process, he imparted his particular brand of Christianity, fundamentalism, as a lingering influence on the faith of the citizens of Fort Worth. Fort Worth retains a great deal of this type of conservative Christianity.

DFW has grown both economically and in population over the course of the last decade. Economic prosperity created a culture that is materialistic and busy, causing the church calendar to be squeezed out of people's lives. This is particularly dangerous when participation is crucial to many churches' discipleship strategies. Population growth, and in particular increasing diversity, has created a need to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach of disciple making in favor of a customizable approach. In order to address these changes, this final project seeks to use coaching, which is highly customizable, as a method of discipleship by encouraging the practice of spiritual disciplines.

CHAPTER 2

MINISTRY CONTEXT OF NRHBC

Founded in 1956 as a neighborhood church in a growing suburb, today NRHBC is

a regional church with influence that spans beyond the confines of the city of North

Richland Hills. The primary concern of this project is the spiritual growth of the members

of NRHBC. Therefore, the context of the members of NRHBC is examined, including a

brief history of the church, mission statement, membership demographics and the current

discipleship strategy.

A Brief History of NRHBC

The story of NRHBC starts like that of many SBC churches. Typically, a new

SBC church is started when an existing SBC church decides, either on its own or in

conjunction with SBC agencies, to plant a new church. This was the case for NRHBC

when Richland Hills Baptist Church (RHBC) decided to start a new work in the city of

North Richland Hills. Established in 1853, with twenty-eight members, Birdville Baptist

Church started Richland Hills Baptist Church as a mission church on July 13, 1952.[1] A

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[1] Louise Kerr, "Rejoicing in His Victories, Responding to His Vision," (paper presented at the fortieth anniversary of North Richland Hills Baptist Church, North Richland Hills, TX, May 1996).

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few years later, RHBC sent forty-one members to start NRHBC.[2] On February 26, 1956, these members held services at North Richland Elementary School.[3]

On May 20, 1956, NRHBC was chartered with 115 members.[4] Four houses were purchased on Vance Road and one house on Parchman Street in order for the church to have a parsonage, nursery and educational space.[5] James Hestor became the first pastor of NRHBC while still a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. At the end of 1957, NRHBC averaged 158 members in Sunday School and $25,000 in receipts.[6] In January 1958, Hester led a groundbreaking for a six-hundred seat auditorium that cost approximately $60,000.[7]

In 1959, Hester left NRHBC paving the way for W. Hal Brooks to become the second pastor in July 1959. Under the shepherding of Brooks, who pastored NRHBC for twenty-two years, NRHBC transitioned from a community church into a regional church. Although Brooks deserves the credit for pastoring NRHBC during a time of explosive growth, unfortunately, he also set certain precedents that later caused a church split.[8]

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] "North Richland Baptist Church Believes in its Families," *Mid-Cities Daily News*, February 24, 1985.

[8] Bill Swank, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, June 18, 2012.

At the end of 1960, NRHBC averaged four hundred in Sunday School.[9] From 1963 to 1965, additional land was purchased and educational space developed including an 11,400 square foot education building.[10] In 1966 the church set a goal to build, as money was raised, a new twelve hundred-seat auditorium. A record number of new members were added in 1967, eighty-three by baptism and 202 by transfer from other churches.[11] In 1968 there was an average attendance of 713 in Sunday School.[12] The decade of the 1960s marked a growth of 78 percent in Sunday School.[13] This growth, while significant, was outpaced in the 1970s.

For NRHBC, the 1970s started with groundbreaking services held for the new worship center on March 29, 1970.[14] Brooks challenged the church to complete fundraising for the worship center by 1974.[15] In March 1971, NRHBC set a record of 902 in Sunday School attendance, representing 27 percent growth in just three years.[16] In 1972, a new financial high was set as the church received $290,000, which represents a growth of 173 percent in giving from 1965 to 1972.[17] On October 7, 1973, a record was

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[9] Kerr, "Rejoicing in His Victories, Responding to His Vision."

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] "North Richland Baptist Church Believes in its Families."

[16] Kerr, "Rejoicing in His Victories, Responding to His Vision."

[17] Ibid.

set in attendance with one thousand on campus.[18] The first half of the 1970s saw NRHBC meet their fundraising goal for the new sanctuary.

In 1975 a landmark was constructed, a 75-foot tall fish with inset cross, named the Tower of Truth.[19] The fish stands tall in a fountain shaped in the Star of David. The Tower of Truth, due to its size, has become the branding symbol of NRHBC as the church with the big fish fountain.

The last part of the 1970s saw continued growth in attendance and programming. In 1976, NRHBC averaged twelve hundred in worship and 1051 in Sunday School.[20] Also in 1976, the Parchman family sold ten acres of land to NRHBC that comprises much of the NRHBC campus today.[21] In regards to growth in programming, in 1978, Brooks launched Evangelism Explosion and that same year ninety-eight members went on a mission trip to Nicaragua.[22]

In many respects, 1981 should have been a banner year for NRHBC. The church celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, a record number of 171 people were baptized, and the church purchased additional property at the southwestern corner of Glenview and Parchman.[23] However, in June 1981 Brooks resigned as pastor.

Brook's resignation was a sign of something more sinister in the works. According to Bill Swank, a prominent church member and local historian, Brooks left

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

NRHBC due to a conflict with the worship pastor.[24] Just a year before, the annual

Christmas pageant moved from Richland High School to the Tarrant County Convention

Center and over ten thousand people attended.[25] The pageant added performances and

was renamed, "The Greater Fort Worth Christmas Pageant." The growth of the pageant

and the resignation of Brooks signaled that the influence of Paul Paschall, the worship

pastor, was growing to unhealthy proportions.

In 1983, Phillip Simmons became the third pastor of NRHBC. Three records

would be set in the first several months of Simmons' pastorate. On April 15, 1983,

NRHBC had 1557 people who attended Sunday School.[26] On Easter Sunday, 1983,

NRHBC held services at the Birdville Coliseum with over three thousand in attendance.[27]

In 1985, NRHBC planted Northwood Church on the northern border of North Richland

Hills. This church met for the first time on September 15 with eighty-two in Sunday

School and 121 in worship.[28]

On May 4, 1986, NRHBC celebrated thirty years as a church with two thousand

in attendance.[29] On April 2, 1989, NRHBC broke ground on a 42,000 square foot

"Family Life Center" that included a gymnasium, fellowship hall, kitchen and education

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[24] Swank, interview.

[25] Kerr, "Rejoicing in His Victories, Responding to His Vision."

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

space.[30] The Family Life Center opened on June 17, 1990.[31] As the 1980s came to a close, so too did the explosive growth of NRHBC.

Simmons shepherded the church towards new ways to engage the community. Cornerstone Assistance Network was founded in order to meet the physical needs of the community. Vacation Bible School moved off-campus into various locations in order to engage the spiritual needs of the community. Cornerstone Counseling Center was established in order to help those in the community in need of Christian counseling. In 1992, Simmons was diagnosed with brain cancer and died in March 1994.[32] As a result, Shari Emmons, active participant in the worship ministry at the time, reflects that leadership of the church fell to Paschall.[33] The next pastor did not reverse this trend.

On August 14, 1994, NRHBC called Joe McKinney as the forth pastor of NRHBC. Two weeks later, NRHBC reached a record attendance of just under 2500 in Sunday School.[34] In 1995, 533 new members were added to the rolls with 203 baptisms and an average Sunday School attendance of just under sixteen hundred.[35] In August 1995, NRHBC started a third Sunday School hour at 8:15 AM.[36]

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Shari Emmons, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, September 17, 2012.

[34] Kerr, "Rejoicing in His Victories, Responding to His Vision."

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

In 1996, NRHBC experienced further program expansion while membership grew

to 3535 and the budget grew to $2.8 million.[37] The mission's ministry started to

coordinate Operation Touch, Angel Tree, Apartment Ministries and classes for English as

a Second Language. A stewardship campaign was started for the construction of a new

children's ministry building. The construction of the children's building marked the last

major building project of NRHBC to date.

In 1997, McKinney resigned as pastor of NRHBC amidst scandal of a personal

nature. Unfortunately, unhealthy transitions are common in the history of NRHBC. In

1959, the transition from Hester to Brooks was a normal, healthy transition of one senior

pastor to another. There has not been one since.[38] Brooks left the church in part due to

conflict with Pascall. From Simmons to McKinney, the transition occurred due to

Simmons's death. These unhealthy transitions in the office of pastor allowed for Paschall

to gain further influence in the church, which eventually led to conflict.[39]

In August 1998, NRHBC called Tommy Teague as pastor. In December 1998,

NRHBC purchased property adjacent to the campus that included a six-story office

building and parking at the cost of $3.9 million.[40] In 1999, Teague proposed reducing the

scale of the Christmas pageant. This change led to direct conflict with Paschall, who

coordinated the pageant. In August 1999, Paschall was asked to resign. Instead of reading

his resignation at a church meeting on August 15, Paschall led some members to walk

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Swank, interview.

[39] Emmons, interview.

[40] Louise Kerr, "North Richland Hills Baptist Church History" (paper presented at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of North Richland Hills Baptist Church, North Richland Hills, TX, May 2006).

out.[41] These 216 members established North Point Baptist Church in neighboring Hurst.[42]

An additional 101 left the church for North Point in January 2000.[43] Ultimately, a total of

384 members left NRHBC for North Point from November 1999 to September 2000.[44] A

total of 602 members left NRHBC that year, a significantly higher number than in a

typical year that represents the damage of a church split.[45]

In many respects the 2000s represented a period of recovery and forward

movement following the church split. Teague led the church into the new millennium,

embracing programming as a means to encourage numerical growth. In 2000, Teague

launched Vision 2000: Preparing for the Millennium.[46] This program included a new

mission statement, new programs such as a student mission trip to England, the re-tooling

of the missions ministry, and the development of a thrift store on the southern tip of the

church campus.

In 2002, the Children's Ministry Building was opened. Teague also led the church

in a $1.4 million renovation of the Worship Center, offices and atrium, which was

completed in the fall of 2003.[47] A new schedule was debuted in 2003, with the addition of

a traditional or hymn-laden worship service at 8 AM and two contemporary worship

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[41] Swank, June 12, 2012.

[42] Mark Spence, "Membership Realignment as a Result of 1999 Church Split" (report presented to senior pastor, North Richland Hills, TX, October 29, 2012).

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Kerr, "North Richland Hills Baptist Church History."

[47] Ibid.

services at 9:15 AM and 10:45 AM.[48] The goal of the new service was to attract those looking for a more traditional service.

In 2006, NRHBC celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the church and becoming debt free.[49] The next few years, from 2007 to 2009, saw the addition of the Wellness Center Ministry, Bus Ministry and Middle School ministry which all coincided with the hiring of three new staff members. In 2007, NRHBC began a stewardship campaign entitled Imagine in which the church spent several million dollars in additional building renovations. As land was purchased to make the campus contiguous from Vance Road to Parchman Street, from Glenview Drive to Boulevard 26, the part of the campus immediately adjacent to Boulevard 26 was remodeled allowing for the church to start Christmas on the Boulevard in 2008 as an outreach to the community.

While leading a group from NRHBC on a trip to Israel, Teague died suddenly in June 2011. Over the course of the next year, the church grew through the grieving process. Today, the church looks forward to many years of fruitful ministry under the leadership of Scott Maze, who was called as pastor in May 2012.

NRHBC's Mission Statement

In the mid-to-late-1990s, two prominent Southern Baptist leaders, Rick Warren and Thom Rainer, encouraged churches to develop mission statements. Warren argued in *The Purpose Driven Church*, "There is incredible power in having a clearly defined purpose statement. If it is short enough for everyone to remember, your statement of

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

purpose will yield (several) wonderful benefits for your church."[50] Rainer encouraged the writing of mission statements because "it is difficult, if not impossible, to motivate our members to be involved if they do not even know why the church exists. Such is the reason that the (churches) in our study placed a high priority on communicating the mission of the church."[51] Due to the influence of leaders such as these two men, writing mission statements became one of the trendy ways to encourage church growth at the dawn of the new millennium.

After losing several hundred members yet still maintaining the desire to grow the church past the two thousand attendance mark, Teague proposed "Vision 2000: Preparing for the Millenium."[52] He crafted a mission statement that focused on community, discipleship and evangelism: "NRHBC is a community of transformed believers connecting others with Christ."[53] Under the leadership of Teague, NRHBC developed programs for each emphasis of the mission statement.

As a result of this endeavor, Sunday School was rebranded as Sunday Morning Bible Study (SMBS) in 2003.[54] SMBS largely retains the idea of Sunday School and contains the "Community" component of the mission statement. Classes meet on a weekly basis and the main focus of the class time is the lesson. The classes are

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[50] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 86.

[51] Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: the Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 145.

[52] Tommy Teague, "Vision 2000: Preparing for the Millenium" (powerpoint presented at staff retreat, North Richland Hills, TX, March, 2000).

[53] Ibid.

[54] Kerr, "North Richland Hills Baptist Church History."

encouraged to facilitate community on Sunday mornings as well as throughout the week. SMBS is the key point of community for the church, but also contains an important role in transformation.

The development of new ministries also occurred for the second point of the mission statement, "Transformed." Teague defined transformed as, "Living the transformed life is the daily commitment of your every day life to God and following His (*sic*) purpose for you."[55] Based on this definition, Transformed is the discipleship portion of the mission statement. Two major ministries exist for this component of the mission statement, SMBS and Wednesday night Connect.

The second component of Transformed, Connect, is comprised of discipleship classes that are teacher-student based. The majority of discipleship that occurs at NRHBC is based on a classroom education model, be it on Sunday mornings through SMBS or Wednesday night through Connect. Connect is a variety of classes offered for adults of all ages and life stages. Typically, there are classes for men, women, singles, couples, parents and classes open to any adult. Classes are largely topic based and, while more discussion oriented than SMBS, retain the same education model. Therefore, transformation for disciple making at NRHBC is primarily based on education.

The third component of NRHBC's mission statement, Connecting, refers to evangelism and missions. NRHBC has several mission partnerships throughout the community, national and world including both financial support, as well as short-term mission teams. The main evangelism program at NRHBC is "Invest and Invite." Invest refers to spending time with a non-Christian; Invite to inviting that person or persons to

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[55] Teague, "Vision 2000", March 2000.

an evangelistic church event. Invest and Invite reveals a deficiency of program-centered strategies since it is possible to participate in Invest and Invite without ever sharing the Gospel with someone.

Since the mission statement for NRHBC involves community, transformation and connecting, the goal of each member of NRHBC should be the same. However, reality is that a majority of NRHBC members participate in community, transformation and connecting only through participation in programs. In *Transforming Discipleship,* Greg Ogden contends that the cause "of the low estate of discipleship is that we have tried to make disciples through programs."[56] In other words, while successful at filling a church calendar, programs have not proven successful at making disciples.

Membership Demographics

Like many large churches, NRHBC offers a wide variety of programs in order to attract the highest number of people possible. As a result of the diversity of programs, there is diversity in regards to the generations represented among the members of NRHBC. On the other hand, NRHBC is largely homogenous socio-economically despite the diversity of the surrounding population. As a result, the demographics of NRHBC reflect a church that is balanced in regards to age and homogenous in regards to race.

The leaders of NRHBC have followed church growth principles that encourage a variety of programs in order to attain mass appeal. The three worship services on Sunday morning are designed to each provide a unique style of worship, which appeal to different demographics. Also, the sermon is adapted to each audience according to the culture of

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[56] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 43.

each service. The intent is for the three different worship styles to make the church as attractive as possible to the largest number of people; the same intent is true for the ministries of NRHBC.

Unique ministries exist for preschoolers, children, middle school students, high school students, singles, young adults, median adults and senior adults. More ministries are offered for artists and athletes, men and women, divorcees and couples, those grieving and those celebrating new life. In short, it is in the wide variety of ministries that NRHBC attempts to appeal to a broad audience of Christians.

Both generational diversity and balance exist at NRHBC. There are 5,331 members of NRHBC.[57] Using the generational definitions of Rainer and his son Jess in *The Millenials*, there are six generations at NRHBC.[58] The oldest and youngest generations are the least represented. One percent of church membership is comprised of the "G.I. Generation" born between 1904 and 1924.[59] Three percent of the church membership comes from the "Next Generation" born from 2001 to present.[60] The middle four generations comprise the overwhelming majority of the church and reflect the balance. Fifteen percent of the church is the "Silent Generation" born between 1925 and 1945.[61] The "Boomers," or those born between 1946 and 1964, encompass 29 percent of

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[57] Mark Spence, "NRHBC Generational Study" (report presented to senior pastor, North Richland Hills Baptist Church, September 26, 2012).

[58] Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville: B and H Publishing Group, 2011), 7-8.

[59] Mark Spence, "NRHBC Generational Study."

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

the membership of NRHBC.[62] "Gen Xers" comprise 23 percent of the church,

representing those born between 1965 and 1979.[63] Millenials, born between 1980 and

2000, are the last major group and consist of 26 percent of the church.[64] In total, the four

middle generations are 93 percent of the church, and membership is almost equally

distributed between them.[65]

Where NRHBC is diverse in regards to age, NRHBC is racially homogenous

when compared to the surrounding community. Over the course of the last five years,

NRHBC has added 1,412 new members.[66] Of these new members, 150, or 10.6 percent,

came from minority groups.[67] By comparison, 39.9 percent of the population within a

five-mile radius of NRHBC's campus comes from minority groups.[68] The church year of

October 2010 to September 2011[69] saw the highest percentage of new members from a

minority group at 14 percent.[70] From 2007 to 2011, each year maintained an increase in

minority groups. However, 2011-2012 saw a reverse in this trend as new members from a

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Mark Spence, "NRHBC demographic research" (report presented to senior pastor, North Richland Hills, TX, December 12, 2012.)

[67] Ibid.

[68] PerceptGroup, *Ministry Area Profile 2010: 5 Mile Radius*, 4.

[69] The church calendar year for NRHBC is from October to the end of September. Records are kept according to the church calendar year.

[70] Spence, "Demographic research."

minority group decreased to 10 percent.[71] While NRHBC is not entirely homogenous, when compared to the surrounding culture, the racial diversity of NRHBC does not reflect the diversity of the community. Offering a variety of programs and ministries has resulted in a diversity of age at NRHBC but not diversity in race.

Emphasis on Paid Staff

In March 2000, Teague outlined the steps to meet a numerical goal of an average attendance of two thousand.[72] One aspect was the proliferation of new programs for each component of the new mission statement. The other key component was the hiring of new staff, particularly ministers, in order to oversee the new programs. As a result of this direction, there is an emphasis on paid staff at NRHBC.

Over the last twelve years, six new ministry positions have been created and filled. This is in addition to the eight ministers that were already employed. At the same time, average attendance in SMBS has grown from 1,362 in 2000, to 1,527 in 2011; this represents a growth of 2 percent per new minister.[73] Teague's investment in staff did not result in the numerical growth he intended.

On the other hand, each new minister has resulted in the development of new programs for the church. Ogden offers this assessment of ministry: "We have shunted our spiritual leaders into being program developers, administrators and caregivers."[74] New

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Teague, "Vision 2000."

[73] Mark Spence, "SMBS Attendance" (report presented to senior pastor, North Richland Hills, TX, December 10, 2012).

[74] Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship,* 41.

ministers create new programs, but new programs do not necessarily result in new disciples.

Discipleship Ministry at NRHBC

The discipleship strategy for the next decade at NRHBC was also set in 2000. Initially entitled, "Journey" and now called "Connect," the discipleship strategy was designed to move through four steps: seeker, learner, servant and multiplier.[75] Seeker was defined as those exploring the Christian faith.[76] The next step, learner, was for those initially growing in Christ.[77] The learner was to be studying spiritual disciplines, attending SMBS and developing a biblical understanding of the world.[78] Servant was defined as those close to Christ, particularly those serving through spiritual gifts, sharing the Gospel with others and engaging in worship and SMBS.[79] The last step was entitled multiplier, those who develop a life purpose, lead others and invest in the purpose of others.[80] A key component of each definition is participation in NRHBC programs and therefore success was measured in participation.

Each step in the existing discipleship strategy includes participation in a program offered at NRHBC. Success is measured by attendance. Reggie McNeal contends, "We don't have much evidence to support the assumption that all this church activity has

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[75] Teague, "Vision 2000."

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

produced more mature followers of Jesus. It has produced many tired, burned-out

members who find that their lives mimic the lives and dilemmas of people in the culture

who don't pall all the church rent."[81] Unfortunately, participation does not guarantee that

disciples are made.

There are two components of the Connect strategy that discourage successful

disciple making. The first is that discipleship opportunities are limited to the church

campus. This engenders the mindset that the locus of discipleship is the church campus

rather than the life of the disciple. The second component is the one-size-fits-all approach

of the discipleship strategy. The expectation is for everyone to attend worship, become a

member, attend a SMBS class, serve the church and ultimately lead in a program. There

is little-to-no customization in the strategy. Ogden's critique of most discipleship

programs applies to NRHBC's; the "nature of most programs is that they do not take into

account an individual's growth rate, which is essential to growing disciples."[82] That the

discipleship process is largely limited to the NRHBC campus and not customizable is

further exacerbated by the fact that there is a general decline in participation in

discipleship activities.

There is a confluence of factors that combine to make the Connect strategy

insufficient to make disciples. When participation is the metric for success and fewer are

participating, then the system is failing to make disciples. On the one hand, participation

over the course of the last five years has remained steady within the range of 121 at the

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[81] McNeal, *The Present Future*, 8.

[82] Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship,* 45.

lowest attendance average in the spring of 2010 to a high of 244 in the fall of 2007.[83] By

comparison, participation in SMBS hit a low in 2007 with an average of 1,386 and a high

of 1,527 in 2011.[84] Therefore, while participation in Connect classes has remained

relatively steady, average attendance represents a fraction of those who attend on Sunday

mornings. Greater participation in a discipleship strategy needs to occur. However,

greater participation is not the only solution. In addition to involving more people, the

process needs to become customizable, and life coaching is a customizable approach.

Life Coaching to Develop Disciples through the Practice of Spiritual Disciplines

This final project is concerned with making disciples. Due to the changing

realities of the ministry context of NRHBC as well as changes in the surrounding

community, a new process for making disciples is needed. The goal is to make a flexible,

customizable system in an age that increasingly needs flexibility and customization.

A prominent mindset within the American Evangelical Church is that Christians

shop for churches with programs that meet their needs. Better programs attract more

people necessitating new programs and new ministers. It is a circular system in which

church consumers, rather than disciples of Christ, are created. One of the biggest

challenges in transitioning from program-driven discipleship to people-driven

discipleship is the type of Church culture where people look for their needs to be met

rather than for churches that make disciples.

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[83] Mark Spence, "Connect attendance" (report presented to senior pastor, North Richland Hills, TX, October 30, 2012).

[84] Spence, "SMBS attendance."

Busy schedules and diverse backgrounds create a need for diversity and customization in making disciples. Ogden contends, "Regimentation and synchronization are counterproductive in disciple making. Every individual is unique and different. Making disciples requires a customized approach."[85] One of the benefits of coaching is its customizability.

The system of disciple making in this final project is customizable. Unlike Connect classes, which take place at a certain time and location, coaching can take place in any location and at any time. The Connect discipleship strategy has a one-size-fits-all approach but coaching allows the coach to customize the conversation according to the unique situation and needs of the coachee. While this project encourages the practice of spiritual disciplines as the focus of the coaching conversation, the specifics are left to the discernment and discretion of the coach and coachee. This approach allows discipleship to shift from an institutional process to personal spiritual development that is highly customizable.

The Great Commission, Matthew 28:19-20, includes the challenge to go and make disciples. It is the responsibility of the Church to make disciples of members of the local church as well as of indigenous people on foreign shores. Unfortunately, the system in place in many American churches results in church consumers rather than disciples of Christ. Life coaching, due to its customizability, has the potential to make disciples among the members of North Richland Hills Baptist Church.

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[85] Ibid.

PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

No longer can the American Church base discipleship exclusively on participation
in church activities. Instead, a new disciple-making process must be created. The
methodology of disciple making in this project is a potential solution to the discipleship
problem. Several resources are explored to better understand the paradigm shift in
society, spiritual disciplines and an explanation of how life-coaching relationships can
offer a solution.

Shifting Paradigm and Missional Response

The Missional Church is widely regarded as starting the missional conversation
among many American Church leaders. In this work edited by Darrell L. Guder, several
church leaders contribute their perspectives on the need for the American Church to
reorient around God's mission. As a result, *Missional Church* critiques many of the key
components of the American Church and makes suggestions on how to restore God's
mission to the forefront of the Church.

The authors discuss the transition within American culture from a Christendom society to one that is "Post-Christian and in many ways anti-Christian."[1] In the first chapter, Guder explains, "The basic thesis of this book is that the answer to the crisis of the North American Church will not be found at the level of method and problem solving. . . . (for) the problem is much more deeply rooted. It has to do with who we are and what we are for."[2] The crisis of the American Church is the attempt to answer society's new problems with familiar solutions. *Missional Church* exhorts the Church to address these new problems utilizing Scripture. The biblical solution is the mission of God, and the authors of *Missional Church* explain how the American Church can implement solutions.

In *Missional Church*, the authors apply the missions' mandate from God to solve several of the problems of the Church. Three components of their argument offer a summary of the authors' main line of reasoning: the issues of institutionalism, anthropocentrism and institutional idolatry. Many in the Western world understand the Church as an institution. The authors of *Missional Church* call for a return to biblical and apostolic roots by arguing that the Church is intended by Christ to be a movement of God's people. The authors argue that church leaders must reclaim this missional spirit in order to move from institution to movement.

The authors contend that the Western Church is too anthropocentric. Many American pastors are concerned with the "spiritual needs of consumers and a desire to

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[1] Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: a Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 3.

[2] Ibid.

maximize market penetration for numerical growth."[3] Service is too often defined as the time members spend serving the needs of other members. Service must be redefined to include time spent in the community serving others rather than just serving the needs of the local church.

According to the authors, many in the American Church are in danger of institutional idolatry. The organization has become an end in itself. Many examples exist in American churches where the individual "institution places all its energy in its own maintenance."[4] The Church has become more concerned by its reputation, growth and success than in proclaiming the Gospel and glorifying God. Reorienting around mission can cure the American Church of institutional idolatry.

The most significant contribution *Missional Church* makes to this final project is the admonition to transition leadership from program developers to people developers. NRHBC needs to become a church that equips people rather than keeps them busy. Life coaching fits the model that the authors of *Missional Church* advocate because it is primarily concerned with developing people.

While *Missional Church* warns against the dangers of institutional idolatry, they do not address the potential for mission to become an idol. Humanity is willing to make idols out of most anything, including good correctives such as returning to the mission that God entrusted to the Church. The authors limit this resource by failing to forewarn against making mission an idol.

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[3] Ibid., 198.

[4] Ibid., 229.

Missional Church accomplishes its purpose of addressing the core issues of the American Church, some of which center around the drift away from God's mission. The new problems associated with change in American culture must be addressed through a return to a biblical solution, the mission that God entrusted to the Church. The emphasis on mission encourages a movement away from institutionalism and a move towards people development, which is the focus of this final project.

The Practice of Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines lay at the foundation of this final project. Therefore, they must be thoroughly examined, particularly in regards to a definition and an examination of several disciplines. Thankfully, Foster provides an in-depth discussion of spiritual disciplines in his *Celebration of Disciplines*.

The entire first chapter of *Celebration of Discipline* is Foster's thesis, where he explains his concern over superficiality, the ability of spiritual disciplines to move people into depth, the need for Christians of every type and depth to practice disciplines, and a warning against turning the disciplines into pharisaical laws. Foster explains the thesis on spiritual disciplines stating, "The classical Disciplines (*sic*) of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow world."[5] For Foster, spiritual disciplines provide the depth that is missing in contemporary Christianity. It is due to his concern about depth that Foster bases his argument in favor of the practice of spiritual disciplines.

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[5] Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 1.

Celebration of Discipline opens with a call towards spiritual maturity. Foster

contends, "The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or

gifted people, but for deeper people."[6] According to Foster, too many Christians assume

that the regular practice of fasting, study or prayer is reserved for the spiritually mature.

He contends, "God intends the Disciplines of the life to be for ordinary human beings:

people who have jobs, who care for children, who wash dishes and mow lawns."[7] Rather

than being the exclusive practice of the spiritually mature, it is the disciplined practice

that fosters depth.

After arguing in favor of the practice of spiritual disciplines, Foster offers a few

warnings. The first is against practicing spiritual disciplines without first focusing the

affections of the heart on God. Foster explains, "The Spiritual Disciplines are an inward

and spiritual reality, and the inner attitude of the heart is far more crucial then the

mechanics for coming into the reality of the spiritual life."[8] By orienting the Christian's

heart on God, the potential to transform the disciplines into legalism is blunted.

Foster warns against turning the disciplines into legalism: "It is easy in our zeal

for the Spiritual Disciplines to turn them into the external righteousness of the scribes and

Pharisees."[9] The Gospels are replete with examples of the discipline of the Pharisees, but

it was their self-righteous practice that was repudiated by Christ. Foster contends that

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 3.

[9] Ibid., 9.

conviction by the Holy Spirit will warn Christians to the change from grace to law in the practice of the disciplines.

It is this work of God within Christians that is the key to the spiritual disciplines. Foster argues that the "needed change within us is God's work, not ours . . . we cannot attain or earn this righteousness of the kingdom of God; it is a grace that is given."[10] The spiritual disciplines allow the Christian to place himself or herself "before God so that he can transform us."[11] The disciplines are a practice of the Christian but growth is a result of God's action within the disciple. Concluding his argument in chapter one, Foster spends the remaining twelve chapters explaining the practice of twelve individual spiritual disciplines.

It is the explanation of these disciplines, including details on how to put each discipline into practice, that Foster makes the most significant contribution to this final project. He provides the insight that while the "Bible called people to such disciplines as fasting, prayer, worship and celebration," the Bible also "gave almost no instruction about how to do them."[12] It is the particular instructions on the spiritual disciplines that are crucial to this project and Foster provides an instruction manual to each discipline.

A limitation of *Celebration of Discipline* is Foster's elevation of the spiritual disciplines to the level of sacrament in his statement that spiritual disciplines "are God's means of grace."[13] According to the theologian, Wayne Grudem, the sacraments "in

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[10] Ibid., 6.

[11] Ibid., 7.

[12] Ibid., 3.

[13] Ibid., 7.

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themselves (sic) actually convey grace (sic) to people."[14] Foster would do well to clarify

whether the spiritual disciplines are God's means of conveying grace, a sacramental

position, or if he intends his argument to be line with a more Protestant position that the

spiritual disciplines, along with the Lord's Supper and Baptism, to be the means of grace

to those who are already Christians.[15]

Originally introduced in 1978, *Celebration of Discipline* has provided generations

of Christians a helpful guide on spiritual disciplines. In giving instructional details on

each discipline, Foster clarifies the practice of each discipline. It is these instructions that

are crucial to the implementation of this final project.

The Relationship of Spiritual Disciplines to Discipleship

One of the fundamental arguments of this final project is the belief that a

Christian can grow as a disciple through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Without the

connection between the spiritual disciplines and disciple making, this final project does

nothing to correct the discipleship process of NRHBC. Thankfully, Willard makes a case

for the effectiveness of spiritual disciplines as a discipling endeavor in *The Divine

Conspiracy*.[16]

The thesis demonstrates Willard's concern for discipleship within the lives of

Christians: "It is my hope with this book to provide an understanding of the gospel that

will open the way for the people of Christ to actually do – once again, for they have done

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[14] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 966.

[15] Ibid., 950.

[16] Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*.

it in the past – what their acknowledged Maestro said to do."[17] His thesis begs the question, what did the "Maestro" of Christianity command his followers to do? Willard uses the Sermon on the Mount to describe a life lived according to the example of Christ as Jesus taught on and proclaimed the invisible Kingdom of God.

In the first two chapters, Willard begins by raising several concerns about the teachings of how to live a good life within three American spheres: academia, culture and the Church. Willard describes a movement within academia to disassociate moral knowledge from moral action. He applies this critique to American culture and voices concerns within art, particularly the arena of entertainment, music, television and movies. There is a celebration of unethical behavior within American art, which reveals a celebration of doing whatever one wants do as right.[18] Willard takes to task both extremes found in the American Church for separating moral knowledge from action.[19] Willard then turns to the Sermon on the Mount as the corrective to common mistakes found in American academia, culture and Church.

While chapters 1 and 2 of *The Divine Conspiracy* focus on these concerns, chapters 3 through 9, turn to the Sermon on the Mount. It is the Sermon on the Mount, according to Willard, that teaches Christians how to live in God's invisible kingdom while still living on the earth. As a result, Willard spends seven chapters explaining this sermon. He uses Jesus' teachings and practice as the example for Christians to follow. In

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[17] Ibid., xv.

[18] Ibid., 10.

[19] Ibid., 12.

chapter nine, Willard transitions from discussing the Sermon on the Mount to a description of a life in the Kingdom practiced through spiritual disciplines.

The connection between spiritual disciplines and discipleship is the most significant contribution Willard makes to this final project. Willard connects the Sermon on the Mount to spiritual disciplines by explaining that Jesus' teaching "leads to a discipline, not a law, and a discipline that prepares us, precisely, to act in a way that fulfills the law of whole-person love of God."[20] Christians should "not just hear what Jesus said to do and try to do that. Rather, we also notice what he did, and we do that too."[21] According to Willard, Jesus is the one who connects discipline and discipleship. Christians must follow Christ's example and practice the same disciplines.

Willard, in his discussion on spiritual disciplines, warns against the potential abuse of spiritual disciplines: "(The scribes and Pharisees) focus on the actions that the law requires and make elaborate specifications of exactly what those actions are and of the manner in which they are to be done."[22] However, what is missing from this book is an explanation of how to avoid the pitfalls of legalism.

The argument for spiritual disciplines as a means to make disciples is found both in Christ's teaching and in his example. Willard explains that those "who have made great spiritual progress all seriously engaged with a fairly standard list of disciplines for a spiritual life. There has been abuse and misunderstanding, no doubt, but the power of solitude, silence, meditative study, prayer, sacrificial giving, service, and so forth as

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[20] Ibid, 201.

[21] Ibid., 352.

[22] Ibid., 143.

disciplines are simply beyond question."[23] In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard makes a

definitive connection between the role of spiritual disciplines and discipleship.

Life Coaching Defined and Process Explained

Due to the relative newness of life coaching, there is an unfortunate lack of

academic resources that help define, explain and offer examples of life coaching. Robert

Biwas-Diener, through the article "Personal Coaching as a Positive Intervention," in the

Journal of Clinical Psychology, offers a much-needed reputable perspective on life

coaching.[24] Although his article is concerned with coaching in a psychological setting, his

definition of coaching and explanation of the methodology is helpful to this project.

In the first paragraph of the article, Biwas-Diener offers this thesis: "In this

article, I will outline coaching as a positive intervention and discuss its potential for

application with clinical clients."[25] The focus of the article is primarily on how

psychologists and psychotherapists could utilize the techniques of coaching. Biwas-

Diener's goal with the text is to introduce coaching to psychologists, explain how to

apply coaching techniques and differentiate between coaching and psychotherapy. His

argument includes the following definition of coaching: "Personal coaching is a

professional relationship in which coaches work with clients to facilitate experiential

learning and improve functioning and performance, often in the context of working

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[23] Ibid., 355.

[24] Robert Biwas-Diener, "Personal Coaching as a Positive Intervention, " *Journal of Clinical Psychology*" 65:5 (2009): 544-553.

[25] Ibid., 544.

toward specific goals."[26] It is this focus on performance that is the main difference between coaching and psychotherapy.

Biswas-Diener explains, "Coaching is often seen as a method to make high-functioning people perform even better, whereas psychotherapy is principally concerned with the treatment of mental disorders."[27] He also clarifies that psychology deals primarily with the client's past before the client is able to move forward in a healthy manner. Coaching, on the other hand, is forward thinking, building on the strengths of the coachee. Within the coaching relationship, as explained by Biswas-Diener, the coachee sets the agenda, establishes the goals, while the coach offers praise and holds the coachee accountable. Biswas-Diener concludes the paper with case studies as examples. He demonstrates a psychologist can successfully utilize techniques unique to coaching.

Additionally, Biswas-Diener discusses the core assumptions of coaching, "That people have an innate capacity to grow and develop, a focus on mutually agreed upon goals, and an understanding that the relationship is relatively equal and collaborative."[28] The coach and coachee collaborate on the focus of the relationship, set the goals, and the coach holds the coachee to the established goals. Biswas-Deiner's definition and explanation of assumptions provide an academic comparison point for the curriculum developed by Coaching4Clergy, which is the curriculum utilized in training coaches in this project. This contribution of Biswas-Deiner is crucial to the integrity of the project.

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 546.

[28] Ibid., 544-545.

The limitation of this resource is the exclusive focus on clinical psychology and psychotherapy. Coaching as utilized in other environments, such as the classroom, boardroom or pulpit, are not explored. While this is not the scope of Biswas-Diener's paper, it is an omission that impairs the usefulness of the resource. Overall, Biswas-Diener provides a much needed resource on life coaching. This article provides a helpful definition, discussion of methods and critique of assumptions within coaching.

Life Coaching for Disciple Making

According to McNeal, the American Church pursues solutions to the wrong questions. Instead, in *The Present Future*, McNeal proposes new and difficult questions that Church leaders must address in order for the Church to move forward in a post-Christendom culture. Fortunately, McNeal provides answers to the tough questions through biblical solutions that encourage the Church to regain God's mission. *The Present Future* is replete with salient insights into needed changes in the American Church and in regards to discipleship in particular which is the scope of this final project.

In the introduction, McNeal pens the thesis, "My hoped-for contribution is to provide you with a synthesis of essential actions, an overall strategy, which will help you move forward with those who will join you in reshaping the Christian movement in North America."[29] In short, McNeal attempts to reorient the direction of the Church by asking new and challenging questions. It is in the posing of these difficult questions that McNeal hopes to change the trajectory of the Church from increasing irrelevance to cultural engagement.

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[29] McNeal, *The Present Future*, xviii.

While the book deals with six different questions for the Church, there are three themes that comprise the argument of the book: a critique of church busyness, a calling for Kingdom growth and an emphasis on spiritual formation. McNeal argues that church-centered busyness has been confused with vibrant spirituality. In the American Church, participation in church activities is the implicit measuring stick for discipleship. McNeal writes, "We have assumed that if people come to church often enough they will grow."[30] The goal of this final project is to transition discipleship away from mere participation in church activities.

McNeal contends that the Church needs to shift its focus from individual church growth to community transformation.[31] As attendance became the measurement for the success of a ministry, churches sought to improve their ministries in order to attract as many people as possible. McNeal contends, "Once the bottom line became the measure of success, the rush was on to acquire attendees, even if they came from other churches."[32] Competition rather than collaboration may allow an individual church to grow numerically, but it impairs churches working together towards community transformation.

The third salient insight is McNeal's call to return to spiritual formation. McNeal writes, "The approach to spirituality in the modern church has been to adopt the world's education model. Sunday 'School' reflects the basic assumption that the path to Christian

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[30] Ibid., 80.

[31] Ibid., 26.

[32] Ibid., 24.

maturity involves the acquisition of biblical information."[33] Instead, McNeal calls for spiritual formation to move from the classroom to the living room. The methodology that McNeal suggests for this transformation of discipleship is life coaching.

The idea of utilizing life-coaching relationships as disciple-making methodology to encourage spiritual disciplines is the focus of this final project, but the idea originates with McNeal. Therefore, this idea of McNeal's is the most significant contribution that *The Present Future* makes to this final project. McNeal recommends, "Churches provide life coaching for people. We need to view this as spiritual formation."[34] This final project explores whether or not the methodology recommended by McNeal produces disciples.

The Present Future is a polemic against a current model of Church found in the American Church landscape. In the introduction, McNeal promises that the book provokes, which is an endeavor he achieves. However, the main limitation of the resource is that McNeal ignores the potential to utilize existing systems within the Church to accomplish the missional change that he advocates.

In *The Present Future* McNeal provides a thought-provoking corrective to Church leaders in America. This final project is built on McNeal's idea of combining life coaching and spiritual disciplines in order to make disciples. In addition, McNeal offers important strategies and methodologies for churches to remake themselves into organizations that make disciples, used by God, to transform the community that lies outside the walls of the church.

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[33] Ibid., 55.

[34] Ibid., 77.

American society is undergoing a paradigm shift for which many churches are unprepared. The resources in this chapter offer a new path in which disciples are made in relationships, through the practice of spiritual disciplines as customized to each coachee. For example, *Celebration of Discipline* gives detailed instructions on how to practice twelve spiritual disciplines. Willard's work explains how spiritual disciplines lay at the foundation of disciple making. In *The Present Future*, McNeal makes the argument that disciples can be made in life-coaching relationships that customize the practice of spiritual disciplines, which is the basis for this final project.

CHAPTER 4

GOD'S MISSION HAS A CHURCH

In the American Church, far too often mission is defined as what professionals do on foreign shores, whereas ecclesiology is concerned with the functions or purposes of the church in local community. As a result, mission becomes what some in the Church do rather than a command that should involve every Christian. This chapter is concerned with discussing strengths and weaknesses of Baptist ecclesiology. An alternative ecclesiology is proposed in which mission is moved from the fringes of ecclesiology to the center. This chapter concludes with a discussion on how disciple making through life coaching harnesses the strengths of the missional movement in order to be a mission-oriented discipleship strategy. This movement of mission from the fringes to the center of ecclesiology is simply a recalibration of God's intent for the Church because the Church is God's instrument to accomplish his redemptive mission. In other words, God's mission has a Church.

Baptist Ecclesiology Strengths

Three strengths of Baptist ecclesiology are discussed here: the use of Scripture alone as a source of faith, the non-creedal tradition and the autonomy of local churches.

This is not to say that there are only three strengths of Baptist ecclesiology. These three strengths were selected because of their relevance to the thesis of this final project.

When speaking of the strength of Scripture alone as a source of faith within Baptist ecclesiology there are two components to this statement. The first is biblical authority. E.Y. Mullins, explains, "Authority of the Scripture lies at the basis of (the Baptist) plea."[1] In theory, Baptists utilize the Bible as the only source for faith and practice. In *The Baptist Heritage*, Leon McBeth explains, "From John Smyth[2] onward (Baptists) refused to accept any human authority, bishop, church, or decree unless it agreed with scripture."[3] Within the Baptist tradition, the goal is to use the Bible as the foundation on which every other component of Church must rest or be replaced.

While authority of the Bible refers to its role as foundation of belief, the second component of Scripture alone as a source of faith is belief in the sufficiency of Scripture. Mark Dever writes: "to observe that Scripture is 'sufficient' is to observe that it's sufficient for helping us do whatever God would have us do."[4] Baptists believe the Bible does not need to be supplemented or redacted. The Bible alone is sufficient and authoritative for all faith and practice.

It is the authority and sufficiency of Scripture that led Baptists to craft confessions rather than creeds. McBeth explains the purpose of confessions, "To those without, confessions explained, defended, and clarified the Baptist faith. To those within the

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[1] Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, 26.

[2] John Smyth is recognized by Leon McBeth as the founder of the Baptist denomination.

[3] H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 70.

[4] Mark Dever, *The Church: the Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B and H Publishing Group, 2012), xxi.

Baptist fold, the confessions educated, unified and confirmed the faithful."[5] McBeth

further explains, "Confessions (are) merely human statements . . . in no wise could they

ever approach the authority of Scripture."[6] The intent is for confessions to explain beliefs

but to never rival the authority of Scripture

This non-creedal tradition is the second strength of Baptist ecclesiology. McBeth

offers insight into the difference between a creed and confession within the Baptist

tradition: "A confession affirms what a group of Baptists, large or small, believes at any

given time and place. A creed prescribes what members must believe."[7] In other words, a

confession is intended to be more general in nature, more of an umbrella of beliefs, rather

than a creed, which tends to be more specific. For example, Baptists can have divergent

beliefs about eschatology or soteriology and remain Baptist. This allows for a great deal

of flexibility in belief while ascribing to the same confession. This flexibility of belief

can lead to flexibility of methodology, which is an important component of this final

project since coaching as disciple-making methodology is a new methodology.

An important component of Baptist ecclesiology is local-church autonomy where

each individual Baptist church is self-governing. McBeth explains that autonomy for the

local church means "each local congregation (is) complete and independent within

itself."[8] Dever explains, "The local congregation is ultimately responsible for its

discipline and doctrine. Disputes between members (Matt 18:15-17), as well as matters of

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[5] McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 68.

[6] Ibid., 67.

[7] Ibid., 66-67.

[8] Ibid., 76.

doctrine (Gal 1:8, 2 Tim 4:3), church discipline (1 Cor 5), and membership (2 Cor 2:6-8)

are recognized as congregational matters."[9] Many Baptist churches organize partnerships

and associations, which adopt confessions that reflect the beliefs of the partner churches.

However, even within major branches of the Baptist denomination, such as the SBC,

neither the associational leaders nor the adopted confession can infringe upon the

autonomy of the local church. Within the Baptist tradition, each church has the obligation

to practice the faith based on Scripture alone and guided by the adopted confession.

Baptist Ecclesiology Weaknesses

Baptist ecclesiology is founded on the belief that the Bible is the authority and is

the sufficient guide for the faith. This belief has led to many Baptist churches being

strong teachers of doctrine. On the other hand, a weakness of Baptist ecclesiology is the

Baptist discipleship system in which the culmination of the discipling process is

classroom participation.

The typical Baptist discipleship process starts when someone becomes a

Christian, followed by baptism by immersion, and concludes with participation in a small

group or Sunday School class. The new Christian is expected to attend Sunday School,

where he or she is expected to learn right belief and right behavior. Ken Hemphill, SBC

denominational leader, explains, "Once a church reaches people through the front door of

worship, the church still must assimilate them into the small group structure."[10] This

process assumes that attendance makes disciples. Unfortunately, Sunday School classes,

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[9] Dever, *The Church*, 121.

[10] Ken Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur: a Sunday School Growth Strategy for the 21st Century* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 21.

especially in Baptist churches, can merely focus on imparting biblical knowledge. As a result, discipleship is largely understood as acquiring biblical facts.

In making Sunday School, or other small groups, the main discipling environment, Baptists have created a discipleship system that emphasizes knowledge but too often neglects action. In *Transformation,* Bob Roberts contends, "The Western approach to discipleship (is) the transfer of information through curricula. This approach results in educated converts who may grow churches, not necessarily radically transformed disciples who will change the world."[11] Disciple making must return to a model that is as interested in action as it is in belief. Life coaching for the practice of spiritual disciplines offers a connection between knowledge, belief and action in order to make disciples.

When the classroom is the pinnacle of the discipleship process of a church, numerical metrics become the measurement of success. A classroom that is routinely filled is considered a success whereas an empty or partially-filled classroom is an area for growth. Thus another ecclesiological weakness of the Baptist church is the use of numerical metrics, such as attendance and budgets, to measure success. As long as a church grows in these aspects, regardless of positive impact in the community or ability to make disciples, many consider such churches successful. McNeal remarks, "We have developed church scorecards that measure bottom lines only – attendance, giving and

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[11] Bob Roberts, *Transformation: How Glocal Churches Transform Lives and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 15.

membership,"[12] which McNeal contends "rewards church activity and can be filled in without any reference to the church's impact beyond itself."[13]

It may be possible at this point to simply encourage new programs, such as a program that encourages missional participation. However, a programmatic fix is insufficient. McNeal explains that the "need of the North American church is not a methodological fix. It is much more profound. The church needs a mission fix."[14] As a result of the need for a mission fix, this project proposes a new ecclesiology in which the Gospel mission, as imparted by Jesus Christ to his Church, takes a more prominent role.

The Church as a Community on Mission

A concern with Baptist ecclesiology is the relegation of mission to the vocational missionary rather than the responsibility of each Christian. In making mission the responsibility of every Christian, the ecclesiology described attempts to raise the importance of mission to the same level as it is emphasized in Scripture. The ecclesiology proposed is that the Church is a community of disciples under the lordship of Christ partnering with God on his redemptive mission. This section is divided into three subsections that will further examine each component of this ecclesiology.

The first component of the ecclesiology suggested here is the Church as a community of disciples. This statement is based on 1 Corinthians 1:2, in which Paul writes, "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to

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[12] McNeal, *The Present Future,* 110.

[13] Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), xvii.

[14] Ibid., 10.

be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours." In this verse, Paul makes several statements that confirm the Church as a community of disciples.

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul uses the term *ekklesia*, which means "an assembly" but is translated by New Testament scholars as "The Church, either the body, or the place."[15] However, the Church is not merely an assembly of Christians. As Alan Hirsch explains, "An ecclesia (*sic*) is not just a God-community—there are many such communities around. We are defined by our relationship to the second Person of the Trinity, the Mediator, Jesus Christ."[16] This verse is replete with examples of the uniqueness of this type of *ekklesia* as one centered around Jesus Christ. Understood, but unstated, is that the community is comprised of disciples of Jesus Christ.

Paul announces that the Church consists of disciples in 1 Corinthians 1:2 when he states that the church of Corinth is "those sanctified in Christ Jesus." Grudem defines sanctification as "a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives."[17] Sanctification, therefore, is the process of becoming a disciple of Christ. Thus the Church is a community, an *ekklesia*, of disciples progressively sanctified in Christ.

The second component of the ecclesiology proposed here is based on Colossians 1:18, which states, "And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and

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[15] H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, eds., *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), 239.

[16] Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 41.

[17] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1253.

the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy." N.T. Wright, in his commentary on Colossians, contends that Colossians 1:18 reveals, "It is to this Jesus Christ, none other, that the Colossians now belong in belonging to the church."[18] Christ as the head of the Church denotes that Christ is the Lord over the Church. Richard Melick illustrates that in using the body as a metaphor, Paul is explaining that, in "the hierarchy of the parts of the body, the head (is) superior to the rest."[19] Thus the Church, with Christ as the head, is under his lordship.

According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, God gave the Bible as the basis of practice in both personal and congregational life. It states, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Through the Bible, God has given his people everything they need. If a church leader attempts to lead contrary to Scripture, that leader is usurping the lordship of Christ. It is in the right teaching of the Bible that the Church functions under the lordship of Christ.

The Church, under the lordship of Christ, must heed Christ's teachings and commands. In Matthew 28:18-20, Christ calls his Church to partner with God on his redemptive mission. This is the third part of the ecclesiology presented here, and has two components: partnership with God and that the mission is ultimately God's. While the partnership is the first component mentioned, it will need to be examined in light of God's redemptive mission. Therefore, it is the latter that needs to be examined first.

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[18] N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: an Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 78.

[19] Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 221.

The Gospel mission that Jesus commands his followers to obey in Matthew 28:19-20 ultimately belongs to God. This is what is meant by "his redemptive mission." Since the mission is God's mission, the Church must learn that "the living God is a missionary God."[20] It was God who started the mission of redemption by sending his Son and the Holy Spirit. Just as any discussion of being a disciple is the emulation of Christ, it is crucial to understand that the Christian must also emulate the missional nature of God. Just as God went to the world to redeem, the disciple too must go into the world with the Gospel. Lesslie Newbigin argued that mission is so central to the life of the Christian that, "There is no participating in Christ without participation in (Christ's) mission to the world."[21] In Matthew 16:18, Jesus states, "I will build my church." The triune God grows his Church, and in turn expects his Church to join his efforts on mission in the world.

In the Great Commission Jesus commands his Church to go, but also promises that "surely I am with you always." Craig Bloomberg explains that in the Great Commission, Jesus "calls his people to become disciple makers, and he promises to be with them irrespective of their successes or failures."[22] The Church does not own the mission but "mission belongs to the very being of the church."[23] The mission then is God's mission, and is a partnership between the Church and God.

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[20] John R W. Stott, "The Living God is a Missionary God" in *Perspectives of the World Christian Movement*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorn (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 1.

[21] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 1.

[22] Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 433.

[23] Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 1.

In a traditional Baptist ecclesiology, mission is a subset of ecclesiology and is applicable only to the vocational missionary and the occasional short-term volunteer missionary. Many Baptist churches are best labeled as attractional churches that do their best to attract church members, many of whom become spectator Christians. As a result, the typical Baptist ecclesiology does not accurately convey the biblical role of mission as a command for every Christian. The attempt is made in the ecclesiology of this paper to elevate mission to the center rather than the fringes. In order to transition NRHBC to a more biblical and missional ecclesiology, the Church needs to adopt the strengths of the missional movement.

Adopting the Strengths of the Missional Movement

As it currently stands, the missional movement is still in its infancy. In *Forgotten Ways*¸ Hirsch provides a helpful definition: "The missional church is a community of God's people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God's mission to the world. . . . The church is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible."[24] Properly understood, mission is central to the purpose of the Church. As Newbigin explains, "A church that is not 'the church in mission' is no church at all."[25] The missional movement is a helpful corrective to the traditional understanding of the Church as the goal of the Gospel and salvation as the instrument to that end.

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[24] Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 82.

[25] Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 2.

Within the missional movement the starting point for understanding the purpose of the Church is Scripture. Scripture attests that the Church exists for God's mission. Guder explains, "A missional ecclesiology is biblical . . . the biblical witness is appropriately received as the testimony to God's mission and the formation of God's missionary people to be the instruments and witnesses of that mission."[26] An appropriate understanding of the role of mission in the Church emphasizes the missional commands of Christ in passages such as the Great Commission and Acts 1:8-9.

In order to adopt the strengths of the missional movement, NRHBC must transition from attractional to missional. Attractional refers to the emphasis on coming to church for a program, event or ministry rather than on the missional understanding that Christ commands the Church to, as you go, make disciples. In order to make this transition, three changes must take place for NRHBC. First, to change from attractional to missional, ecclesiology must be made a subset of missiology. Second, church leadership must transition from program developers and event coordinators to missionaries. Last, there must be a change in what is measured and valued.

The need for the first change, from mission as a subtenant of ecclesiology to polity as a subset of missiology, has already been discussed in this chapter. Therefore, the argument in favor of ecclesiology as a subset of missiology has been articulated. However, the pragmatics of transitioning the responsibilities of leadership and creating a new metric will now be explored.

With the development of the church growth movement, a new purpose of membership was proposed, "every member a minister." The church growth movement

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[26] Guder, *Missional Church*, 11.

emphasized the need to create new and better programming in order to attract the most possible members. John Mark Yeats and Thomas White contend pursuit of numerical growth, "Many churches simply caved in to whatever process, whatever program, whatever worked to get people in our doors."[27] As a result, the need for volunteers grew exponentially in order to staff the new and expanded programs. When every member is a minister, the focus is on serving the church. On the other hand, making every member a missionary is a return to the biblical mandate for every Christian to live on mission.

Another product of the church growth movement is that many pastors and leaders became event coordinators and program developers. As Guder explains, "The nature of leadership is thus transformed into the management of an organization shaped to meet the spiritual needs of consumers and maximize the market penetration for numerical growth."[28] The focus on numerical growth results in the role of the pastor and leaders to do whatever it takes to add members. Fulfilling the mission of the Church becomes the responsibility of the vocational minister and disciple making becomes a program. In order to make the transition from an attractional church to a missional church, NRHBC must transition its leadership to be primarily focused on teaching and equipping church members to be missionaries. It is for this reason that life coaching was selected as an alternative method because the focus is on teaching and equipping.

In order to further the transition from attractional to missional, the metrics for success need to be changed. For example, at NRHBC the primary measurements for success are attendance and financial giving. When the church hits highs in attendance or

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[27] Thomas White and John Mark Yeats, *Franchising McChurch* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 65.

[28] Guder, *Missional Church*, 198.

receives a large sum through tithes, the church leadership celebrates a success. As McNeal contends, "The current scorecard promotes the internally focused, program-based, church-based side of the ledger. We must develop a scorecard that supports the other side of the shifts."[29] Metrics such as hours spent serving in the community, number of non-church affiliated persons who surrender their lives to Christ and are baptized, and money given to non-church non-profits are just examples of ways that NRHBC can change what is measured and change what is celebrated. The time spent with a life coach or as a life coach can also be one of the new metrics.

Since church programming tends to lead Christians away from engagement of the community, the solution is not a new program that brings members to the church campus, rather encouraging them to engage the community. Any new endeavor must be concerned with equipping church members in the regular traffic patterns of their life and releasing them to ministry in their community. In other words, any new endeavor, such as life coaching, has to be congruent with Christ's commands to "go and make disciples," rather than asking either the community or members to "come" to the church campus to be discipled. Therefore, life coaching is a missional disciple-making endeavor because it is a "go and disciple" methodology of making disciples.

Life Coaching and Missional Disciple Making

In order to determine if a church is fulfilling the mission or merely attracting a crowd is to explore whether or not a church fulfills Jesus' call to "go and make disciples." The key issue centers upon whether or not members are equipped to live as

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[29] McNeal, *Missional Renaissance, xvii*.

missionaries, as they would be in missional churches, or if they are merely encouraged to come to the church campus for programming, as they would be in attractional churches. Life coaching, as presented in this final project, is a missional, disciple-making endeavor because it fulfills Jesus' command in the Great Commission to "go and disciple" and because it is customizable to the context, the religious background and the spiritual needs, of the coachee.

Before discussing how life coaching is a form of missional disciple making, a brief note about the importance of discipleship in missions is in order. A common misunderstanding of missions is that it is primarily concerned with evangelism, as though in the Great Commission Jesus commands his followers just to make converts. Many mission endeavors are only concerned with making converts but not with discipling those converts. Jesus, on the other hand, commands his followers to make disciples. Writing in the *Evangelical Missiological Quarterly*, Allen Arnsen explains, "The task of making disciples is the key to the overall task of missions."[30] While missions is usually first concerned with making converts, the primary task of missions, according to the Great Commission is in making disciples. Therefore, a strategy is only missional if it is ultimately concerned with making disciples.

The first point in life coaching for missional discipleship is that the coaching relationship is not limited to a time or location dictated by the institutional church. Unlike in attractional methodologies, where the location of discipleship is the church campus and occurs according to the church calendar, the locus of disciple making in this project

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[30] Allen G. Arensen, "Making Disciples According to Christ's Plan," *Evangelical Missiological Quarterly* 16:2 (April 1980), http://www.emqonline.com/emq/issue-226/1223 (accessed January 17, 2014).

is in the life of the coachee. In other words, the coach and coachee may meet wherever and whenever is best for them. The location and time is entirely customizable to their schedules. This schedule and location flexibility makes life coaching a "go and disciple" methodology rather than an attractional disciple-making process.

The second reason why the coaching in this project is missional is the ability to contextualize the discipleship process to each coachee. Josphat Yego, writing in *Evangelical Missiological Quarterly*, defines contextualization as "making something applicable to the life situation in which one finds (oneself). It means to clarify . . . or make it applicable to their particular situation."[31] Contextualization, according to Yego, is to customize application to the context of the disciple. Yego further explains the importance of contextualization in missions: "It simply means the never-changing word of God in ever-changing modes of relevance. . . . With this in mind, I see contextualization not only as right, but as necessary."[32] By allowing the coachee to determine which spiritual disciplines to develop, life coaching offers a customizable approach to discipleship rather than a one-size-fits-all approach found in many attractional churches. Best practices in missions are concerned with contextualization, including customizing methodology to the context. Therefore, because coaching is customizable it is missional.

This final project is based on the idea that the practice of the spiritual disciplines is discipling. A fair critique is whether or not the practice of spiritual disciplines is

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[31] Josphat K. Yego, "Appreciation for and Warnings about Contextualization," *Evangelical Missiological Quarterly* 16:3 (July 1980), http://www.emqonline.com/emq/issue-214/1140 (accessed January 17, 2014).

[32] Ibid.

missional and therefore further explanation is in order. The spiritual disciplines are not inherently missional. However, this final project is as concerned with methodology as it is with curricula. The spiritual disciplines are the content, the curriculum, of the disciple-making strategy. The methodology of life coaching is missional as it is concerned with going and making disciples as well as being contextualized to each coachee.

The focus of this final project is on creating a methodology that makes better disciples than the current methodologies practiced in many American churches. The Great Commission is ultimately concerned with making disciples. Therefore, this final project is missional as it is concerned with both making disciples and contextualizing discipleship to the coachee.

At the core of God's mission is making disciples. The methodology of the attractional church is facilitating participation in church programming. This strategy neither fulfills God's mission nor is it an effective method for making disciples. This problem is a reflection of an ecclesiology that makes mission a subset of ecclesiology. When mission is at the fringe rather than the center, the result is an American church culture that makes consumers rather than missionaries. In this chapter, an alternative ecclesiology was proposed that moves mission to the center of ecclesiology from the fringe. Since God is a missionary God, his people are to be a missionary people. When his people are a missionary people, they must disciple one another with a missional, disciple-making methodology. Due to its characteristics of "go and disciple" in the life of each coachee and ability to be contextualized to each coachee, life coaching offers just such a missional methodology.

CHAPTER 5

A THEOLOGY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Lack of discipleship is believed to be one of the main culprits of recent decline in

the Church in North America. Solutions abound. Some experts propose new programs,

others propose paradigm shifts; some voices offer church health as the solution, while

others claim that a return to the first-century model is best. Few dispute that the American

Church needs to be fixed. This project claims that the solution is a return to the example

that Christ set for the Church through his earliest disciples.

Before a new perspective is offered, this chapter critiques the traditional Baptist

method of disciple making. The critique uses two passages of Scripture to address the

problems within Baptist life of basing discipleship on participation and knowledge.

Following the discussion of Baptist discipleship, an alternate definition of discipleship,

according to Jesus' teaching in Luke 9:23 is offered. The definition is further elucidated

using the "Great Commandments" of Matthew 22:37-40. Included in this chapter is the

discussion of the "Great Commission" as a command to make disciples, not just converts

to the faith. An argument is made that the life coaching methodology utilized in this

project is a method of missional discipling. This claim requires a theological critique of

life coaching. The chapter concludes with an examination and theological justification for the use of Willow Creek's Reveal Survey in measuring the results of this project.

Critiquing Baptist Orthopraxy Concerning Discipleship

The typical process of discipleship in a Baptist church is simple but replete with assumptions. It starts when a non-Christian becomes a Christian, is subsequently baptized by immersion and becomes actively involved in a small group. The process is deemed successful if the disciple ultimately serves as a leader somewhere in the programs of the church. Some churches, such as NRHBC, supplement the process with weeknight classes, conferences, retreats, new members classes or other programs. However, this process is fraught with assumptions that damage the ability to make disciples. Instead, it excels at making busy church members.

One of the problems with this process includes the assumption that a new Christian has a background in church, which prepared the new Christian to attend a Sunday School class or small group. Often these classes are filled with church members who have attended a Bible study for many years. While this background in church may have been true in times past in American Christianity, it can no longer be assumed. This supposition sets up the new Christian for failure rather than success. Life coaching allows for the customizing of the disciple-making process according to the religious background of the Christian.

NRHBC's main measure of success is attendance. This metric for success is built on the assumption that participation in church activities will lead to members becoming

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disciples of Christ. The belief is that the more people who participate in a program the more disciples are being made.

There are several critiques of this belief. John Drane, in *The McDonaldization of the Church* contends that measuring success by attendance has its roots in the church growth movement. He comments, "The Church Growth Movement laid great stress on calculability as a key measure of spirituality. . . . Emphasis on quantification can encourage us to avoid the realities, and thereby skew the real picture of what is taking place."[1] For some churches the principles of the church growth movement generated numerical success. Drane contends an "overemphasis on what is quantifiable will generally hinder if not undermine personal and spiritual growth."[2] Therefore, the solutions to growing a church could be detrimental to making disciples.

In *Resident Aliens*, Will Willimon and Stanley Hauerwas offer another critique of success measured through participation. They contend that when spiritual maturity is measured by participation, superficiality is the result. They write, "What we call church is often a conspiracy of cordiality. . . . You don't get into my life and I will not get into yours. This accounts for why, to many people, church becomes suffocatingly (*sic*) superficial. Everybody agrees to talk about everything here except what matters."[3] Disciple making through participation in programs is predicated on the goal of making disciples as efficiently as possible. Everyone participates in the same programs and is

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[1] John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity, and the Future of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005), 39.

[2] Ibid., 41.

[3] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 138.

taught the same lessons, all without the fundamental understanding that disciples are

individuals and therefore cannot be mass manufactured. When program participation is

the means to make disciples, only the façade of the disciple is addressed; superficiality is

a result. In turn, superficiality is an apt charge against many churches in America today.

Even those churches that did not fully embrace the church growth movement still

put their faith in programs to make disciples. As Greg Ogden contends, "Programs can

make it look like we are growing disciples, but that is more illusion than reality, and we

know it."[4] Churches that use programs to make disciples believe involvement leads to the

development of disciples. When discipleship hinges on participation, and participation

decreases, fewer and fewer disciples are made. A new solution must be proposed that

allows for the customization of schedule and measurement of success beyond attendance.

The most biting critique of measuring spiritual maturity through spiritual activity

is offered by Christ in Matthew 7:21-23:

> Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but
> only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to
> me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name
> drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?" Then I will tell
> them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"

Jesus utters these words at the conclusion of what has been entitled the "Sermon on the

Mount." Those in the audience for Christ's sermon were anxious to learn what it takes to

receive salvation. Hearing that a confession of Christ as Lord followed by miraculous

deeds does not necessarily result in a saving faith should cause an examination of what it

means to be a disciple of Christ. David Platt explains that Jesus is "talking about good,

religious people. . . . Though they professed belief in Jesus and even did all kinds of work

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[4] Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 43.

in his name, they never truly knew him."[5] The making of disciples should be focused on

following Christ, rather than only on participation in the activities of a church. As R.T.

France notes in his commentary on Matthew, "The basis for that entry is people's

relationship with (Jesus), whether or not he 'knew them.' Further, the essence of their

rejection from the kingdom of heaven is that they must go away from him."[6] The Church

needs to renew discipleship so that following Jesus, not involvement in church programs,

is the focus of Christ's disciples.

The typical discipleship methodology in the Baptist church is education based.

Classes or groups are based on a teacher imparting knowledge of the Bible to students.

Thus, the normative Baptist system is based on biblical knowledge. Ogden explains,

"Programs operate on the assumption that if someone has information, having that

information will automatically lead to transformation."[7] According to this process a

mature disciple is one who possesses substantial biblical knowledge due to repeated

participation in church programs.

Again, there are several important critiques of the assumption that a mature

disciple is simply one who is biblically knowledgeable. Ogden contends, "We can hold

truth in a compartmentalized fashion without having it change the way we think, feel or

act."[8] It is possible to have a mind full of facts, stories and teachings from the Bible

without this knowledge impacting the life of the student. Knowledge should not be the

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[5] David Platt, *Follow Me* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), 8.

[6] R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, *the New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 294.

[7] Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship,* 43.

[8] Ibid., 44.

goal of a discipleship program, but a means for a transformed life. Therefore, applied knowledge must take precedent.

Unfortunately, biblical knowledge does not automatically lead to devotion to Christ or his mission. In fact, the first-century Corinthian church demonstrates what happens when knowledge obfuscates. In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul addressed the Corinthian church that defended their participation in idol worship. As Gordon Fee explains, "This meant for them that attendance at the temple had no significance one way or the other since they were only eating with their friends, not worshipping what did not exist."[9] Technically, the Corinthian church was correct. The gods represented by the idols do not exist as Paul recounts their argument in 1 Corinthians 8:4, "'An idol is nothing at all in the world' and that 'There is no God but one.'" The Corinthian church used knowledge, in this case that idols represent false gods, to defend participation in idol worship. This is an example of the insufficiency of knowledge alone as the basis for discipleship.

Paul counters the Corinthian church's right knowledge with a call towards right behavior. In 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, Paul writes, "We know that 'We all possess knowledge.' But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God." Fee explains, the "abuse of others in the name of 'knowledge' indicates a total misunderstanding of the nature of Christian ethics, which springs not from knowledge but from love."[10] Knowledge, even the right knowledge such as in the Corinthian church, can be applied incorrectly. Therefore, a theology of discipleship must seek to impart both

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[9] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, the New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 362.

[10] Ibid., 363.

right knowledge and the right application of that knowledge. Fortunately, applying

knowledge is a key component of life coaching. Discipleship must include following the

example Christ set. Jesus set the example of right knowledge and right behavior and bids

his disciples to follow him.

A Definition of Discipleship According to Christ's Teaching in Luke 9:23

Participating in church activities is important. Biblical knowledge is also

important. However, discipleship is more than just participating in programs centered

almost exclusively on imparting information. Discipleship must center on imitating Jesus

Christ. In Luke 9:23, Jesus explains the pathway of discipleship, "Then he said to them

all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily

and follow me.'"[11] There are three components of Jesus' plan to make disciples: self-

denial, daily cross bearing and following him.[12] Jesus' plan to make disciples must be the

Church's plan as well.

The path towards becoming a disciple of Jesus is first marked by self-denial.

Following Christ begins with the realization of one's inability to save him or herself.

Right relationship with God is only available through the free gift of God's son.

Therefore, in this first phrase, Jesus explains that salvation is through Christ alone (John

14:6) and that salvation cannot be earned; it is a gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The second component is daily cross bearing. According to Joel Green, "Taking

up the cross in its Roman context would have referred literally to the victim's carrying

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[11] The opening of this verse, "Then he said to them all," demonstrates that the following words are for a larger audience than just the twelve.

[12] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, *the New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 372.

the crossbeam of the cross from the site of sentencing to the place of crucifixion."[13] Leon Morris contends, "Christ's follower has died to a whole way of life. Luke tells us that this is not something that can be finished and got out of the way: it must be done daily."[14] In the decision to follow Christ, the disciple demonstrates he or she is living an entirely new life. In other words, "One is to live on a daily basis as though one has been sentenced to death by crucifixion. In this sense dead to the world that opposes God's purpose, disciples are free to live according to the values of the kingdom of God proclaimed in Jesus' ministry."[15] The disciple of Christ must daily put to death desires and temptations of the surrounding world that make it difficult if not impossible to follow Christ.

Following Christ means imitating Christ. Ogden explains, "Jesus is saying that discipleship training is not about information transfer, from head to head, but imitation, life to life."[16] Jesus invited his disciples into relationship with him and then offered a daily demonstration of the life that Jesus expects from his followers. Imitating Christ is the imitation of the life that Christ lived, for example, practicing the disciplines he practiced, sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom just as Jesus proclaimed, and persevering to the end just as Christ persisted. Since imitating Christ is the goal of a disciple, the characteristics of a mature disciple are consistently practicing spiritual disciplines, regularly sharing the Gospel and persevering in the faith.

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[13] Ibid., 373.

[14] Leon Morris, *Luke: an Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, USA, 1988), 189.

[15] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

[16] Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship, 86.*

Spiritual disciplines are a means for disciples to grow in spiritual maturity.

Donald Whitney argues, "Although God will grant Christlikeness to us when Jesus

returns, until then He intends for us to grow toward that Christlikeness. We aren't merely

to wait for holiness, we're to pursue it."[17] Godliness, therefore, requires the disciple of

Christ to pursue Christlikeness. James Smith explains through the practice of the spiritual

disciplines, "Genuine transformation into the character of Christ really is possible."[18]

Thus, in order to make disciples, the Church must call to imitate Christ by practicing

spiritual disciplines. Willard makes this explicitly clear in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*:

> We can become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall
> style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that
> he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by
> practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives
> around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in
> the fellowship of his Father. What activities did Jesus practice? Such things as
> solitude and silence, prayer, simple and sacrificial living, intense study and
> meditation upon God's Word and God's ways, and service to others.[19]

Following Jesus includes the consistent practice of the spiritual disciplines, which in

partnership with the Holy Spirit results in the making of disciples.

The process of discipleship Jesus offered is self-denial, daily crossbearing and

following Christ. The life that Jesus invited the disciples to imitate was one lived

according to the Great Commandments of Matthew 22. In every act Jesus demonstrated

an all-encompassing love for God and sacrificial love for others.

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[17] Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991)*,* 16.

[18] James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 13.

[19] Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, ix.

Discipleship Based upon the Great Commandments

In Matthew 22, an "expert in the law" sought to challenge Jesus by asking him, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus answers with a pair of commandments, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." These two commandments are branded the Great Commandments. While self-denial, daily cross bearing and following Christ are the process of discipleship according to Jesus, these two commandments are the foundation of the third component of the process, imitating Christ, and therefore are the basis of the characteristics of a mature disciple as one who consistently practices spiritual disciplines, regularly shares the Gospel and perseveres in the faith.

Maturity in Christ, understood as following the example of Christ, is a life lived according to the Great Commandments. A disciple of Christ follows his example by loving God with all his heart, soul and mind, and loving his neighbor as himself. The love that Jesus describes and demonstrated is not merely esoteric. Love is not just an emotion but also includes action. Bill Hull explains, "Love is primarily a verb, an action that is demonstrated through obedience."[20] The disciple of Christ does not just proclaim love for God and neighbor but demonstrates it as well: "You can recognize disciples by the results they produce in their own life and in the lives of others."[21] Love requires action. Jesus

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[20] Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 26.

[21] Ibid.

gave a demonstration of how to love God and love others in part through the practice of spiritual disciplines.

The spiritual disciplines can be divided into two groups, those that demonstrate a love for God, such as fasting, worship and prayer, and those that demonstrate a love for others, such as fellowship and service. Jesus regularly practiced both types of spiritual disciplines. According to Luke 4:1-2, Jesus followed his baptism with a retreat into the desert and fasted for forty days. In Matthew 14:22-23, Jesus sent the disciples away so that he could spend time alone with God in prayer. On the eve of the crucifixion, Jesus demonstrated love for others by washing the disciples' feet, an act of service. These are but three examples of a life lived practicing the spiritual disciplines. To follow Christ, a disciple must practice the spiritual disciplines.

The spiritual disciplines demonstrate love for God and others. Hull explains, "When we intentionally engage in the same disciplines that Christ practiced while on earth, Christ's character, otherwise known as the fruit of the Spirit, is gradually developed in us over time."[22] By following Christ's example in the practice of spiritual disciplines, a follower of Christ is discipled and fulfills the two Great Commandments. The practice of the spiritual disciplines is discipling. Thus, the last component of the discipleship process, "follow me," is exercised through practicing the same spiritual disciplines in which Christ engaged.

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[22] Ibid., 18.

The Great Commission as a Call to Make Disciples

Any discussion on discipleship must include a discussion on missions. Many Baptist churches hold the erroneous belief that missions is something done outside the church while discipleship is an activity for those within the church. Jesus, through the Great Commission, explains otherwise, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Hull explains, "God's primary plan for the church is for disciples of Jesus to develop other men and women into disciples."[23] To speak of discipleship is to speak of the mission God gave the Church, and to speak of missions is to speak of making disciples. Therefore the method of making disciples explored here, life coaching, must also be true to the Great Commission.

Mission is more than making disciples cross-culturally. Best practices in missions include contextualization, ease of reproducibility, a focus on people development and a sense of giving up control to the Holy Spirit. In order for life coaching to be a method of missional discipling, the best practices in mission must be present.

Life coaching is fundamentally focused on the development of people. Teaching is a component of life coaching, but not in the sense of a student sitting in a classroom. As Platt explains, "When we hear Jesus talk about teaching we need to be careful not to immediately jump in our minds to the classroom, lecture-style setting we often associate

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[23] Ibid., 23.

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with teaching the word."[24] There is no classroom for life coaching. Ogden states, "Disciple making is about relational investment."[25] Discipling through life coaching happens in the relationship between the coach and coachee. Additionally, the curriculum path is customized to areas the coachee needs to develop. If, in the coaching relationship it is determined the coachee needs to develop prayer, the coachee would read an explanation of prayer, written by Willard and Foster and supplied through this project, and learn about prayer through conversation with the coach. Application points are determined in conversation and the coach holds the coachee accountable.[26] It is this life development focus that makes disciples, and part of what makes life coaching missional.

The customizable nature of disciple making through life coaching in this project is another aspect of its missional nature. Ogden explains the importance of customization, "Regimentation and synchronization are counterproductive in disciple making. Every individual is unique and different. Making disciples requires a customized approach."[27] That the method is minimally prescriptive and maximally customizable means that life coaching is contextualized. The coachee determines, within the coaching relationship, which spiritual discipline, how many disciplines and the time needed to focus on each. Thus, the method is contextualized according the background and needs of the coachee. Not every coachee needs to focus on the same spiritual disciplines, and as a result, the method is missiologically sound because it is contextualized to each coachee.

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[24] Platt, *Radical*, 99.

[25] Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship,* 17.

[26] For a picture of how the life coaching relationship works, read the case study in Appendix A.

[27] Ibid., 45.

Practicing spiritual disciplines requires the coachee to be disciplined. Ogden notes that in reading Scripture, "One is left with an obvious impression that leading the Christian life will require spiritual discipline."[28] Depending on the coachee, discipline may be easy or difficult, which is why accountability is built into the system. Hull writes, "You can't make disciples without accountability."[29] The combination of both discipline and accountability strengthens the ability of life coaching to make disciples.

One of the critiques of this methodology is the lack of a precise curriculum path for the coachee. Baptists typically assume that every Christian, particularly if they are new to the faith, must first learn how to pray, study the Bible and assimilate into a local church. While each is an important discipline Christians to practice, it is not correct to assume that everyone must have the same starting point. A new Christian may already have in her nature a proclivity to study and so Bible study comes naturally. A coachee may have been a Christian for decades but never developed the discipline of prayer. In addition to being contextualized, the customizable nature of life coaching allows for the giving up of control to the Holy Spirit, which is an important component of best practices in missions. Hull explains, "The disease of Western Christianity is the pathological need to lead and control our environment, but more and more people are starting to give up control and follow Jesus and his methods."[30] Handing over control of the curriculum path to the life coaching relationship is predicated on trusting the Holy Spirit will guide the discussion and application.

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[28] Ibid., 26.

[29] Hull, *Jesus Christ, Disciplemaker,* 15.

[30] Ibid., 18.

The last component of best practices in missiology is reproducibility. If a method is not easily reproducible by the indigenous church then the method must be abandoned. Ease of reproducibility is the key. For example, it is possible to reproduce the campus, ministries and programs of NRHBC, but depending upon location it may cost tens of millions of dollars to replicate the church campus, hire ministers and fund programs. Therefore, NRHBC is not easily reproducible without a significant investment. Another example is that it is possible to reproduce a traditional, Western education path in a Central Asian pastor, but it would require years spent at seminary. Therefore, while education is eventually reproducible, it is not easily reproducible. In order to judge the reproducibility of life coaching, the ease of reproducing a coach must be considered.

The methodology of life coaching is simple. It requires the coach to practice in-depth listening and the ability to ask insightful questions. Training is mandatory, but brief, and the majority of the training is on-the-job. The simplicity of the coaching method coupled with the emphasis on practical training means the method is easily reproducible. Reproducibility, contextualization, reliance on the Holy Spirit, accountability and a focus on people development are components that make life coaching a missional, disciple-making methodology. As previously stated, it is the methodology, not the curriculum of spiritual disciplines themselves that is missional.

Theological Implications of Disciple Making Through Life Coaching

This section is concerned with the theology behind life coaching itself, in particular the implications of discipling through life coaching, and the connection between life coaching and the theology of discipleship proposed here. In order to

examine the implications of the process, this section discusses how spiritual disciplines

encourage spiritual growth, including the teaching of spiritual disciplines through life

coaching, and how each component fits together. In other words, this section explains

how life coaching can equip the coachee to practice spiritual disciplines which in turn

help the coachee towards spiritual maturity, which is to say the imitation of Christ in

loving God and loving others.

One of the fundamental assumptions of this project is the belief that the practice

of spiritual disciplines is discipling. The Christian experiences spiritual growth, both by

the act of the discipline itself as a means of personal training and in the transforming

work of God in the life of the Christian as disciplines are practiced. Foster and Emilie

Griffin explain, "We take on a series of spiritual practices that will open us to God's

work in our lives."[31] Spiritual growth requires both the personal discipline of the

Christian and the work of the Lord within the disciple.

In 1 Timothy 4:7, Paul exhorts that one should "train yourself to be godly." This

reveals the Christian has responsibility in the process of spiritual maturity. There is a

sense of personal training towards godliness in the same sense that an athlete trains in

order to compete. As Willard notes, "The Bible also informs us that there are certain

practices – solitude, prayer, fasting, celebration, and so forth, we can undertake, in

cooperation with grace, to raise the level of our lives toward godliness."[32] The attainment

of godliness, in this sense, requires the disciplined effort of the Christian.

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[31] Richard J. Foster and Emilie Griffin, eds., *Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines* (New York: Harper One, 2000), xii.

[32] Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 69.

In addition to training for godliness, the disciplined practices of the spiritual disciplines are a means for preparation. Willard is again helpful here: "(Jesus') teaching leads to a discipline, not a law, and a discipline that prepares us, precisely, to act in a way that fulfills the law of whole-person love of God."[33] The spiritual disciplines prepare the Christian for obedience to the Great Commandments to love God and love others. It is the disciplined practice, as opposed to infrequent practice, of the spiritual disciplines that allows the Christian to imitate Christ's example.

The regular practice of the disciplines is not enough for attainment of godliness within the Christian. Godliness is not entirely within the ability of the Christian. God offers the spiritual disciplines as a means for the disciple to participate in transformation towards godliness. However, without the activity of God within the Christian, godliness is unattainable. Instead, the spiritual disciplines are best understood as the Christian participating with God, albeit on a junior level, towards spiritual maturity.

Whitney explains this partnership between the Lord and the Christian well: "The Spiritual Disciplines then are also like channels of God's transforming grace. As we place ourselves in them to seek communion with Christ, His grace flows to us and we are changed. That's why the Disciplines must become priority for us if we will be godly."[34] It is ultimately God who transforms the Christian as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "(Christians) are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Smith explains the partnership between the disciplined Christian and the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit comes alongside us, within us and

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[33] Ibid., 201.

[34] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 19.

around us as we engage in spiritual exercises."[35] The spiritual disciplines facilitate growth toward godliness through consistent practice and more importantly, the work of God in the life of the obedient Christian.

Routinely, Christians who spend any time on the church campus learn of the need to pray, give, serve and practice any number of the spiritual disciplines. If the pulpit and classroom were effective means of teaching the spiritual disciplines then the American Church would not have a dearth of growing disciples. An alternative means of training in the spiritual disciplines must be discovered and it is the premise of this final project that life coaching relationships provide the perfect environment to encourage the practice of spiritual disciplines and hold the coachee accountable to their disciplined practice.

McNeal extols the advantages that coaching offers in disciple making. He says, "Use (life coaching) as an opportunity to introduce people to and educate them about spiritual disciplines and dynamics of spiritual growth. . . . Many people in church have never encountered the disciplines of prayer, fasting, Bible study, and ministering to others."[36] It is assumed that if a Christian attends church they will "pick these (spiritual disciplines) up along the way if they just hang out in the church long enough."[37] As McNeal makes the case, the assumption that attending church and participating in programs will pick up the spiritual disciplines is erroneous. He offers the suggestion that the spiritual disciplines be taught in life coaching relationships.

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[35] Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God*, 29.

[36] McNeal, *The Present Future*, 78.

[37] Ibid.

Life coaching offers advantages that the traditional program and classroom model of the Baptist discipleship process does not possess. One of the advantages is that life coaching is a partnership. Val Hastings writes, "The coach and the coachee are involved in a collaborative process that is 100% about the person being coached."[38] The coach and coachee work together as partners to encourage the spiritual growth of the coachee. This is not a top-down approach, such as in the classroom where the teacher does a majority of the work, and where the student may be a passive participant.

When done correctly, coaching involves each party in the discipling process. There are no passive participants. Laurie Jones explains the partnership component of the role of the coach, "Coaches don't teach; they facilitate. Coaches don't tell; they draw forth. And coaches are willing to admit when they don't know the answers."[39] A life coach collaborates with the coachee for the purpose of devising a growth plan. In this project, the growth plan is the implementation of the spiritual disciplines that, in partnership with the coach, the coachee puts into practice.

The first step in the coaching process is for the coachee to determine which spiritual disciplines to practice. This is the subject of the first meeting between the coach and coachee. At this meeting, the coach encourages the coachee to visit a website set up for this project in order to review a list of spiritual disciplines and review a synopsis of the spiritual discipline(s) that the coach and coachee determine to focus on initially.[40] A determinative factor for which discipline or disciplines to practice may be those

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[38] J. Val Hastings, *The Next Great Awakening: How to Empower God's People with a Coach Approach to Ministry* (Philadelphia: Self-published, 2010), 6.

[39] Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, Life Coach* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 229.

[40] Review Appendix A for a case study of a coach and coachee relationship in this project.

disciplines the coachee has practiced previously or those disciplines the coachee has an affinity. This conversation is aided by the fact that coaching emphasizes strengths. Hastings offers the perspective, "Coaches intentionally look for and develop the strengths and giftedness of the person being coached."[41] In this manner, coaching encourages the untapped potential within the disciple, inherent in each Christian due to spiritual gifting.

In the classroom model of discipleship, only the teacher is exercising his or her spiritual gifting while students merely listen. In coaching, because of the emphasis on implementation of what was discussed in the relationship, the coachee is encouraged to practice the disciplines and gifting that God has given to him or her. It is in this manner that coaching emphasizes strengths as it customizes to the coachee.

One of the biggest advantages of coaching is its customizable nature. Jane Creswell remarks that unlike many discipleship programs, "Coaching offers no package deals, no right answers, no preconceived results."[42] The customizability of coaching has greater potential than the classroom to encourage the coachee to practice the spiritual disciplines. Creswell shares the example of a pastor who set and attained goals at a greater level than ever before; "(This pastor) set his own personal goals, guided by how he was being led by the Holy Spirit, and—together with his coach—explored ways to reach him."[43] Coaching was utilized in this man's life to reach goals that he otherwise could not set or achieve. This scenario is coaching at its best.

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[41] Hastings, *The Next Great Awakening*, 6.

[42] Jane Creswell, *Christ-centered Coaching: 7 Benefits for Ministry Leaders* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 7.

[43] Ibid., 31.

On the other hand, there is a potential for the coachee to wander into areas that are contrary to the teachings of Christ. For example, the coachee may want to set a goal to divorce a spouse for reasons contrary to those outlined in the New Testament. The coach has the ability to correct behavior and discern when an action plan is guided by factors contrary to the Holy Spirit. The expectation that a coach has an active relationship with Christ and is grounded in God's Word ensures that the coach is not naïve to the potential for the coachee to take advantage of the coaching process for pernicious reasons.

The goal of this project is to make disciples. This chapter explains the process of making disciples as described by Christ in his calling for self-denial, cross bearing and persevering in the faith. In order for disciples to follow Christ they must emulate the life that Christ lived, including a life that regularly exhibited the spiritual disciplines. The pulpit and the classroom are insufficient teachers of the spiritual disciplines whereas life coaching has potential to effectively implement these disciplines. Therefore, the preferred future of this project is to encourage growth in Christlikeness through the exercise of spiritual disciplines learned through life coaching relationships.

Connecting the Reveal Survey to the Theology of Discipleship

In the summer of 2007 Willow Creek Community Church leadership published an account of their realization that the many activities and programs of their church were not successful in making disciples. The reputation of Willow Creek, and especially that of their pastor Bill Hybels, ensured that the book, *Reveal*, would have a large audience.[44]

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[44] Willow Creek Association. *Reveal Spiritual Life Survey Tracking Report: North Richland Hills Baptist Church Comparing June 2012 with January 2013* (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Association, 2013).

This influence included the pastors of NRHBC and many of the critiques of Willow Creek's discipleship process in *Reveal* were similar to those made in this project of NRHBC's discipleship process. They also offer similar solutions as the one's made in this project. In the conclusion of *Reveal,* the authors offer the survey that Willow Creek leadership developed to measure the disciple-making ability of their church programs. It was these three factors, the similar critiques of the discipleship process, similar solutions and the availability of the survey that led to those critiques, which resulted in the utilization of the Reveal survey in this project.

Hawkins and Parkinson offer two critiques of Willow Creek's discipleship strategy similar to the critiques made in this chapter. The first is their programming, albeit abundant, does not always lead to a better disciple.[45] A busier schedule, be it Willow Creek's or NRHBC's, does not automatically result in a better disciple. The second criticism is that participation is an inadequate measure of success. The authors asked, "Does increased attendance in ministry programs automatically equate to spiritual growth?"[46] They answered with "To be brutally honest: it does not."[47] The same question and answer is posed in this project; participation in church programs does not adequately measure if disciples are being made. Not only are these critiques similar, the authors offer potential solutions to those advocated in this theology of discipleship.

There are three similar solutions. The first is that the practice of the Great Commandments of Matthew 22 is an excellent measurement of spiritual maturity. The

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[45] Ibid., 4.

[46] Ibid., 13.

[47] Ibid.

authors, referring to Matthew 22:37-39, contend, "An increasing love for God and for other people was (their) working definition of spiritual growth."[48] This is similar to the argument made here that spiritual maturity is an imitation of Christ's love for God and for others. The second similarity is their conclusion that "personal spiritual practices are the building blocks for a Christ-centered life."[49] The theology of discipleship articulated here makes an analogous argument that spiritual practices, here articulated as spiritual disciplines, are discipling. The last similarity is in regards to relationships. This project utilizes relationships, between the coach and coachee, to encourage spiritual growth. In *Reveal*, the leaders of Willow Creek contend, "Spiritual friendships are a key driver to spiritual growth."[50] These similar solutions along with the critiques offer enough theological parallel to justify the utilization of the Reveal survey in this project.

The Reveal survey was used in order to measure the success of this project to make better disciples. Each coachee took the survey at the beginning and end of their coaching relationships and the results were compared using the survey's definitions of spiritual maturity.[51] The purveyors of the survey use four definitions for spiritual maturity: exploring Christianity, growing in Christ, close to Christ and Christ centered. The first, exploring Christianity, describes someone who is not yet a Christian but is interested in the faith.[52] The next three descriptions include an increasing development in

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[48] Ibid., 29.

[49] Ibid., 44.

[50] Ibid., 57.

[51] The results are offered in Appendix A. An evaluation and conclusions from the results of the survey are found in chapter seven.

[52] Ibid., 38.

spiritual practices. For example, in the third level, Close to Christ, "These believers report much higher levels of personal spiritual practices than earlier segments."[53] That harmonizes with this project's argument for spiritual disciplines in the disciple-making process. It was the myriad of similarities between this project and the arguments made in *Reveal* that justify the selection of the Reveal survey to measure this project's results.

The life coaching presented in this project is concerned with encouraging the practice of spiritual disciplines. Because some disciplines are concerned with loving God and others concerned with demonstrating love towards others, this methodology also fulfills the need for disciples of Christ to obey the Great Commandments. Christ calls his followers to emulate his example when he bids his disciples deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him. A mature disciple is one who imitates Christ. In other words, one who consistently practices spiritual disciplines, regularly shares the Gospel and perseveres in the faith. NRHBC needs to implement the discipleship process that Jesus offered, in which the Church encourages the practices of self-denial, daily cross-bearing and emulation of Christ.

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[53] Ibid., 39.

PART THREE

STRATEGY

CHAPTER 6

A PLAN FOR THE USE OF LIFE COACHING TO DEVELOP DISCIPLES

This chapter moves from theory to practicality, from the idea of life coaching to the pragmatics involved in making disciples in a pilot group at NRHBC. A discussion on the goals of the project are discussed and followed by the content of the strategy. This includes an examination of the qualities of leadership needed for the project as well as a description of the target population that participated. The last section of this chapter is a narrative describing the timeline of the project's implementation. Ultimately, the pragmatics of the project must be consistent with the theology of the preceding chapters; this chapter proves that life coaching for the practice of spiritual disciplines is a missional method of disciple making consistent with the theology advocated in this project.

Goals

In order to achieve the preferred future this project has six goals. The first is to create a customized approach to discipleship. Understanding the relationship between spiritual disciplines and spiritual maturity is the second goal. The third is to enlist and train life coaches, followed by the fourth, to help members practice spiritual disciplines through the implementation of life coaching relationships. The fifth and sixth goals are

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closely related, to encourage Christlikeness in the practice of spiritual disciplines and to see members of NRHBC maturing as disciples. Each of these goals is briefly explored.

The first goal is to create a customized approach to discipleship. The current one-size-fits-all model of discipleship at NRHBC is obsolete in an increasingly diverse Northeast Tarrant County. The current assumption is that everyone who joins NRHBC has a common religious background, which is no longer the case. Therefore, a method of making disciples that allows for customization to the religious history of the disciple is necessary. Additionally, customization must be based on the schedule of the disciple. Schedules are increasingly crowded and traditional Sundays and Wednesday night sacred times are no longer observed. The discipleship model must be flexible and able to fit in the schedule of the disciple. Finally, customization must move the locus of discipleship from the church campus to life. This goal is accomplished by allowing the coach and coachee to customize their meeting time and location to their schedules and allowing the coachee to choose which spiritual disciplines to discuss with the coach and implement. The coaching relationships in this project allow for the customization of discipleship.

In the coaching relationship the practice of spiritual disciplines is discussed, which leads to understanding the relationship between spiritual disciplines and spiritual maturity. This project makes the argument that the spiritual disciplines encourage spiritual growth through the disciplined practice of the believer and the transforming work of God. As Whitney states, "The Spiritual Disciplines are the God-given means we are to use in the Spirit-filled pursuit of Godliness."[1] Spiritual disciplines have an external and internal component, external as the disciple practices the disciplines and internal in

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[1] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 17.

regards to Christ working within the Christian. The link between the practice of the spiritual disciplines and the discipling of the coachee is demonstrated in the results of this project as coachees regularly practiced the spiritual disciplines that were cultivated in the coaching relationships.

The third goal is the enlistment and training of life coaches. Enlistment occurred through the recommendation of the pastoral staff at NRHBC and through the author's personal network. Nine coaches were enlisted and trained by two trainers from Coaching4Clergy. Upon being matched together, the coaches and coachees began meeting with time and location determined between the two parties.

The fourth goal is the practice of the spiritual disciplines by members of NRHBC through life-coaching relationships. In the relationship, the coach and coachee determined which disciplines to practice. The coachee read a brief description of a spiritual discipline, with abbreviated explanations of each discipline from *Celebration of Discipline* and *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. The coachee met with the coach who helped process biblical truths about the disciplines from the descriptions and created an action plan for implementation. Over the course of meeting together, the coach held the coachee accountable to the action plan. Through this relationship, the coachee put the selected spiritual disciplines into practice.

The coaching relationship between Jake Kuylen and I provides an accurate example of how this project used life coaching to disciple a member of NRHBC by encouraging the practice of spiritual disciplines. While raised Catholic, Jake was not a frequent attendee of Mass and the Christian faith was not a priority for Jake or his family.

In our budding friendship, Jake and I began to discuss matters of the Christian faith. In the spring of 2011, Jake became a Christian and I baptized him.

Due to our friendship, I asked Jake to participate in this project. At our first coaching meeting, I gave Jake an overview of the coaching relationship. This overview included the need for Jake to be committed to practicing spiritual disciplines since the practice of spiritual disciplines is discipling. I explained the role of the coach as one who listens deeply and asks powerful questions with the goal of creating a customized plan for the coachee-disciple to put the spiritual disciplines into practice. We discussed which spiritual discipline Jake would prefer to practice first and he decided on prayer. Our meeting concluded with the need for Jake to visit my final project's website in order to read Foster and Willard's overview of the spiritual discipline of prayer.[2]

At our next meeting, Jake brought both Foster and Willard's overviews of prayer and we discussed Jake's understanding of prayer. I corrected his misunderstandings of prayer and we discussed how Jake could make a disciplined practice of prayer in his life. Jake decided to set aside one hour each week, on Sunday nights, for prayer.

At subsequent meetings, I kept him accountable to praying on Sunday nights and we discussed further understandings and misunderstandings of prayer. After a few weeks, Jake decided to add a subsequent discipline of his own choosing. The second discipline he chose was Bible study.

In the several months that we met together, Jake implemented the practice of four spiritual disciplines, prayer, Bible study, submission and fasting. If I had prioritized the spiritual disciplines for Jake, I would never have picked submission as a third discipline

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[2] http://spencefinalproject.wordpress.com/

to practice. However, as someone who struggles with authority, Jake needed the discipline of submission in order to have a healthy relationship with those in authority.

I kept Jake accountable by inquiring about his practice of each discipline at our coaching meetings as well as in informal settings as friends. Over the course of the project, Jake demonstrated the impact of disciplined practice of prayer, Bible study, submission and fasting in his daily life. Jake's attitudes, actions and relationships were all improved as a young man was becoming more like Christ through the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines. His attendance and participation in NRHBC's worship services also reflected someone growing in a relationship with Christ. In short, Jake demonstrated that the regular practice of spiritual disciplines is discipling as he grew in Christlikeness.

The fifth goal is encouraging Christlikeness in the practice of spiritual disciplines, which logically follows the fourth goal. As Foster and Griffin explain, "The spiritual disciplines are pointed toward spiritual formation . . . a series of concrete actions that will gently move us toward transformation in Christ."[3] The disciplines encourage Christlikeness because the disciplines are the activities that Christ did himself while on the earth. It is his own example that Jesus called the disciples to when he bid them to "Follow me." Therefore, to be like Christ is to do the things Christ did, which are the spiritual disciplines, which leads to the last goal of this project.

The last goal is to see members of NRHBC mature as disciples of Christ. The success of life coaching is second only to the ability of disciples to be made. If the methodology fails to produce disciples, then life coaching must be cast aside and another means to make disciples sought. The same is true for tradition, polity and ministry

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[3] Foster and Griffin, *Spiritual Classics,* xiii.

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philosophy if they fall short in the aim to make disciples. Christ commanded his Church to make disciples and nothing less must be the goal. This goal was met for a majority of participants as they consistently practiced spiritual disciplines during this project.

Content of the Strategy

In order to make disciples through the practice of spiritual disciplines as facilitated through life-coaching relationships, there are several components of the plan that must be considered. One of the first determinations was in regards to the spiritual disciplines. The works of two well-regarded theologians on the subject of spiritual disciplines were utilized, *The Celebration of Discipline* and *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.

The selection of these works as the foundation for the spiritual discipline curriculum was based on the reputation of the authors. *The Celebration of Disciplines* outlines twelve disciplines whereas Willard articulates fifteen distinct disciplines of the spiritual life. According to Willard, the spiritual disciplines are celebration, chastity, confession, fasting, fellowship, frugality, prayer, sacrifice, secrecy, service, silence, solitude, study, submission and worship. The spiritual disciplines discussed by Foster are celebration, confession, guidance, meditation, prayer, service, simplicity, solitude, submission and worship. The discrepancy between the two authors, in regards to number of disciplines, is simply due to a difference in opinion on the scope of a few of the individual disciplines.

Willard and Foster's articulation of each spiritual discipline, while thorough, are lengthy. There was concern coachees would be intimidated by the quantity of study required to determine which discipline to practice. Therefore, each discipline was edited

into a one- or two-page abbreviated description. After the summaries were completed, the disciplines were posted to a blog to be easily accessible to coachees. Coachees were encouraged to access the blog, read the descriptions of their choosing and discuss them in meetings with their coaches.

After deciding on the curriculum for the spiritual disciples, characteristics of coaches, which are explained in this chapter, guided the selection of coaches. After coaches were selected, training became the next step before partnering them with coachees. In January 2010, I received training from Coaching4Clery, through the recommendation of the local Southern Baptist association, and received certification in basic life coaching. Coaching4Clergy is a non-denominational Christian organization that trains pastors and church leaders as life coaches, which was practical for this project.

The Coaching4Clergy curriculum offers a four-step process for coaching. The first step is for coaches to practice deep listening. Hastings contends, "All coaching begins with listening."[4] The ability of the coach to listen has a "direct bearing on the quality of (the coach's) coaching."[5] A coach is listening for several things, including any beliefs of the coachee that may hinder him or her reaching full potential. Furthermore, the coach's listening ability influences the rest of the coaching process and directly influences the next step in the Coaching4Clergy process, powerful questioning.

The use of questioning is the foundation of the coaching methodology. Hastings explains what makes a question powerful: "Powerful questions are usually open-ended, leaving room for contemplation and reflection, instead of being limited to yes or no or

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[4] Hastings, *The Next Great Awakening*, 14.

[5] Ibid.

specific choices."[6] The ability of the coach to ask powerful questions determines the success of the coaching relationship, and challenges the coachee to think harder, go deeper or create new solutions. As Hastings contends, "Powerful questions promote both/and thinking, opening up the coachee to a fuller range of possibilities."[7] In asking penetrating questions, the coach encourages the exploration of new solutions. This methodology allows for the coachee to be the source and therefore owner of the solution.

On the other hand, if the coach resorts to providing suggestions or offering advice the coachee is not the owner of the solution. When the coach generates the solution, such as the action plan for practicing spiritual disciplines, it may be the perfect plan for the coach but an entirely wrong plan for the coachee. While the coach still guides the conversation, the coachee must be the one formulating and articulating the action plan in order to increase the likelihood that the coachee puts it into practice.

In addition to deep listening and powerful questioning, the coach must also utilize artful language. Hastings explains the role artful language plays in the Coaching4Clergy methodology: "Language can provide a platform that propels someone closer to their hopes and dreams; at the same time, our language can reinforce doubts and limiting belief – dashing hopes and dreams."[8] Coaches must be constantly aware of the language employed in order for the conversation to encourage the coachee towards application. Hastings provides further insight into the importance of words when he writes, "Words often contain assumptions, presuppositions, judgments, manipulation and suggestions. In

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[6] Ibid., 18.

[7] Ibid., 19-20.

[8] Ibid., 24.

coaching conversations, (coaches) intentionally choose words that are neutral, non-manipulative and free of any agenda."[9] Again, the goal is for the coach to utilize powerful questions and artful language without offering advice, to ensure the coachee generates application points rather than the coach. When the coachee owns the application points, he is more likely to adhere to the action plan.

The last step in the Coaching4Clergy process is action and accountability. Hastings explains, "One of the primary reasons that a person or group decides to work with a coach is that they want to take action and reach their goals."[10] According to the Coaching4Clergy curriculum, there are three components of the action and accountability plan, including brainstorming, designing the action and follow through.

In this project, the coaching relationship encourages the practice of the spiritual disciplines by creating a customized action plan with the coach holding the coachee accountable. In order to accomplish this, the first step is for the coach and coachee to brainstorm. Hastings comments that brainstorming "enables the individual to discover for themselves different perspectives and possibilities. This involves distinguishing between fact and perception/interpretation, as well as gaining clarity and defining success."[11] During brainstorming, parts of a plan come to the forefront of the conversation leading to the next stage, designing the action.

Designing the action is the stage in which a plan is formulated. According to the curriculum, "The plan includes next steps that are attainable, measurable, specific and

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[9] Ibid., 25.

[10] Ibid., 29.

[11] Ibid., 30.

have target dates. In most cases the plan addresses both what you need to do and who you need to become in order to reach your goal."[12] Without the specifics details, such as target dates and precise action steps, the plan likely will be too general and miss out on the advantage of being customizable. While a precise plan is vital, success is more often determined through the next step, follow through.

A plan without follow through is superfluous. At the beginning of a coaching session, the coach inquires about the follow through of the action plan set in place at the previous meeting, thereby holding the coachee accountable to the plan. A lack of follow through may be a result of a flaw in the plan, which can be changed during a subsequent conversation. In coaching, the coachee/disciple is elevated above the curriculum, rather than in traditional discipleship process where the curriculum is primary. As a result, the likelihood of follow through with the plan is more likely than in a classroom-based discipleship program. Therefore the coaching process is more likely to encourage the practice the spiritual disciplines, which leads to the formation of disciples.

In a typical life-coaching relationship, the coachee determines the topic of conversation. The conversation is open and subject to desire of the coachee. The coaching term for this type of conversation is content-free. However, since the goal is to make disciples through the practice of spiritual disciplines, in preparation for this project, the Coaching4Clergy trainers Trigena Halley and Becky Biser suggested that the life coaching practiced in this project be content-rich. In content-rich coaching, the coaching topic is determined by the coach rather than the coachee, in the case of this project the coaching topic is spiritual disciplines. Even though the coachee chooses from a list of

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[12] Ibid., 31.

spiritual disciplines, the process remains content-rich because the coaches are trained to coach to the topic of spiritual disciplines. Content-rich coaching utilizes the same four-step process of deep listening, powerful questions, artful language and action and accountability as content-free coaching. These two factors, the desire to make disciples by encouraging the practice of spiritual disciplines and the fact that content-rich coaching does not invalidate Coaching4Clergy's four step coaching process, were the impetus for content-rich coaching rather than content-free. During coaching training for this project the coaches were instructed in content-rich coaching.

The next component of the strategy was enlistment of coachees. An important component of enlistment was a commitment from the coachees to continue to the end of the project. This requirement meant enlistment focused largely on personal networks within the church. The hope was that if the coachees had personal relationships, they would be more likely to persevere. In addition to being part of this network, willingness to learn about and apply the spiritual disciplines was an important trait of the coachees. These two characteristics were utilized in the enlistment of the coachees.

Before the coaches and coachees met, the coachees were asked to take the Reveal Survey in order to assess their spiritual maturity.[13] Upon completion of the project seven months later, the coachees were asked to take the survey again. Comparing the results of the two surveys, one before and one after the project, provides insight into whether or not the process is effective in making disciples.

This project is dependent upon an accurate picture of the starting point to measure the spiritual vitality of a select group and a subsequent comparison point. The comparison

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[13] An explanation why the Reveal survey was used can be found in chapter 5.

point provides a perspective on whether or not coaching for spiritual disciplines is an effective method of making disciples. The Reveal survey is an effective tool in measuring spiritual growth as developed through the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Leadership and Target Population

This section discusses who provides leadership for the project and outlines sought-for characteristics within coaches and coachees to guide enlistment. While I provide the overarching leadership for the project, the individual coaches are the primary leaders since they personally interact with coachees. Therefore the characteristics of coaches are the first leadership components discussed.

There were four primary components sought in the character of the individuals trained as coaches. A coach needs to be a good listener and direct communicator since these are two crucial components of the coaching process. Additionally, a coach needs to demonstrate genuine care for others to ensure genuine care for the coachee. Furthermore, while the coaching method does not require the coach to practice all of the spiritual disciplines, a coach can better assist the coachee in the practice of the spiritual disciplines where there is a shared commitment to the practice of the disciplines.

Two life-coaching trainers from Coaching4Clergy made themselves available to lead the training for coaches. By request, the two trainers adjusted the training to include the content-rich component that is crucial to this project's coaching model. The training took place on a Saturday and focused on offering real-life coaching situations in order to better prepare the new coaches from NRHBC to immediately start coaching.

The initial coachees were members of NRHBC and interested in growing in their spiritual walk. The idea behind enlisting only those who want to grow was based on the idea that the practice of the spiritual disciplines requires some self-motivation. Another characteristic of coachees is willingness to be open-minded. Because coaching is a new methodology, those unwilling to try something new would impair the potential to gauge whether or not the methodology works. There was also a desire to enlist people from backgrounds that reflect the diversity of NRHBC.

Resources

Several resources were utilized in this final project including curriculum for and descriptions of life coaching, education space, administrative help and financial. Fortunately, many of the resources already existed and only a few required modifications to fit the needs of this project. The life-coaching training curriculum was developed by Coaching4Clergy. The trainers utilized a training process created by their organization. This process and presentation guided the training. One important component of the training was that training was not merely lecture but included practical, hands-on components. This included live demonstrations of the coaching process and pairing off of coaches to practice life coaching. In addition to the process, *The Next Great Awakening* was given to each coach. The training provided largely followed the content of the book.

At the training, coaches were given an overview of the project and specifics on the importance of their role as coaches. The differences between content-free life coaching and content-rich coaching and how the content-rich aspect of the project required them to make minor alterations to traditional coaching process were addressed.

The coaches were familiarized with the spiritual discipline resources utilized in the project, particularly introducing them to the pertinent works of Foster and Willard and a website that hosted the paraphrased descriptions of the spiritual disciplines. As a result, coaches did not need to attend a second training for the spiritual discipline component.

NRHBC provided the remaining three resources necessary for the implementation of the final project. The education space on the church campus, in the form of one of the classrooms, was utilized on the Saturday training of the life coaches. An assistant provided administrative help, taking place mostly during the set up of the training. In this regard, she ordered the curriculum from Coaching4Clergy, took care of the logistical details of the training such as arranging travel, and took care of filing the necessary paperwork with the church, such as facility scheduling forms and receipts.

The last resource the church provided was financial in terms of covering the cost of the Coaching4Clergy training and Reveal survey. The cost of training included the amount owed Coaching4Clergy for the curriculum and the cost of trainers. One of the trainers was based out of Utah; therefore the cost included travel and reimbursement. The other trainer was local and offered her services for free since she works for the Tarrant Baptist Association, which is financially supported by NRHBC. Due to the generosity shown by the managers of the Reveal survey in not charging NRHBC for the use of the survey, the financial cost of the project was limited to the expense of the training.

Final Project Summary and Timeline

The theology and plan of the project are articulated. What remains is a description of the project from inception to conclusion. The summary and timeline that follows

provides a clear path to understanding how the nine members of NRHBC put the spiritual disciplines into practice as developed in each of their life-coaching relationships.

While this final project started in September 2011, the idea of coaching for spiritual disciplines began forming in the summer of 2010. In his book, *The Present Future*, McNeal encourages the use of coaching for disciple making. The first formulations for this final project's plan took form at that point.

In January 2011, I received basic certification training for life coaching sponsored by the Tarrant Baptist Association and Coaching4Clergy. Upon completion of the training, I participated in several coaching sessions that resulted in certification in basic life coaching. The basic certification gives rudimentary understanding and experience in coaching necessary for this final project.

The spring of 2011 was spent formulating the plan. The next step was receiving formal approval of the final project proposal that August. What followed was formulating a theological basis and developing resources for the project.

Three basic categories of resources were developed at the same time the theological basis was formed. The first category involved resources about the spiritual disciplines. Having decided that the descriptions of the spiritual disciplines would come from *The Spirit of the Disciplines* and *Celebration of Discipline*, the length of the descriptions, some up to fourteen pages long, seemed as if it would encumber the coachees as they selected which disciplines to put into practice. In order to prevent this from being a liability each description was edited to no more than three pages in length. The goal in summarizing was to retain an accurate portrayal of the original author's description while making it more reasonable for coachees to read multiple descriptions.

The second category of the resources developed was the training curriculum of the coaches. Familiarity of the Coaching4Clergy training and the ease of accessibility due to the relationship between the local Baptist association and Coaching4Clergy, made the familiar choice also the most logical. As a result, Coaching4Clergy was contacted to acquire the curriculum and arrange for trainers to provide necessary training for the project. Hastings provided the curriculum at a significant discount. The coaching trainers were then scheduled to provide training, which took place in May 2012.

The last resource needed was a means to assess the spiritual maturity of the coachees. The Reveal survey created by Willow Creek Community Church was chosen for reasons already elucidated in the previous chapter. During the fall of 2011, the purveyors of the survey were contacted in order to arrange for its use in this project. The managers of the survey made the survey available for free. Based on the schedule set by the Reveal staff, the assessment was scheduled to take place in June of 2012.

The next step in the timeline was the identification, enlistment and training of coaches, which took place from January to April of 2012. At a meeting in January 2012, the staff of NRHBC was asked who in the church best fit the characteristics of a life coach, which included those who are good listeners, direct communicators, demonstrate genuine care and practice spiritual disciplines. The staff suggested several candidates.

The process for enlistment simply entailed contacting potential coaches, explaining the project and the role of a coach in particular, and asking them to participate. It was decided that ten coaches, each partnered with one coachee, would provide a sufficiently large enough pilot group for the purposes of assessing the disciple making potential of this project. There were both five male and female coaches. Furthermore, the

goal was to invite church members of a variety of ages and backgrounds to ensure the project was customizable as well as applicable to a diversity of people. As a result, the ages of the coaches ranged from in their twenties to sixties, some were believers from childhood while others came to faith as adults, and several were at one time involved in denominations outside of the Baptist umbrella.

The last stage of this process was training the coaches, which took place on May 5, 2012. The timeframe was determined sufficient for the purposes of preparing coaches by the trainers. At this training, modification of the coaching process from content-free to content-rich and the need for the coaching relationship to focus on developing and implementing spiritual disciplines in the life of the coachee were discussed.

One unforeseen complication for the coaching training is that it coincided with NRHBC calling Maze as the new senior pastor. On that Saturday, the church leadership scheduled several meetings for various groups to meet the prospective pastor. When the schedule was announced, one potential coach declined to attend the coach training in order to attend one of the meetings to meet the new pastor. Other scheduling complications prevented changing the date, so training commenced as scheduled. The potential coach who canceled became a coachee instead. Nine coaches were in attendance for the entirety of the coaching training.

The nine coaches were comprised of Cindy Leach, NRHBC's children's minister; Stuart Doyle, NRHBC's middle school minister; Janet Spence, my wife; Jason Roberts, a young adult Sunday School teacher; Angela Roberts, lay leader in the church; Bennett Howell, a middle-aged adult Sunday School teacher; Cindy Funderburk, a single adult Sunday School teacher; Shirley Ramsey, a lay leader in the church; and me. Three of the

coaches, Leach, Doyle and myself, had previously received coaching certification. The ages of the coaches ranged from Doyle, in his late-twenties, to Funderburk, in her mid-fifties. Eight of the coaches are married and one is single. Three of the coaches became Christians as adults and the rest grew up in church, making a decision for Christ in their childhood or youth. With the variety in age, gender, exposure to coaching and background, this coaching group was sufficiently diverse for the purposes of this project.

The identification, enlistment and spiritual maturity assessment of the coachees followed a similar process with the coaches, and took place between March and June of 2012. In a staff meeting the role of coachees was explained. Three characteristics guided the identification process, including being interested in growing, open-minded about coaching and contributing to a diverse group of people in regards to age and background. With these characteristics in mind, the staff offered several potential coachees.

The enlistment of coachees was not as easy as identification. Contact was made to the potential coachees via phone and email. This process took place during March and April of 2012. Several declined due to the demands that coaching would place on their schedule. With April concluding and the training of coaches occurring in early-May, the need to enlist coachees became demanding. Therefore, the next step was to make a broader plea to the church. By the time training of the coaches occurred on May 5, eight coachees were enlisted. Five of the coachees were women and three were men. With nine coaches trained, five of whom were women and four men, the tenth coach who declined to attend training in order to meet with the prospective pastor agreed to become the ninth coachee. The result, therefore, of the enlistment was that the all nine coachees were enlisted and matched the gender of the nine coaches.

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The five women were Reba Hill, a senior adult and Sunday School teacher; Ann McDowell, a senior adult; Joice Weisell, a single senior adult; Jenna Hargrave, a middle-aged adult; and Darlene Rogers, a young mom. The four men included Ben Tune, a middle-aged adult and Sunday School teacher; Caleb Kern, a young adult and middle school volunteer; Jake Kuylen, a college student; and Michael a middle school student.[14] Both Weisell and Kuylen are new Christians, coming to faith within the year of the start of the project. The remainder of the coachee group made decisions for Christ in childhood. In a similar fashion to the coach group, the goal was to enlist a group of coachees who reflect the diversity in age and background of NRHBC in order to gauge the ability of the methodology presented in this final project to make disciples.

Once coachees were enlisted, a spiritual maturity assessment followed. The Reveal survey is hosted online so a link was sent to coachees giving them an eight-day window in June 2012, per Willow Creek Church's direction, to take the survey.[15] All nine took the survey. Within a month of the survey completion, Willow Creek sent the preliminary results. At the end of the final project, the coachees were once again asked to take the survey in order to compare their spiritual maturity as a result of the final project.

Originally, the goal was to have coaches and coachees meet from May 2012 to December 2012, but with delays in both training and the Reveal Survey, the pilot project was moved back one month. Prior to the first coaching session, coachees were encouraged to visit a website, where descriptions of the spiritual disciplines were hosted, in order to familiarize the coachees with the spiritual disciplines. At the first session, the

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[14] Michael's last name will be withheld in order to preserve his privacy as a minor.

[15] Willow Creek Church gives each church that participates in the survey their own unique link so that results are particular to each church but can also be compared to the national average.

coaching conversation focused on which spiritual disciplines the coachee wanted to develop, the coach to provide insight if necessary into that decision and prioritizing the disciplines. The coachee was then encouraged to read the description of the discipline at the top of the prioritized list in preparation of the second visit.

The coach and coachee determined the content of the conversations, location, and frequency of meeting of the remaining coaching sessions. These meetings took place over the course of the next several months, from June 2012 until January 2013. In order for the project to be uninfluenced by presuppositions, neither coaches or coachees were contacted, except to encourage they continue to meet through the end of January 2013.

The second Reveal survey was scheduled to begin the last week of January 2013 and last for eight days. The coachees were encouraged to participate. According to the purveyors at Willow Creek, seven of the nine coachees completed the survey. By comparing the results of the survey in January with the results of the survey in June, the effectiveness of the final project in making disciples of the coachees involved in this project should be determined.

The last step is the evaluation and analysis of the pilot project. The Reveal survey data informs this step. However, in order to gain a larger picture, including ways the process can improve, the coaches and coachees involved in the project were interviewed. Several benefits, as well as ways the process could improve were elucidated in the interviews and are discussed in a subsequent section.

Including the time spent developing a theological basis and resources, the final project took place from September 2011 to March of 2013, although the roots of this project stretch back to the summer of 2010. Care was taken to ensure that the right

resources, methodology and volunteers were enlisted in order to measure the ability of coaching as a methodology to make disciples by encouraging the practice of spiritual disciplines in the life of the coachee.

Following Christ means participating in the same activities as Christ. This project is primarily interested in the discipling nature of the spiritual disciplines. In order to make disciples of a sample group, NRHBC members were placed in life-coaching relationships that encouraged the practice of spiritual disciplines. This chapter outlined the implications, goals, strategy and leadership necessary to facilitate life-coaching relationships for the ultimate goal of making disciples who emulate Christ's example. It concluded with a timeline and narrative of how the goals were met through the implementation of the strategy into the lives of nine coaches and coachees.

CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION AND NEXT STEPS

Whereas previous chapters focused on components of this final project such as

demographics, theology and strategy, this chapter discusses the evaluation of the project

and next steps in implementation. A summary of the assessment plan for the project is

discussed followed by a report on the results of the experience of the coaches and

coachees. This is followed by insights into discipleship and coaching gleaned from the

project. Included in the insights are inherent strengths and weaknesses with suggestions

on how to improve the process. Next steps for further development and implementation

of this ministry are explored. The acceptance or rejection of the project's methodology

hinges on whether or not coachees grew as disciples of Christ as a result of implementing

the practice of spiritual disciplines as facilitated by life-coaching relationships.

Assessment Plan

For this project, there were two components that needed assessed. First was the

impact of the coaching relationship on the spiritual maturity of the coachee. The second

was the project itself. These two assessments help ascertain the effectiveness of coaching

for spiritual maturity and critique the implementation plan utilized in this project.

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In order to measure the impact of the coaching relationship on the spiritual maturity of the coachee, there were two points of assessment. The first occurred prior to the start of the project in order to gauge the spiritual maturity of the coachee before embarking on the coaching relationship. The spiritual maturity of coachees was assessed through their participation in the Reveal survey. Once the survey was complete, the purveyors of Reveal sent results. These results were reviewed, but held until the end of the project for more thorough review and comparison.

The second assessment point took place at the end of the coaching relationship in order to provide a comparison point. Results from the second survey were compared with results from the initial survey. The comparison provided insight on the overall effectiveness of the project to make disciples, the crucial focus of this final project.

During the project, through informal means such as face-to-face conversation or via email, the coaches and coaches were contacted. This was to ensure that coaches and coachees were actively participating in the project and to address any concerns. At the conclusion of the project, various participants were contacted through a variety of means including face-to-face, over the phone and email. The conversations centered on assessing the logistics and implementation of the project from the perspective of the participants. The goal of these conversations was to ascertain the effectiveness of the plan and potential improvements in the process for broader implementation at NRHBC.

Report on Results

There are two components of the results that help ascertain the effectiveness of the disciple-making approach espoused in this project. The first is the spiritual maturity

benefits of coaching, which are based on the results of the Reveal survey and interviews with coaches and coachees. Interviews are utilized to discuss the second component—an assessment of the implementation of this project, particularly in regards to what went well and what needed improvement. The results are crucial to understanding the effectiveness of a coaching relationship to encourage the practice of spiritual disciplines.

The purveyors of the Reveal survey provide a spiritual life tracking report with a plethora of data. Of particular importance for this project is the "Spiritual Continuum Profile" chart reproduced in Appendix A.[1] The chart includes Willow Creek's four segments of spiritual status, "Exploring Christ," "Growing in Christ," "Close to Christ," and "Christ-Centered."[2] The chart is important because it demonstrates whether or not the coachee-disciples experienced spiritual growth during the pilot project.

In the first round of surveys, four of the coachees were identified as "Exploring Christ," three as "Growing in Christ," two as "Close to Chris," and zero as "Christ-Centered." In wave two, one of the coachees remained "Exploring Christ," two as "Growing in Christ," two as "Close to Christ," and two as "Christ-Centered."[3] When quantified based on segment, where "Exploring Christ" scored as a one through "Christ-Centered" scored as a four, the average score for the coachees before the project was a 1.77. After the final project completed, the average result was a 2.71. This is almost one

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[1] Willow Creek Association. *Reveal Spiritual Life Survey Tracking Report: North Richland Hills Baptist Church Comparing June 2012 with January 2013* (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Association, 2013), 8.

[2] Each segment is described in Appendix A according to Willow Creek's definition.

[3] Despite repeated encouragement to take the survey, only seven of the coachee-disciples took the survey for wave two in January 2013 as compared to all nine in the first wave in June 2012. The lack of participation by two members should not corrupt the results.

complete segment higher on Willow Creek's spiritual continuum. The average coachee moved from an average of between "Exploring Christ" and "Growing in Christ" to an average of almost all "Close to Christ." This is a significant enough step to conclude, at least according to Willow Creek's spiritual continuum, life coaching to encourage the practice of spiritual disciplines is an effective disciple-making methodology.

Whereas the Reveal survey provides quantifiable data to the ability of this project to make disciples through life-coaching relationships, interviews with the participants provide personal reflection. McDowell shared that coaching was "encouraging and made me want to go forward with 'all of this.'"[4] When asked what "all of this meant" she clarified that coaching helped her "(Grow) in my relationship with Christ."[5] When asked, "Is there anything else (you) would like to say about the coachee experience?" a similar sentiment was shared by Kuylen. He responded, "I found it really helpful as a newbie to better structure how I should be a Christ follower."[6] That Kuylen, as a "newbie" found coaching helpful is encouraging that this project can help new Christians implement spiritual disciplines. In addition to these responses about the coaching process in general, a couple of those interviewed shared specific disciplines that were implemented.

Tune shared that as a result of coaching he was "able to see God in more of a relationship. I listen more (in prayer) than I ever did before."[7] Tune's coach helped him transform the way he prays: "Instead of focusing more on myself in prayer, it is more

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[4] Ann McDowell, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, March 15, 2013.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Jake Kuylen, email message to author, March 19, 2013.

[7] Ben Tune, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, March 15, 2013.

listening; more of a conversation."[8] McDowell also shared about a specific discipline that her coach helped her develop, "I developed a daily devotional time in the morning."[9] Tune's and McDowell's reflections on participation in the project demonstrate that coachees did, in fact, put into practice spiritual disciplines.

In addition to discussing the spiritual benefits of the final project, coaches and coachees were asked to assess the logistics of the project and how the process can improve. All provided insight on what went well in the project as well as areas of improvement. Positive comments involved two components: the accountability offered in one-on-one relationships and the flexibility that coaching offers.

In regards to accountability, Hargrave commented that "accountability was very important—it is difficult for me to meet a goal otherwise."[10] When asked to clarify the accountability offered in this project, she offered a salient insight that her coach "helped me set a goal and held (me) accountable in informal settings."[11] Hargrave's coach, Leach, shared a similar opinion about accountability in informal settings, "Just because we did not have an appointment, we had other opportunities for me to hold (Hargrave) accountable."[12] An advantage of the process espoused in this project is the ability to offer accountability in informal coaching settings as well as formal coaching meetings. It is this aspect of it that demonstrates the flexibility of this project. Leach provided further

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[8] Ibid.

[9] McDowell, interview.

[10] Jenna Hargrave, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, March 12, 2013.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Cindy Leach, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, March 20, 2013.

insight into flexibility when she commented that one of the positives of this project was "the flexibility of it, especially with Jenna's schedule. There was not a regular day, time, place, which worked well."[13] These two accounts demonstrate that flexibility and accountability are significant advantages of coaching.

The insight coaches and coachees offered into areas of improvement are more helpful than comments about what went well. Although other areas of improvement were noted, there were two common themes that came to light for this project. The first was expectations were not clearly communicated to coachees. The second was the need to hold coaches and coachees accountable in regards to consistency in meeting.

Ramsey offers this insight into the need to more clearly communicate expectations: "My experience was that my partner did not have a full understanding of what coaching was all about. She was kinda (*sic*) stuck in some areas of her life and wanted advice. But we forged ahead and she took steps towards the disciplines she wanted to focus on."[14] While it may not be possible to give the coachee a "full understanding of what coaching" entails, it is possible, as Roberts suggests, to "clarify what is to be accomplished."[15] An improvement can be made to clarify the process, particularly in regards to purpose.

While the coaching relationship encourages accountability, as was discussed earlier, several coaches and coachees noted that the coaches and coachees need to be held accountable in regards to meetings. Tune commented that there needed to be an endeavor

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Shirley Ramsey, email message to author, March 21, 2013.

[15] Angela Roberts, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, March 13, 2013.

to "encourage more consistency in meeting."[16] When not held accountable, the frequency of meeting decreased. Kuylen explains, "When there was a sizable lapse in meetings, I found myself steering away from the target goals that were set with my coach."[17] In moving forward, as coaching is more broadly implemented at NRHBC, there should be increased communication between coaches, coachees and central leadership to maintain vibrant coaching relationships and meetings that are frequent enough to meet the needs of the coachee.

The results of the Reveal survey demonstrate that the average coachee participant in the project grew in their relationship with Christ. This finding is substantiated by personal interviews with the coachees. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that disciple making is possible through the practice of spiritual disciplines as developed through life-coaching relationships.

Insights Gleaned from this Project

As stated in Chapter 6, this project had six basic goals. This section reflects on whether or not this project met each goal and the changes needed where the project fell short. While this project was able to encourage the practice of spiritual disciplines in coaching relationships, which resulted in the discipling of the participants, improvements can be made before broader implementation at NRHBC takes place.

The first goal was to create a customized approach to discipleship. No two coaching relationships looked exactly alike. Each met at a different time and place as

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[16] Tune, interview.

[17] Kuylen, email.

well as the content of each relationship being different. Some met at restaurants, some met in homes and even a few met on NRHBC's campus. The same level of diversity can be found in which spiritual disciplines were discussed. No two coachees implemented the exact same disciplines and yet each experienced some level of spiritual growth. Unlike the current discipleship strategy at NRHBC, which is one-size-fits-all and occurs exclusively in classrooms on NRHBC's campus, the discipleship strategy utilized in this project was customized to each coachee. One of the strengths of this project is in producing a contextualized and customizable plan for discipleship that can be implemented on a broader scale.

To understand the relationship between spiritual disciplines and spiritual maturity was the second goal. This goal was accomplished in two ways. The first was through the theological reflection required by the project. A strong theological argument was made through support of Scripture and well-regarded theologians that the practice of the spiritual disciplines is discipleship. The results of the project also demonstrated that this argument is not merely philosophical but can be proven through the experience of the participants. The coachees put the spiritual disciplines into practice at a greater rate than previously and experienced spiritual growth as a result.

The third goal was merely to enlist and train life coaches. Enlistment was not a problem and the training provided by Coaching4Clergy was solid. An area of improvement in this project is to provide further training. Leach reflected that future training needs to provide "solid definitions of what the coaching relationship entails" in

order to better communicate expectations.[18] Solid definitions will be placed on the materials used in the enlistment and training of future coaches.

The fourth goal is concerned with the relationship between the coach and coachee. While only one coaching relationship out of the nine ended prematurely, many of the coaches and coachees reflected on the need for greater accountability. Spence, another coach, provides insight into this need: "There may need to be accountability among the coaches if anyone else met like we did, or if some fell off and stopped meeting. Some accountability for the coaches to make sure they are meeting would be good."[19] An increase in accountability by the leader of this ministry will ensure that the coach and coachee are "meeting the expectations that they have for each other."[20] Greater accountability should encourage more regularity in meeting, which can enhance the coaching relationship.

The fifth and sixth goals are symbiotic and can therefore be tied together. The fifth goal is to encourage Christlikeness in the practice of the spiritual disciplines and the sixth goal to see members of NRHBC maturing as disciples. One strength of this project is its ability to demonstrate that content-rich coaching can encourage consistent practice of spiritual disciplines resulting in spiritual growth. Therefore, the fifth and sixth goals were accomplished through the coaching advocated in this project.

One last insight needs to be discussed before moving onto broad implementation at NRHBC. This project depended upon the ability of the coachees to learn about a

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[18] Leach, interview.

[19] Janet Spence, interview by author, North Richland Hills, TX, March 20, 2013.

[20] Ibid.

spiritual discipline by reading a summary of it. Not everyone learns best through reading and as a result a weakness of the project was in not providing other means to learn about the spiritual disciplines. Hargrave, a coachee, provided this insight in her interview when she commented, "I am a visual, kinesthetic learner. My learning from reading is limited. (In this project), visual kinesthetic learners are neglected."[21] Other methods must be explored, such as video for visual learners and demonstrations of each spiritual discipline for kinesthetic learners. In order to effectively teach the spiritual disciplines to a diverse audience, each learning style must be accommodated.

To varying degrees of success, each of the six goals was reached. The results of the project revealed that some of the goals were strengths of this project, such as customization and the ability of this project to make disciples. Other goals revealed some areas of weakness including the need to provide greater accountability that could result in a higher ability to disciple coachees. The vision now is to take the results of this project, including insights gleaned from participants, and implement life coaching for disciple making on a broader scale at NRHBC.

From Final Project to Ministry at NRHBC

The next steps of this endeavor are to take the necessary steps to broaden the project from a final project to a ministry at NRHBC. Since the project is predicated on the need to fundamentally change the discipleship process of NRHBC, broader implementation is more than simply involving an increasing number of church members. Fortunately, recent changes at NRHBC offer opportunity to steadily grow this ministry.

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[21] Hargrave, interview.

NRHBC is starting a satellite campus, Cross Church, in April 2014 where I will be campus pastor. For the next few years, Cross Church will meet in a school on Sunday mornings. Cross Church members will not have access to the campus during the week resulting in a need for an alternative discipleship process than the one currently employed at NRHBC's original campus. As a result, Cross Church will need a strategy that makes disciples in the lives of members since the campus is not available. The community that Cross Church will be reaching has the same level of diversity of religious background as the community surrounding NRHBC's main campus. Cross Church needs a disciple-making process customizable to the religious history of each member. The first step towards broader implementation at NRHBC will be utilizing the process at Cross Church.

Implementation of life coaching at Cross Church will follow many of the same logistics practiced in this project. Coaches will be trained through the curriculum of Coaching4Clergy by trainers from the same organization. Church members will be encouraged to participate. As more coaches are trained, more coachees will be enlisted, although I do not anticipate using the same one-to-one ratio of coach to coachee as utilized in this project. Once this system is refined and if it is successful at Cross Church, the same process will be implemented for the original campus of NRHBC.

The advantage of starting at Cross Church is that it presents a problem of how to disciple when access to the campus is limited. The same reliance on attractional programs to make disciples is not as available to the members of Cross Church as it is to those who attend NRHBC's original campus. This problem offers an opportunity to measure the ability of this project to make disciples on a broader scale. If successful, the disciple-making strategy has great potential for NRHBC and beyond.

An area of growth for this ministry is the need to develop a means to utilize it outside the membership of NRHBC. While this project was concerned with making better disciples of its participants, it also has potential to make more disciples. In the future, NRHBC can advertise life coaching to the community as a means of evangelism that can directly lead into discipling. A non-Christian could be interested in meeting with a life coach from NRHBC and in the training of the coaches, the coach could be taught how to transition coaching conversations to the Gospel. As a result, the coaching ministry could be used as an evangelism tool as well.

This chapter was concerned with assessing the ability of this project to make disciples among coachees. The results of the Reveal survey and the testimonies of the coachees demonstrated that many of the participants grew in spiritual maturity. This project met many of the goals set forth and while it certainly had weaknesses, it has great potential for discipling members of NRHBC. The next steps in implementation are to employ the strategy at Cross Church, a satellite campus of NRHBC, and subsequently utilizing it at both campuses. Coaching as a disciple-making strategy that encourages practice of spiritual disciplines has great potential for discipling members of NRHBC.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the project, I relayed a conversation that took place between a
church member and myself regarding ministries available to new Christians.[1] The content
of that conversation was an impetus for this final project. At the time the only disciple-
making methods available to a new Christian centered on the resources and programs
available on the NRHBC campus during church meeting times. Should that conversation
occur today the resources available would be quite different. Rather than encourage a
new Christian toward participation in just church programming, he or she can be
partnered with a coach who would help implement spiritual disciplines.

The ultimate goal of this final project is to make disciples. A fundamental belief
undergirding this project is that the traditional Baptist method of making disciples, which
relies on participation in church programs and the imparting of biblical knowledge, is an
insufficient methodology for the twenty-first century context of NRHBC. This process
does not make disciples. It makes busy church members.

A few decades ago, participation in programs was an effective means to make
disciples. This was a time of Christendom in which church participation was a cultural
expectation and the busyness of life did not overcome the church calendar. Generally
speaking, this time corresponded with the founding of NRHBC, in which the community
calendar and the church calendar were more intertwined than they are today.

NRHBC sits in the middle of suburban Northeast Tarrant County, which is
increasingly growing more diverse socio-economically as the DFW area grows in

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[1] Graham, interview.

population. The fundamentalist, religious history of broader Tarrant County is one in which the conservatism of pastors such as Norris still has significant influence. This influence is evidenced by higher than national average cultural identification with Christianity and a proliferation of mega-churches. However, this conservative tendency is being challenged as the DFW area grows economically and in population over the course of the last decade.

Population and economic growth impact local institutions, including churches. Economic growth has led to an increase in busyness, which results in less time available to devote to the church calendar. As a result, the Church needs to customize disciple making according to an individual's schedule. In a similar fashion, population growth is due to national and international immigration to DFW. The ethnic diversity of DFW is accompanied by religious diversity. In addition to customizable schedules, the Church needs a customizable strategy for making disciples attune to the varying religious backgrounds found in the surrounding community.

As the community has grown more diverse, NRHBC is slowly reflecting that diversity. Founded in 1956, the early history of NRHBC was one of a community church. NRHBC became a large church in the 1970s and 1980s by utilizing many of the church growth principals popular at the time. In the 1990s, the church was led by three different pastors: Simmons, McKinney and Teague. These pastors led the church towards numerical growth through expansion of programs and staff.

The expansion of programs formed the current discipleship process of NRHBC, where success is measured through participation in on-campus programs and the church campus is the locus of discipleship. These programs include Sunday School and

Wednesday night classes that follow a one-size-fits-all approach to disciple making. As NRHBC has become more diverse and members more busy, the discipleship process has not been adjusted to meet these needs. Diversity requires contextualization.

Current discipleship at NRHBC reflects inherent strengths and weaknesses in traditional Southern Baptist ecclesiology. On one hand, the autonomy of the local church gives each congregation the freedom to set doctrine and define ecclesiology. On the other hand, many common characteristics remain. The most important common characteristic of the Baptist church is the use of Scripture alone as the source of faith. This emphasis on the importance of Scripture led to the role of biblical knowledge as the culmination of the Baptist discipleship process and disciple making occurring largely in the classroom. Thus, an advantageous characteristic of Baptists, the importance of Scripture, has led to a disadvantage due to the methodology employed. Where the classroom is a disadvantageous methodology, the coaching in this project retains the importance of Scripture to Baptists, while making the process customized to each coachee-disciple.

The method of making disciples currently employed by NRHBC is a come and participate methodology. This is a significantly different method than the one espoused by Christ in the Gospels. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Disciples are not made participating in church programs that merely teach biblical knowledge; they are made by going, baptizing and teaching to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow Jesus. Following Jesus includes following the example he set in practicing the spiritual disciplines, proclaiming the Gospel and persevering to the end. These are marks of a mature disciple.

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In order to make disciples of NRHBC members, the discipleship process must be customizable to the life patterns of each member. It must also encourage the practice of spiritual disciplines because the consistent practice of spiritual discipline is discipling. The life coaching espoused in this final project fits both requirements and therefore is poised for broader implementation at NRHBC.

Broader implementation will start with Cross Church, a new satellite campus of NRHBC. Due to the limited access to the campus, Cross Church requires a new method of discipling that does not rely on campus-centric programming. The discipleship process utilized in this paper offers such a solution. Once implemented at Cross Church, if it continues to be a successful strategy in making disciples, it will be expanded and employed at both campuses as the primary means of making disciples.

In addition to broader implementation at NRHBC, this project offers a couple of things to the broader Christian community. The first is an advocacy for customizable discipleship plans to the context of each member of the church. The solution for every church in every context may not be to utilize life coaching. However, this project has demonstrated the need for contextualized disciple making. Pastors need to reflect upon their methods of discipleship and make changes to processes that are not customizable.

The second component this project offers to the broader Christian community is implementation of the process utilized within. Conversations between Coaching4Clergy representatives and I have occurred about the potential to take this system and develop it for other churches to utilize. This would include development of resources such as written materials and training through Coaching4Clergy's coaching certification process. The goal is to encourage the same type of disciple-making success found in this project.

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Based on the interviews of those involved in this project and the results of the Reveal survey, it is reasonable to conclude that life-coaching relationships that encourage the practice of spiritual disciplines are able to make disciples. As Leach commented, "I think there is great potential to use coaching in the development of spiritual disciplines."[2] From this great potential found in life coaching is a great potential to make disciples of the Church of the twenty-first century. No greater need exists.

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[2] Leach, interview.

APPENDIX A

	Spiritual Continuum Profile[1]			
	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	Base Size[2]	Percentage	Base Size	Percentage
Exploring Christ	4	44%	1	14%
Growing in Christ	3	33%	2	29%
Close to Christ	2	22%	2	29%
Christ-Centered	0	1%	2	28%

The authors of *Reveal* offer these definitions for exploring Christ, growing in Christ, close to Christ and Christ centered:

"Exploring Christ: These people are taking the first steps in spiritual growth and are marked by significantly lower levels of agreement with belief statements such as 'I believe salvation comes only through Jesus Christ.'

"Growing in Christ: These early believers are growing in their faith through church experiences and are also starting to incorporate personal spiritual practices into their normal routine outside of church.

"Close to Christ: These believers report much higher levels of personal spiritual practices than earlier segments. Serving emerges as an important expression of their faith. While their devotion to Christ is growing, they still hold back from full faith commitment.

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[1] Willow Creek Association. *Reveal Spiritual Life Survey Tracking Report: North Richland Hills Baptist Church Comparing June 2012 with January 2013* (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Association, 2013), 8.

[2] Base size is the number of participants, coachees, who were identified according to each stage of the spiritual continuum. In "Wave 1," there were four coachees who were "Exploring Christ" whereas in "Wave 2," only one coachee was "Exploring Christ."

"Christ Centered: These people have fully surrendered their lives to Christ, demonstrated by their dramatically higher levels of spiritual behaviors and attitudes across the board. They 'very strongly agree' that they seek God's guidance in every area of their lives – at tow times the level of any other segment."[3]

In order to clarify the importance of the spiritual continuum profile, I assigned numeric value to each of the four stages. "Exploring Christ" was assigned a value of one, "Growing in Christ" a value of two, "Close to Christ" a value of three and "Christ-Centered" was assigned a value of four. For example, in "Wave 1," when enumerated "Exploring Christ" received a total value of four because the base size of four was multiplied by the value of one; in "Wave 2" the base size of two for "Christ-Centered" was multiplied by four and therefore received a total value of eight. The resulting average demonstrates that each coachee moved almost one full stage on the spiritual continuum.

	Spiritual Continuum Profile Enumerated			
	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	Base Size	Enumerated	Base Size	Enumerated
Exploring Christ	4	4	1	1
Growing in Christ	3	6	2	4
Close to Christ	2	6	2	6
Christ-Centered	0	0	2	8
Average	n/a	1.77	n/a	2.71

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[3] Hawkins and Parkinson, *Reveal*, 38-39.

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