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EVANGELISTIC DISCIPLESHIP:
EQUIPPING DISCIPLES
TO LIVE FOR JESUS IN A VINEYARD CHURCH PLANT

A DOCTORAL PROJECT
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

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ABSTRACT

Evangelistic Discipleship: Equipping Disciples to Live for Jesus in a Vineyard Church Plant

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Doctor of Ministry

2015

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

This doctoral project describes a process of discipleship and equipping in spiritual formation in order to establish the DNA of a Vineyard Church plant in Terrace, British Columbia. Terrace is a community of 15,500 people located five hundred miles north of Vancouver. The evangelistic church plant will emphasize helping people live as authentic followers and disciples of Jesus. The main identity of this church planting initiative will be built around evangelistic discipleship and equipping in spiritual formation helping to create a community of people who authentically live out what it means to live in Christian community. The project will lay out a theoretical and practical foundation for growth and maturation in Christ through participation in spiritual practice and the life of this new community.

Part One will present the history of the Terrace area by looking at the First Nations history, pioneer life, and early church history. Attention will be given to how the cycles of boom and bust have impacted the community and its churches. This section will also look at how religious groups are currently engaging young adults and the greater community.

Part Two will provide the theological foundations for this project. A Vineyard theological perspective will be presented, along with influences from authors who advocate spiritual practice and formation. This section will establish a biblical, theological, and historical premise for the priority of spiritual formation in the lives of those wanting to live as authentic followers of Jesus.

Part Three will develop a plan that spells out how people can participate in a pilot project on spiritual formation. Various spiritual disciplines will be explained, and the opportunity to practice these disciplines within a supportive small group context will be made available. The groups will be mindful of the various timelines, resources, personnel, and assessment tools required.

Content Reader: Richard Peace, PhD

Words: 299

To my wife Ann and our sons, David, Matthew, and Brian Claus—
thank you for being an integral part of our church planting endeavors

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give thanks to my professors: Eddie Gibbs, Richard Peace, and the late Dallas Willard.

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INTRODUCTION

This doctoral project describes a process of discipleship and equipping in spiritual formation in order to establish the DNA of a Vineyard church plant in Terrace, British Columbia. While most churches in the Terrace area define their ministry based upon a denominational identity and their particular beliefs, the Vineyard church plant intends to build a foundation of evangelistic discipleship as new believers practice living in authentic Christian community. It is proposed that the defining characteristic and the overarching apologetic of this new church community be the transformation taking place in the lives of participants who are gradually growing and maturing in Christ and working out what it means to live as authentic Christ followers.

During the past twenty years, my family has been involved in planting two churches in the province of British Columbia. In 1988, my wife and I and our three boys were involved in planting a church in Campbell River, British Columbia, a coastal Vancouver Island community with a population of twenty thousand. In 1998, we began another church plant in Prince George, which is the largest city in the northern half of British Columbia with a population of eighty thousand. Both of these church plants were non-nucleus,¹ and involved a great deal of intentional gathering, evangelism, and disciple making.

In the summer of 2010, my wife Ann and I moved 350 miles west from Prince George to Terrace, intent on planting another non-nucleus Vineyard church. This was a difficult move for us personally. We left behind a loving church family, the Prince

¹ A non-nucleus church plant is a church plant that has no pre-existing group or cluster of people interested in helping launch the new church.

George Vineyard Community Church, a ministry we had initiated twelve years earlier. We also left behind our son and daughter-in-law and two of our grandchildren.

While our Prince George church plant never grew large, we were effective in gathering and facilitating an evangelistic disciple-making culture in the Prince George Vineyard Community Church. As we journeyed forward in ministry, we noticed that general openness to consider Christianity and Christian beliefs was on a decidedly downward trend. Gradually, we were also becoming aware that a logical, rational presentation of the gospel message did not have the appeal and the ability to engage potential seekers that it did ten years previously.

We also realized that the Alpha Course, our prime means of gathering and engaging people, was more rational in its apologetic and overall approach than we had previously thought. Beginning with a shared meal was a wonderful way to get to know people. The retreat weekend provided participants with an experience of community, engaged the heart, provided teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit, and gave an opportunity to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. However, the teaching components and the basic apologetic that presented the claims of Christ were largely intellectual and assumed the validity of overarching meta-narratives, an evangelistic approach more effective in the modern era than with the current largely postmodern audience.

In an effort to keep pace with evangelistic and cultural trends, I read extensively on evangelism and attended numerous conference events which proved helpful and instructive. However, I knew that the larger changes in our culture and the increasingly ineffective current methods of evangelism would require more in-depth thinking on my

part as a church planter. We needed to reshape our evangelistic approach if we were to be effective church planters in the future. As a result, I chose to gain some fresh perspective on the ministries of evangelism and discipleship by enrolling in a Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Seminary. As a church planter, I wanted to understand the changing cultural backdrop and learn about new approaches to sharing the good news and helping people grow and mature in Christ in order to more effectively evangelize and facilitate discipleship within a progressively postmodern, multicultural, and secular West Coast Canadian context.²

This doctoral project, therefore, begins by examining the history, religious context, and dominant values in Terrace, British Columbia. The project presents an overview of planting a Vineyard church in Terrace along with a review of previous church planting experiences of the church planting couple. An exploration of the foundations for a new church community, built on discipleship and spiritual formation, will also be given.

Chapter 1 of this doctoral project presents the community and the church context of Terrace, British Columbia. The City of Terrace has a population of 15,569³ and is located approximately five hundred miles north of Vancouver and roughly one hundred miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. Terrace, surrounded by snow-capped mountains

² According to Canadian Researcher Reginald Bibby, BC and Quebec have the lowest levels of church attendance in the country. See Reginald W. Bibby, *Beyond the God's and Back: Religion's Demise and Rise and Why It Matters* (Lethbridge, AB: Project Books, 2011), 53. Bibby also contends that Canada has become a multicultural country where pluralism helps define the national psyche. See Bibby, *Beyond the God's and Back*, 18.

³ Statistics Canada, "Census Profile: Terrace, British Columbia," www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/togs-spg/Facts-cma-eug.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=cma&GC=965 (accessed May 20, 2014).

year round, is located on the 350-mile Skeena River, a river “unique within North America for its presence and abundance of salmon and for its low habitat disturbance.”⁴

This chapter examines the history of Terrace by looking at Tsimshian First Nation’s history. The Tsmishians had two year-round settlements near Terrace and utilized migrating salmon as their primary food source. The chapter also touches on early pioneer church life, noting the impact of World War Two on the local community and the subsequent boom years that followed. Next, the chapter explores the present community of Terrace by surveying the current demographics and acknowledging the challenge of the current industrial and population boom.

This chapter also analyzes the present religious context, looks at the range of religious options within the community, and observes how churches have grown. The chapter includes an examination of the dominant values of the area such as the independence of the West, skepticism toward authority, love of nature, spirituality, and the connection between the natural and spiritual environments. The chapter concludes by looking at planting a Vineyard church in Terrace by considering church planting within the Vineyard movement, the previous church planting experience of the church planting couple, and the desire to build a ministry around discipleship and spiritual formation.

Part Two of this project begins with Chapter 2, the literature review, which explores the theology of the Kingdom developed by George Eldon Ladd and the subsequent impact of Ladd’s theology of the Kingdom on the Vineyard denomination. Ladd’s perspective on the present reality of the Kingdom of God, living in the “already

⁴ Allen S. Gottesfeld and Ken A. Rabnett, *Skeena River Fish and their Habitat* (Portland, OR: Ecotrust, 2008), 305.

but not yet,” has become the foundational cornerstone that undergirds Vineyard realized eschatology.⁵ This section also evaluates the contribution to this doctoral project of Vineyard authors Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson, who advocate combining the evangelistic focus and intellectual depth of evangelicalism, along with the openness to the power of the Holy Spirit found in charismatic circles, in order to form “empowered evangelicals” who combine the best of both worlds.⁶

The heart of this doctoral project describes a process of empowering disciples of Jesus Christ to grow through spiritual formation. Two books, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* by Dallas Willard and *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* by James Wilhoit, delineate this process of growing and maturing in Christ-likeness. Both books provide valuable perspective to this doctoral project. In addition, authors Darrell Guder, Bryan Stone, and Richard Peace help inform and shape how this doctoral project conceives living as a community of authentic Christ followers.

Chapter 3 explores the theology of this new ministry initiative by examining the theology of the Kingdom and how this perspective informs the theology of creation, discipleship, and spiritual gifts found within this approach. This chapter explores the definition of the word *discipleship* and performs a word study on the concept of discipleship. This section also considers biblical material in the gospel of Matthew, John, Romans, and the Psalms. Chapter 3 also explores evangelistic discipleship. Evangelistic discipleship takes place when a seeker encounters a credible witness of Jesus Christ. The

⁵ John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Healing* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987), 157.

⁶ Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals: Bringing Together the Best of the Evangelical and Charismatic Worlds* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1995), 33.

seeker hears the gospel message and learns about the need for repentance, faith in Jesus, and the need to follow Jesus as his disciple. Over time the seeker processes the claims of Christ and his call of discipleship. This person comes to understand the nature of the call to discipleship, chooses to follow Jesus, and becomes his disciple. Chapter 3 also explores how basic spiritual practices such as silence, fellowship, prayer, meditation, and fasting can help facilitate growth and spiritual maturation.

Part Three begins with Chapter 4, which explores the theological implications of following Jesus and living for him in the present reality of the Kingdom of God. The chapter explores the call to follow Jesus and live as his follower in the here and now. The chapter also examines the need to cultivate openness toward spiritual practice.

This chapter also presents an overview of the basic components that will implement this strategy of discipleship. Then, the chapter discusses the leadership criteria necessary to implement this program in spiritual formation. This chapter also provides a description of the target population, the small group leadership requirements, and the resources needed to implement this strategy of spiritual formation.

Chapter 5 presents a detailed implementation strategy which specifies the time frames and the various components required in order to implement a twelve-week pilot project in spiritual formation. The chapter includes a detailed timeline outlining the various time frames, and it also describes the selection process of the spiritual formation group leaders. Next, this chapter discusses training in spiritual practice, small group dynamics, and basic leadership skills. It also considers the practical resources that need to be secured and acquired in order to effectively launch this pilot project. Finally, the chapter presents an assessment plan to effectively evaluate this twelve-week pilot project.

The summary and conclusion highlight some of the key components of this doctoral project and discuss the importance of creating an intentional program of spiritual formation within the context of a new church plant. New church plants that wish to engage the postmodern mindset will need to create winsome and effective apologetics that engage the whole person and speak to a postmodern culture. The project concludes with a discussion of the need for endurance, patience, and humility as one seeks to follow Christ and grow in him through the practice of spiritual formation.

PART ONE

CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY AND CHURCH CONTEXT

This chapter examines the community and church context of Terrace, British Columbia. The chapter looks at the First Nations history, pioneer life and early church development, the impact of World War Two, and the subsequent boom on the community. Next, the present religious context is explored, followed by a look at the dominant values which shape the local mindset and culture. Chapter 1 concludes with an examination of planting a Vineyard church in Terrace.

History of Terrace, British Columbia

The history of Terrace began with the First Nations tribes, who were the first to reside in the area. The pioneers arrived when sternwheelers began plying the Skeena River in the late nineteenth century. Terrace mushroomed in the 1940s when several large military squadrons were stationed in the community. The town continued to grow in the 1950s through the 1970s when large logging, sawmilling, and pulp mill operations were established in the area. More recently, the centralized location has enabled the town to develop into a regional service and retail center.

First Nations History in Northwestern British Columbia

The rugged west coast of northern British Columbia and the southern tip of the Alaskan Panhandle are home to six distinct First Nations aboriginal groups.¹ The Tsimshian were comprised of three distinct subdivisions.² Along the lower Nass River lived the Nisga'a, while the Skeena River to the south had fourteen small summer and fall fishing villages that overwintered on the coast around Metlakatla Pass.³ The third Tsimshian grouping were the Gitsan who lived on the Upper Skeena, above Kistelas Canyon in seven year-round villages. Missionary efforts to the Tsimshian began in the latter half of the nineteenth century with Anglican missionaries, William Duncan⁴ and his protégé medical missionary Robert Tomlinson. Duncan established a strict, orderly utopian community on the coast in Metlakatla that grew to over one thousand Tsimshians.⁵

¹ Kerby, *One Hundred Years of History—Terrace* (Terrace, BC: Terrace Regional Museum Society, 1984), 4. These six aboriginal groups, stretching from Washington state to Alaska, are comprised of the Coast Salish in the South, the Nootka of Western Vancouver Island, the southern and Northern Kwakiutl of the mid coast BC, the Haida of Haida Gwaii (historically the Queen Charlotte Islands) the Tsimshian of the BC North Coast, comprising the lower sections of the Skeena and Nass Rivers plus the Tlingit of the Alaskan panhandle. See Reg Ashwell and David Hancock, *Indian Tribes of the Northwest* (Surrey, BC: Hancock House Publishers, 2006), 3.

² Ibid.

³ Kerby, *One Hundred Years of History—Terrace, BC*, 4. Overwintering on the coast enabled the migrating Tsimshians to harvest bounty from the sea: “Winter Spring Salmon, clams and cockles, snapper and cod.” See Kenneth Campbell, *Persistence and Change: A History of the Ts'myen Nation* (Prince Rupert, BC: First Nations Educational Council, 2005), 33. While the majority of the Coast Tsimshian villages were nomadic, the villages closest to the present day city of Terrace—Kitsumkalum, three kilometers to the West and Kitselas, twenty kilometres to the East—were year-round villages. See Kerby, *One Hundred Years of History—Terrace, BC*, 4.

⁴ Joan Weir, *Catalysts and Watchdogs: B.C.'s Men of God: 1836-1871* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1995), 87.

⁵ Campbell, *Persistence and Change*, 106. In 1887 after a series of conflicts with his overseeing bishop, Duncan led eight hundred Tsimshian people to form a new community in South Fort Alaska. See Campbell, *Persistence and Change*, 105.

This church plant shares a number of basic key values with First Nations people in this area. Both place a high value on spiritual sensitivity, love for the natural order, and a desire to protect the physical environment. These values offer the potential for this church plant to build bridges and connection with local First Nations people.

Pioneer Life and Early Church Development

Early pioneers were drawn to the Terrace area to trap fur-bearing animals and to harvest cordwood in order to fuel the sternwheelers that were navigating the Skeena River between Port Essington and Hazelton.⁶ With the coming of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in the spring of 1914, linking West to East, lumber could now be shipped by rail to distant markets.⁷ The founder of Terrace, George Little, was one of the first of many enterprising sawmill owners; Little founded a sawmill in Terrace in 1911.⁸

In 1908 when Thomas Marsh arrived in the area to found St. Matthew's Anglican Church, he tried to enlist help with the building of a parish home, but he was informed by local men that "they did not want any damn preacher in the country."⁹ However, once the locals realized that missionary Marsh was capable with "a double-bitted axe and a broad axe and began falling trees and squaring timber on the church lands," they volunteered to help him build his new home and developed appreciation and respect for him.¹⁰

⁶ Norma V. Bennett, *Pioneer Legacy: Chronicles of the Lower Skeena River* (Terrace, BC: Dr. R.E.M Lee Hospital Foundation, 2000), 19.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁸ Nadine Asante, *The History of Terrace* (Terrace, BC: Terrace Public Library Association, 1972), 23.

⁹ Bennett, *Pioneer Legacy*, 36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Initial Anglican worship services were held in homes until a church was constructed in 1911.¹¹ The Presbyterian Church began on May 18, 1913 while the Roman Catholic Church began in Terrace in 1917.¹² This church plant benefits from the initial efforts of these authentic ministries. In spite of the harsh living conditions and numerous challenges, these early churches established a strong Christian presence. They also established a strong foundation for the role of Christian ministry in the ongoing life of the Community of Terrace.

World War Two: Impact on Community and Church Life

Prior to the outbreak of World War Two, the community of Terrace had roughly 355 citizens while another 450 lived in the surrounding area, bringing the population to approximately 800 people.¹³ In the early stages of the war, the north coast of British Columbia was not considered a potential foreign target.¹⁴ However, in the aftermath of the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Canada followed the lead of the United States, and declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941.¹⁵

Within Prince Rupert, the wartime effort caused the population to soar from 6,000 to 23,000 people.¹⁶ In the village of Terrace ninety-five miles to the east, the population

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 161. The Presbyterians voted to join the newly formed United Church of Canada in 1925.

¹³ Karen Kuechle, *The Terrace Mutiny* (Terrace, BC: The District of Terrace, 1984), 8.

¹⁴ Sue Harper Rowse, *In Times of War: Prince Rupert 1939 – 1945* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu.com, 2005), 9.

¹⁵ Patricia E. Roy and John Herd, *British Columbia: Land of Promises: The Illustrated History of Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2005), 135-136.

¹⁶ Rowse, *In Times of War*, 101.

jumped eightfold and reached a new high of 6,000 people, “rendering the town virtually a military settlement.”¹⁷ At the time the community had four established churches: Knox United Church, St. Matthew’s Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Pentecostal Church.¹⁸

Terrace’s unique global position on the western side of North America and its proximity to Asia make it vulnerable to global developments and national decisions that trump local input and concerns. This destabilizes the local population, making them feel powerless and helpless. This church planting project benefits from the historical awareness that unsettled and unpredictable times create unique ministry opportunities. This church plant offers the good news of the gospel to people who need stability and coherence in their lives.

The Boom Years: Impact on Community and Church Life

The factor precipitating the post-war boom in Terrace was the granting of Tree Farm license number 1 to Columbia Cellulose Ltd, allowing the company to harvest approximately one million acres of prime forest land in the Terrace area.¹⁹ This political

¹⁷ Kuechle, *The Terrace Mutiny*, 8. In addition to the construction of a new national defense airport, a three hundred-bed military hospital, numerous infrastructure projects, which included water and sewage facilities, the town also housed three thousand construction workers who were involved in building the Terrace to Prince Rupert Highway. The effect of this dramatic influx of military personnel and construction workers was immediate and transformational for this small forestry, sawmilling, and farming community. Line-ups for basic services in restaurants and other sectors of the community became commonplace and the main intersection in town resembled a major city on Saturday night. Army personnel and construction workers also got into altercations over the limited supply of local girls available to date and take to a dance. See Asante, *The History of Terrace*, 165.

¹⁸ Clarence Warner, interview by author, Terrace, BC, May 21, 2014. Warner is a long-time Terrace resident and member of the Terrace Pentecostal Church.

¹⁹ Norma Kerby, *Greater Terrace Official Settlement Plan: Background Studies and Planning Recommendations* (Terrace, BC: Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine, 1984), 97. Logs harvested in this tree farm license were shipped by rail to Prince Rupert and processed by a pulp mill built by Columbia Cellulose Ltd.

decision by the British Columbia government was viewed by many in a positive light. The one thousand new pulp mill employees helped repopulate the city of Prince Rupert, and the contract also provided steady employment within the logging division in the Terrace area.²⁰ However, this decision also severely restricted timber access by small companies, causing many smaller sawmills to shut down.²¹

As a result of these developments in the forest industry as well as earlier wartime infrastructure projects, the population of Terrace continued to increase from 961 in 1951 to 5,940 in 1961.²² Ten years later, in 1971, the population was 14,500.²³ This population growth in Terrace was also influenced by the construction of an aluminum smelter at Kitimat, beginning in 1951, the construction of the Kitimat town site, the construction of a railway, and a new highway linking Terrace to Kitimat.²⁴

Church involvement for many people during this time in Terrace's history not only met their spiritual needs, but the church community also provided a great deal of

²⁰ Phylis Bowman, *Muskeg, Rocks and Rain!* (Prince Rupert, BC: Phylis Bowman, 1973), 95.

²¹ Both Skeena Forest Products and Pohle Lumber Ltd., two independent locally owned sawmills, did manage to survive and continued to be major sources of employment. See Kerby, *Greater Terrace Official Settlement Plan*, 94.

²² Kerby, *Greater Terrace Official Settlement Plan*, 19.

²³ Ibid. Not only was the town and area growing, but most of this significant growth was occurring outside of municipal boundaries, which lacked zoning, basic regulations, and water and sewage systems. See Kerby, *Greater Terrace Official Settlement Plan*, 20.

²⁴ Ibid., 19. The smelter was completed in 1954, the rail line in 1955, and the highway in 1957. See Kerby, *One Hundred Years of History – Terrace, BC*. As a result of this population increase in the 1950s and the 1960s, several new churches were planted, including the Seventh Day Adventist Church in 1948 and the Evangelical Free Church in 1951. See Dave Newman and Elaine Bretherick, *History of the Terrace Evangelical Free Church* (Terrace, BC: Terrace Evangelical Free Church, 2002), 1. The Christian Reformed Church was planted in 1952. The Roman Catholic Church found it necessary to expand its facilities and added new wings to its Lakelse Street Church in both 1952 and 1962. See Asante, *The History of Terrace*, 163.

emotional support and camaraderie.²⁵ Regular church attendance was the expected norm, and persons who missed a Sunday would be queried by friends and family regarding their absence. The rich opportunity for local recreational pursuits did not trump involvement in regular church activities, and midweek events were typically well attended.²⁶

The Present Community of Terrace: Boom, Bust, and Back Again

The City of Terrace had 15,569 residents in 2011, a change of 1 percent from the 2006 census date.²⁷ Compared to Canada as a whole, the population of those over sixty-five is 2 percent lower, while the working age population was only 1 percent lower at 67.7 percent.²⁸ At 19.6 percent, the population of children aged newborn to fourteen was 1.9 percent higher in the city of Terrace.²⁹ The median age in Terrace is also slightly lower at 39.2 years, versus 41.9 years in the province of British Columbia.³⁰ In Terrace, 21 percent of the population is First Nations.³¹ From 2006 to 2011, the local population

²⁵ John and Hilda Van De Velde, interview by author, Terrace, BC, May 20, 2014. The Van De Veldes are long-time Terrace residents in their late fifties. They explained that it was commonplace to get together with friends and family to help and assist with practical projects, such as gathering firewood, or to celebrate and mark special occasions.

²⁶ Evelyn Pousette, interview by author, Terrace, BC, May 22, 2014. Pousette is a long-time Terrace resident in her early eighties who has been a regular member of the Terrace Evangelical Free Church. According to Pousette, special crusades, calling people to faith and recommitment, were well attended; people would frequently visit other churches during crusade week. A large well-attended city-wide crusade, sponsored by the local church community, featured Canadian evangelist Barry Moore; this crusade was held in 1964 in the Civic Center, the largest auditorium in the community. See Van De Velde interview.

²⁷ Statistics Canada, "National Household Survey: Terrace, BC."

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

experienced a growth rate of 1 percent, reversing the previous decrease of 6.5 percent, which occurred from 2001 to 2006.³²

In Terrace in 2011, 20.6 percent had a high school degree as their highest level of education, 49.7 percent had a post-secondary certificate or diploma, 13.6 percent had a trade diploma, and 8.19 percent had a bachelor's degree.³³ The median household income in Terrace of \$74,321 is roughly comparable to the British Columbia provincial median income of \$69,150 and \$72,240 for the Canadian median family income.³⁴ The primary industries are forestry and transportation, while the largest employers are the wholesale and retail trades, health services, and the accommodations and food service industries.³⁵

A Changing Population and Demographic

While Terrace is largely a community built around the forest and transportation industries, it is also a regional center which provides retail, educational,³⁶ professional, and governmental services throughout northwestern British Columbia. Terrace is increasingly becoming a destination for young adults who wish to live in an affordable smaller community that offers quick access to year-round recreational opportunities.

³² Matt Thompson and Tamara White, "Housing Terrace: Trends, Needs, and Directions," www.terrace.ca/documents/planning-developments/TerraceNeedsAssessment_March_2014_FINAL.pdf (accessed May 20, 2014), 10.

³³ Statistics Canada, "National Household Survey: Terrace, BC."

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ British Columbia: Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training, "Regional Workforce Table: Northwest," www.jtst.gov.bc.ca/regionalworkforcetables/docs/resourcepkg/Section1_LM_Information_Jan25.pdf (accessed June 8, 2014).

³⁶ The main campus for Northwest Community College is located in Terrace as well as the main satellite campus of the University of Northern British Columbia. The Northwest Regional Airport, five miles south of Terrace, has regular daily flights to Vancouver, Calgary, and Prince George. In addition, six helicopter companies operate out of Terrace.

Many of these young adults are educated young professionals who live to ski, paddle, and hike. They revere the natural order and while they have deep spiritual longings, their postmodern approach to life and their negative bias toward the Church typically preclude them from identifying with the local Christian churches.

As massive infrastructure projects get underway in Kitimat,³⁷ the port community forty miles to the south of Terrace, and as other regional projects are launched, such as new transmission lines and new mines along Highway 37, Terrace is beginning to enter the boom cycle once again. On March 24, 2014, the city council passed an amendment that would allow up to three thousand workers in multiple “work camps at the city-owned Skeena Industrial Development Park located just south of the Northwest Regional Airport.”³⁸ While previous workers or army personnel resided in the area for the duration of their stay in the 1940s, today it is common for construction workers to commute to the local Terrace-Kitimat airport and work for two to three weeks at a time.³⁹

³⁷ The amount of potential investment being proposed for Kitimat is staggering. The following projects are all under development or are being proposed: Rio Tinto Modernization – 3.5 billion, Kitimat LNG – 4.5 billion, Pacific Trail Pipeline – 1.3 billion, LNG Canada – 12 billion, Coastal Gaslink – 4 billion, Enbridge Northern Gateway Crude Oil Pipeline – 6.5 billion, Kitimat Clean Refinery – 16 billion. See Kitimat website, “Major Projects,” www.kitimat.ca/EN/main/business/invest-in-Kitimat/major-projects.html (accessed May 26, 2014). All figures represent Canadian dollars and “LNG” refers to “liquefied natural gas.”

³⁸ Josh Massey, “Second Work Camp proposed for the Terrace, BC area,” *Terrace Standard*, March 25, 2014, <http://www.terracestandard.com/news/251721411.html> (accessed May 26, 2014).

³⁹ In 2013 the Terrace-Kitimat airport had a 28 percent increase in passengers. It is expected that this traffic will continue to increase for the next five years. The majority of this increase is due to temporary workers flying to work. See Northwest Regional Airport: Terrace-Kitimat, “Airport Master Plan, 2014,” www.yxt.ca/business-development/www.aircauda.ca (accessed May 26, 2014), 4.

The Challenge of Industrialization in Northwestern British Columbia

Recent statistics from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation reveal that Terrace currently supports the lowest vacancy rate in the province.⁴⁰ In both Terrace and Kitimat, some landlords are responding to this boom by doing extensive renovations to suites and apartments and subsequently raising rents.⁴¹ In many cases, the new rents are so high that people are in effect being “pushed out of their homes,”⁴² claims Stacey Tyers, a city of Terrace councilor and poverty advocate.

The proposed mega projects have the net effect of disempowering the local population by creating uncertainty and powerlessness in the face of massive potential change.⁴³ As this church plant partners with local people to preserve and protect the environment, its leaders will also be able to reach out with our personal stories of coping with change and loss. As relationships and trust deepens, the leaders will have opportunities to share how the story of Jesus has shaped them, providing meaning and purpose in their lives.

⁴⁰ Anna Killen, “Trying to Find an Apartment in Terrace? Good Luck,” *Terrace Standard*, December 13, 2013, <http://www.terracestandard.com/news/235731031.html> (accessed May 26, 2014).

⁴¹ CBC News, “Terrace, Kitimat Low-Income Residents Being ‘Renovicted,’” February 26, 2014, <http://cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/terrace-kitimat-low-income-residents-being-renovicted-1.2551692> (accessed May 26, 2014).

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Two Kitimat residents, Emily Toews and Lis Stannus, have been granted appellant status, as individuals who believe the SO₂ increase proposed by the modernization project could be harmful to human health and the environment. Emily Toews and Lis Stannus, phone interviews by author, October 2013-February 2014.

The Religious Context

A range of Christian churches, from historically established mainline congregations such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church, to newer charismatic churches such as the Rock, are present in Terrace.⁴⁴ Within the community, the established evangelical churches are the Evangelical Free church and the Terrace Pentecostal Assembly.⁴⁵ Two smaller evangelical churches that have fewer than one hundred people in regular attendance are Zion Baptist Church and the Terrace Alliance Church. The largest mainline church in Terrace is the Roman Catholic Sacred Heart Parish followed by the Christian Reformed Church and Knox United Church. This past year, the Lutheran Church decided to close due to declining membership.⁴⁶

Church Identity Shaped by Denominational Affiliation

While each individual Christian church in the city of Terrace has its own nuanced expression of church life and church culture, the various churches have identities that are primarily influenced by their respective belief systems. For instance, a visit to the Roman Catholic church in Terrace makes it clear that adherence to Catholic beliefs, respect for

⁴⁴ Terrace has an established Jehovah's Witnesses congregation, as well as a local Mormon group that appears to be more of a mission outpost than an established congregation. See Yellow Pages, "Terrace Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," www.yellowpages.ca/bus/British-Columbia/Terrace/Church-of-Jesus-Christ-of-Latter-Day-Saints/7886129.html (accessed May 28, 2014). Young male Mormon missionaries are visible in downtown Terrace in the summer and seek to engage the public in dialogue. A Baha'i home group is also present in Terrace, and two different Sikh temples exist in the community. See Yelp, "Terrace: Baha'i Faith," www.yelp.ca/biz/bahai/-faith-nwbc-terrace (accessed May 28, 2014).

⁴⁵ Both of these churches have a senior pastor, an associate pastor, and a church secretary.

⁴⁶ *Terrace Standard*, "Terrace, BC: Church Building Up for Sale," *Terrace Standard*, www.terracestandard.com/news/251433601.html (accessed May 28, 2014).

the church, and allegiance to the pope are defining values within their church culture.⁴⁷

As one surveys the web sites of the Terrace Evangelical Free Church, the Terrace Alliance Church, and the Terrace Pentecostal Church, it is also clear that their respective beliefs about the triune God, the Bible, and other tenets of the faith are the primary elements shaping their church cultures.⁴⁸ On one level this is very understandable, for belief does indeed shape church culture. However, giving primary defining emphasis to belief statements makes it much more difficult to engage in “actual apprenticeship to Jesus,”⁴⁹ where the essential values of a Christian community include commitment to becoming like Jesus through a process of discipleship and spiritual formation.

Church Growth Largely through Transfers

During the past ten years, prior to the beginnings of the current economic resurgence in the Terrace area, it was not uncommon for a church to lose members as unemployed people moved away to find employment elsewhere.⁵⁰ On a more encouraging note, various churches, such as the Terrace Pentecostal Church,⁵¹ the

⁴⁷ The author has visited the Terrace Roman Catholic Church twice, on Christmas Eve in 2012 and on Easter Sunday, March 31, 2013.

⁴⁸ See Terrace Evangelical Free Church, “Home,” www.terraceefc.com/site/cpage.asp?cpage_id=180027581&sec_id=18009593; Terrace Alliance Church, “Home,” www.cmaterrace.ca/?page_id=96; and Terrace Pentecostal Church, “Beliefs,” www.tpallife.org/beliefs/ (accessed May 21, 2014).

⁴⁹ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), xvii.

⁵⁰ Dave Peters, interview by author, Terrace, BC, May 27, 2014. Peters is in his late fifties, and previously was a long-time member of the Terrace Alliance Church. Peters currently attends the Terrace Evangelical Free Church.

⁵¹ Pastor Lowell Holmquist, interview by author, Terrace, BC, May 29, 2014. Pastor Holmquist stated that the Terrace Pentecostal Church has seen three or four people, from teens to seniors, come to faith in response to special evangelistic meetings on a regular yearly basis.

Terrace Alliance Church,⁵² the Terrace Evangelical Free Church,⁵³ and the Terrace Roman Catholic Church,⁵⁴ have all experienced small numbers of people coming to faith each year. However, both Pastor Lowell Holmquist of the Terrace Pentecostal Church and Pastor Bob Pond of the Terrace Evangelical Free Church openly admitted that their churches have grown primarily through church transfers and secondly through children being born into these respective congregations.⁵⁵

Ministry Initiatives to Engage Younger Adults and the Larger Community

Two Terrace churches that have a regular ministry or small group geared to younger adults are the Terrace Pentecostal Church and the Terrace Roman Catholic Church. The Terrace Pentecostal Church has a regular Tuesday night gathering and is available to those who are in grade twelve through age thirty.⁵⁶ The Roman Catholic

⁵² Peters interview. Peters stated that a few people had come to faith on a regular basis each year during his time at the Terrace Alliance Church.

⁵³ Pastor Bob Pond, interview by author, Terrace, BC, May 29, 2014. Pastor Pond stated that a few people have come to faith each year during the past six years that he has pastored at the church.

⁵⁴ Father Terry Brock, interview by author, Terrace, BC, May 28, 2014. Father Brock stated that the Terrace Roman Catholic Church has experienced some people coming to faith through various classes and courses on a regular yearly basis.

⁵⁵ Holmquist interview and Pond interview. Canadian researcher Reginald Bibby has looked at the growth of evangelical churches in the city of Calgary over a thirty-four-year time period from 1966 to 2000 and has observed a similar trend. He found that 71 percent of church growth within the churches he studied was from other evangelical churches. See Reginald Bibby, "The Circulation of the Saints: One Final Look at How Conservative Churches Grow," paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association in Pasadena, California, April 2003, www.reginaldbibby.com/images/cirofsaints03.pdf (accessed May 22, 2014), 5.

⁵⁶ Holmquist interview. Roughly twenty to thirty people show up on a given night that begins with a meal and is followed by small groups that engage in Bible study and discussion.

Church has also started a new regular young adult group for those twenty to thirty focused on building relational connections.⁵⁷

Terrace Evangelical Free Church hosts an annual Vacation Bible School program for one week each summer.⁵⁸ While the majority of the two hundred children come from the church, many come from unchurched homes. A daily soup kitchen, a working partnership between the Terrace Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Terrace and District Community Services Society, serves soup, buns, and coffee seven days a week.⁵⁹ The Terrace Churches Food Bank is an effective inter-church ministry that makes food hampers available to needy individuals and families from the fall through the spring.⁶⁰ Another public cooperative church event, which has an evangelistic component, is the annual Terrace ministerial association's "Service in the Park," a public worship service held on the main stage during Riverboat Days.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Brock interview.

⁵⁸ Secretary Jennifer Peters, interview by author, Terrace, BC, June 27, 2014. This annual vacation Bible school program has approximately eighty workers and is held for one week in early July.

⁵⁹ Soup kitchen staff worker Mike Watson, interview by author, Terrace, BC, June 27, 2014; and Seventh Day Adventist pastor, Wedson Devil, interview by author, Terrace, BC, July 3, 2014. Watson is employed by a non-religious service agency called the Terrace and District Community Service Society (TDCSS). The building, owned by the Terrace Seventh Day Adventist Church, is rented by the TDCSS. On both Saturdays and Sundays, the Terrace Seventh Day Adventist Church operates the soup kitchen and also holds a worship gathering each afternoon. Approximately forty to fifty people attend the midweek and weekend events.

⁶⁰ Pastor Joel Ringma, interview by author, Terrace, BC, June 27, 2014. Ringma stated the Terrace and Churches Food Bank has good support from Christian churches in the community and operates as a distinct entity.

⁶¹ Ringma interview. Ringma stated that the service always has a biblical message that tells the gospel story and regularly has unchurched friends, family, and members of the community in attendance. Riverboat Days, a two-week, mid-summer celebration featuring numerous events, is Terrace's main public festival.

A Large Unchurched Population

The 2011 Statistics Canada census revealed that Terrace has more people who identify themselves as “nones” at 7,540 persons than the 7,405 who actively identify with the Christian Church.⁶² The largest non-Christian religion identified in the census was Sikh at 270, followed by “other religions” at 100 and Buddhist at 40.⁶³ No Hindu, Jewish, or Muslim people were identified in this census.⁶⁴ The census did not provide people who practice the Baha’i faith a place to identify themselves.

As a region, British Columbia “is without question the most secular province in the country.”⁶⁵ At the same time, 65 percent within the province identify strongly with the Christian faith.⁶⁶ British Columbia and Quebec have low weekly church attendance of below 20 percent of the population, however the strong cultural presence of the Roman Catholic Church makes people in Quebec much more likely to identify occasionally with the Christian Church than those who do not attend in British Columbia.⁶⁷

The Dominant Values

Certain values define British Columbia, as any place will draw people who have shared values. In British Columbia, commonly held values include an independent spirit,

⁶² Statistics Canada, “National Household Survey: Terrace, BC.”

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back*, 53.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

skepticism towards authority, and a love for the natural environment. Each of these influences the culture as a whole.

Independent Spirit of the West

One of the pervasive mindsets in British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon that flows out of a pioneering, self-made mindset of Western North America is to openly embrace a designer, do-it-yourself approach to life. For Douglas Todd, the religion editor for the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper, this eclectic approach within religion flows from the fact that the Pacific Northwest has no one religious group that is dominant.⁶⁸ In addition, the Pacific Northwest has become a destination for utopian seekers from around the world.⁶⁹ These two factors, coupled with the strong desire to revere the majestic natural order in these West Coast regions, have spawned multiple personalized expressions of nature worship.⁷⁰ Within Northern British Columbia, this independent approach to life is reinforced due to isolation from the larger urbanized areas of Southern British Columbia, and the smaller population base that frequently lacks influence and power within the provincial and federal governments.

Skepticism toward Authority

In the post 1960s era, respect is no longer a given. Within Canadian culture as a whole, respect must be earned, as Canadians have shifted from deference to discernment

⁶⁸ Douglas Todd, ed., *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia: Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver, BC: Ronsdale Press, 2008), 16.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

and require their authority figures to be worthy of respect and admiration.⁷¹ Factors that have contributed to the skepticism toward authority include the isolation of northwestern British Columbia, the long history of First Nations groups in the area challenging both the provincial and federal government on multiple issues, and the pro-development policies and decisions of the federal and provincial governments. Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of skepticism toward authority figures, especially political figures. The one issue that presently illustrates this feeling of skepticism is the regional and provincial opposition to the proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline.⁷²

Love of the Natural Environment

This church planting proposal places a high value on viewing God as the creator of the natural world around us. By regarding God as creator and humankind as being entrusted with the role of caretaker of the natural order, the church planters have a great deal in common with people in Terrace who love the natural environment. One of the foundations of this church plant is a commitment to caring for God's creation and working with individuals and groups who love the natural order and advocate for its care and protection.

Cedar Welsh, a thirty-two-year-old instructor at the Terrace campus of the University of Northern British Columbia, moved to the area because of the natural beauty. She explains that she "was captivated by the rich forests, mountains and streams

⁷¹ Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back*, 22-23.

⁷² While the majority of British Columbians say they do not want the pipeline, they also believe that the federal government will ultimately approve the deal. See Kai Nagata, "Two in Three British Columbians Say Northern Gateway Is Inevitable," *The Tyee*, February 5, 2014, <http://thetyee.ca/News/2014/02/05/Northern-Gateway-Polls/> (accessed May 30, 2014).

of the area.”⁷³ For Sarah Artis, a writer and communications officer, aged thirty-three, living in Terrace “makes it possible for me to live the life I’ve always wanted. . . . I’m in or near nature, breathing fresh air, and that makes all the difference.”⁷⁴

Connection between the Natural and Spiritual Environments

Since the “space and grandeur”⁷⁵ of the physical environment is so pervasive on the West Coast of North America, Patricia O’Connell Killen argues that “here nature dwarfs the human, forcing people to rethink the meaning of the human person.”⁷⁶ As people rethink their identities within this provocative physical environment, they make the meaning of life and “religion real to themselves by creating something new.”⁷⁷ In creating something new, two dominant themes emerge: “a belief that the self is sacred”⁷⁸ and a belief in “earth-based spirituality—persuasive beliefs and practices regarding sacred nature.”⁷⁹

This newness and creative rebranding is expressed in people’s desire to call attention to environmental causes. The natural world is now viewed as sacrosanct, exemplified by the Kermode bear (a white member of the black bear family) becoming

⁷³ Cedar Welsh, quoted in Visit Terrace, “Locals in the Know,” <http://visitterrace.com/into/about-terrace/locals-in-the-know/cedar-welsh/> (accessed January 21, 2013).

⁷⁴ Sarah Artis, quoted in Visit Terrace, “Locals in the Know,” <http://visitterrace.com/info/about-terrace/locals-in-the-know/Sarah-Artis/> (accessed January 21, 2013).

⁷⁵ Patricia O’Connell Killen, “Memory, Novelty and Possibility in This Place,” in Todd, *Cascadia*, 77.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁸ Mark A. Shibley, “The Promise and Limits of Secular Spirituality in Cascadia,” in Todd, *Cascadia*, 37.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

known as the mystical “Spirit Bear.”⁸⁰ The headwaters of the Stikine, Skeena, and Nass Rivers are now labeled by influential environmentalist Wade Davis as “the Sacred Headwaters” in his book entitled, *The Sacred Headwaters: The Fight to Save the Stikine, Skeena and Nass*.⁸¹ Ian Mcallister also rebrands endangered West Coast wolves in his book by calling them “the last wild wolves: ghosts of the great bear rain forest.”⁸²

Spirituality

While it is clear that spirituality is a very important word for Canadians, it is equally clear that the word means a host of different things to Canadians.⁸³ This kaleidoscope of meanings is even more pronounced in British Columbia, which is the most secular place in Canada in terms of conventional Christian belief,⁸⁴ yet it is also the place where “practices regarding sacred things pervade” the region.⁸⁵ More recently, people in British Columbia who consider themselves spiritual will differentiate themselves from conventional understandings and label themselves as “spiritual but not

⁸⁰ National Geographic Magazine recently had a Kermode bear grace its cover and an accompanying article entitled, “The Wildest Place in North America: Land of the Spirit Bear.” Bruce Barcott, “The Wildest Place in North America: Land of the Spirit Bear,” *National Geographic*, August 2011, 34-65. Kermode bears are white members of the black bear family with a recessive gene; they are found predominantly in northwestern British Columbia.

⁸¹ Wade Davis, *The Sacred Headwaters: The Fight to Save the Stikine, Skeena and Nass* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, D & M Publishers, 2011).

⁸² Ian Mcallister, *The Last Wild Wolves: Ghosts of the Great Bear Rainforest* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, Douglas & McIntyre Publishing Group, 2007).

⁸³ Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back*, 120. Bibby has discovered that 52 percent of Canadians had a more conventional “Christian” understanding of the word *spirituality*, while 48 percent had a less conventional more personalized view of the world and interpreted *spirituality* largely as “relating to our inner-self or soul.” See Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back*, 120-121.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁵ Mark A. Shibley, “The Promise and Limits of Secular Spirituality in Cascadia,” in Todd, *Cascadia*, 34.

religious.”⁸⁶ Changing people’s perceptions about the Christian faith begins for many people when they develop a relationship with a credible Christian who shares common basic values with them. Two values that participants in this church plant share with many British Columbians are the love of the natural order and the value of spiritual experience.

Planting a Vineyard Church in Terrace, British Columbia

During the time that John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard movement, worked for the Fuller Institute of Church Growth, he caught a vision for church planting.⁸⁷ Soon after, Wimber left the Calvary Chapel movement and joined the Vineyard. In 1982 he became the new Vineyard director and began living out his previous church planting vision by offering high-quality seminars that offered informed, practical input on church planting to would-be Vineyard church planters.⁸⁸ As the Vineyard Movement grew and developed, these recorded seminars were circulated around the world.

In the years that followed, the Association of Vineyard Churches USA and other national expressions of the Vineyard movement around the world have continued to place a high emphasis on church planting. Vineyard USA continues to produce a high-quality, full-color magazine called the *Cutting Edge*, devoted to equipping and resourcing church

⁸⁶ Douglas Todd, “BC Residents Not Too Christian, but Love Saying Merry Christmas,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 18, 2013. See also David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity...and Why it Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 26.

⁸⁷ John Wimber worked for the Fuller Institute of Church Growth from 1974-1978. See Steve Nicholson, “John Wimber the Church Planter,” *The Voice of the Vineyard* (Fall 1998): 18-19.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

planters and their teams.⁸⁹ While our Vineyard USA counterparts have been able to resource and equip church planters in a very intentional way, here in Canada both the resourcing of potential Vineyard church planters as well as the support and oversight of new church plants has received significantly less attention.⁹⁰

Previous Church Planting Experiences of the Church Planting Couple

In the summer of 1988, church planters Charles and Ann Claus, along with their three young boys, David, Matthew, and Brian, moved from Calgary, Alberta to Campbell River, British Columbia.⁹¹ They relocated with the intention of planting a non-nucleus, outreach-oriented church. After they arrived in Campbell River, the denominational Home Missions Committee of the Christian Reformed Churches of Classis British Columbia Northwest informed Charles and Ann of their desire to partner with them in their church planting endeavors in Campbell River.

The church plant began with a number of different community surveys and a wide variety of midweek and weekend seminars on parenting, preparation for marriage, as well as classes regarding how to read the Bible and the basic components of the Christian faith. Initially the group met in the Claus home on Sunday evenings, and in the early fall

⁸⁹ Within the Vineyard denomination, it has always been assumed that the best way to have a healthy church is to plant one and build it from the bottom up. In fact, the basic text on Vineyard values, beliefs, and practices is Alexander Ventner's book, *Doing Church: Building from the Bottom Up*. See Alexander Venter, *Doing Church: Building from the Bottom Up* (Cape Town, South Africa: Vineyard International Publishing, 2000), 72-81.

⁹⁰ Within a Canadian Vineyard context, church planting has flowed primarily from initiatives within local churches. In addition, many sending churches within Canada are frequently smaller congregations that find it difficult to support and resource the daughter churches, which are frequently hundreds of miles away.

⁹¹ For the sake of clarity and an objective voice, the third person will be used throughout the paper to refer to the author as the church planter. The Introduction and Conclusion will be exceptions to this.

of 1989, the group began regular Sunday evening services. In 1990, the church plant left the Christian Reformed Church, as Charles and Ann wanted to have a denominational connection with a group more open to the supernatural dimension of the Holy Spirit. Two years later, in 1992, the church plant joined the Association of Vineyard Churches.

In the summer of 1998, Charles and Ann left Campbell River and moved to Prince George, in the central interior of British Columbia, with the intention of starting both a bakery business and planting a new church.⁹² In the fall of 2009, after a protracted season of prayer, Charles and Ann announced to the church that God had called them to plant a new church in Terrace, British Columbia. They would be moving once again by taking the bakery and relocating 350 miles to the West.

Laying a Foundation for a Vineyard Church Plant in Terrace

Charles and Ann moved to Terrace in the summer of 2010, after overseeing the construction of both a new home on their acreage and the refurbishing of a downtown house into a bakery production and retail area. Since moving to Terrace they have worked at becoming vital participants in the community and have built extensive relational networks through Ann's involvement with the bakery and through Charles's activity as a local food producer. They have had numerous people over to their home for

⁹² Ann had previously operated a small bakery business in Campbell River. They began house meetings that fall and also began holding Alpha meetings in their bakery space during a midweek evening. In the subsequent years, Charles and Ann found that Alpha was a good fit for the church plant and their talents as a church planting couple, and their new church hosted over twenty different Alpha courses. Numerous people came to faith as a result of these Alpha courses, and a church culture was formed in which one third of the adults were new believers.

meals and have developed supportive friendships with a wide variety of people.⁹³ Charles is also using this time of study through his Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Seminary to help focus and refine his approach to evangelism and spiritual formation.

Ministry Built Around Discipleship and Spiritual Formation

In previous church planting situations, Charles worked hard at engaging the larger community and sought to meet the needs of seekers and the general public by making the Christian faith understandable and relevant. In the past he also worked to create space and environments where people might begin to encounter the work of the Holy Spirit. These beginning encounters of the Spirit might take place in worship, in a time of prayer, or through a dream or some other experience.

Through Charles's course of study at Fuller, he has come to realize that mystical encounters are momentous and can have a profound impact,⁹⁴ for "they propel us into the future with a deep sense of hope. They give us confidence. But they are not the stuff of daily life."⁹⁵ While Charles previously encouraged people to pray and to read the Bible, he overestimated the value of a spiritual encounter in the life of a new believer and failed to see how life-changing a life of daily prayer, Bible reading, worship, and noticing God could actually become. In effect, Charles was limiting the work of the Spirit and failed to fully appreciate the Spirit's transforming power that can come through Bible reading, daily praying the psalms, the practice of *lectio divina*, learning to notice God, and

⁹³ Charles, along with two other people, has initiated an ongoing gardening group that meets on a regular monthly basis. Charles also served for two years on the Greater Terrace Food Association.

⁹⁴ Richard Peace, *Noticing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 35.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

meditation by drawing on the rich spiritual formation resources available from past spiritual pioneers and spiritual traditions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter 1 observes that the Community of Terrace and the diversity of local religious groups have been shaped by a variety of factors, such as a rich First Nations history, a vibrant pioneer culture, the impact of a World War Two boom, the forestry boom years of the 1960s and 1970s, the independent spirit of the West, and love for the natural environment. Current proposed mega-projects in the region are creating another boom and are destabilizing the local population. This unsettledness creates ministry opportunities for this church plant to share the Jesus story and the hope and new life he offers to people longing for less anxiety and greater cohesion in their lives. Chapter 2 will examine the literature germane to the development of spiritual formation and discipleship within a Vineyard Church planting situation.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines key theological resources that inform this doctoral project. George Eldon Ladd's eschatological perspective of the theology of the Kingdom of God is explored. This chapter also reviews literature on spiritual formation, along with resources that describe how a church can live as a community of authentic Christ followers.

Theology of Christian Life and Spiritual Formation

The section begins by exploring Ladd's view of biblical theology. This section also examines Ladd's eschatological perspective on the theology of the Kingdom of God and looks at the impact this theological perspective had on Vineyard founder John Wimber. Finally, this section discusses a proposal to have evangelical and charismatic churches learn from each other.

A Theology of the New Testament, by George Eldon Ladd

George Eldon Ladd wrote *A Theology of the New Testament* in response to the challenge of Carl F. Henry, who stated that evangelical Protestants needed to move

beyond a “preoccupation with the negative criticism of contemporary theological deviations”¹ and produce constructive “preferable alternatives,” or their influence as evangelical Protestants would be greatly diminished in the coming decade.² Ladd was also personally motivated to counteract the liberal approach of Rudolph Bultmann, “the most influential living German New Testament scholar,”³ who had “divorced the historical Jesus from the Christian faith and removed him from Christian theology.”⁴ In addition, Ladd was concerned about the failure of current American scholarship to produce a “full-scale textbook” on New Testament theology. Ladd’s book was published in 1974, while previously the most recent book on the subject was George Barker Steven’s *The Theology of the New Testament*, which had been written in 1906.⁵

Ladd’s thesis is that biblical theology is a theology that describes and expounds “the theology found in the Bible in its own historical setting, and its own terms, categories and thought forms.”⁶ Ladd asserts that biblical theology “is not initially concerned with the final meaning of the teachings of the Bible or their relevance today. This is the task of systematic theology.”⁷ For Ladd, biblical theology describes and tells the message found within the respective books of the Bible as well as the larger themes

¹ Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Jesus of Nazareth: Savior and Lord* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 9, quoted in George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 25.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 22.

⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁷ Ibid.

that progressively unfold throughout the biblical narrative of salvation history.⁸ Biblical theology is concerned with the “story of God and his concern for men,” a story which only exists because of God’s divine initiative of redeeming lost humankind.⁹

Ladd provides a thorough treatment of differing views and offers his biblical theology within the current theological discussion of his day. For instance, Ladd discusses the development of the “post-Bultmannian” school of thought, for followers of Bultmann such as James Robinson, G. Bornkamm, and Hans Conzelmann had become concerned with Bultmann’s attempt to separate the historical Jesus from Christian belief and theology.¹⁰ Ladd also does an excellent job of building his New Testament theology on foundational Old Testament themes which find their fulfillment in the New Testament. For example, Ladd explores Old Testament concepts of king, kingdom, and kingly rule as he begins to explain the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God.¹¹

One of the central unifying themes found in Ladd’s book is that the Kingdom of God, God’s kingly rule, “which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power, and to bring them into the blessing of God’s reign.”¹² This theology of the Kingdom of God, as articulated by Ladd,¹³ had a formative, defining influence on Vineyard founder John Wimber and the subsequent theology of Vineyard

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 25-26.

¹⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹¹ Ibid., 63.

¹² Ibid., 91.

¹³ Ibid., 69.

churches.¹⁴ Wimber described Ladd's perspective of living in "the presence of the future"¹⁵ as the "already and the not yet" of the Kingdom of God. Wimber believed that this perspective validated the present day reality of the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ At the same time, the view that the Kingdom of God would be realized more fully in the future explained why not everyone was healed and why demonic forces do not always respond to commands of deliverance.¹⁷

This evangelical theological perspective on the present reality of God's supernatural activity informs this doctoral project, for it validates the experiential component of one's faith journey. Believers of all ages can know that God was not only active in the lives of Old Testament heroes of the faith, but that he is actively working in the lives and circumstances of people today. The present day reality of the workings of the Holy Spirit makes God tangible to postmodern thinkers who are open to the mystical dimension of faith. These people are hungry for experiences which add meaning and depth to life.

A limitation of this book is the sharp distinction between biblical theology and systematic theology that Ladd advocates. This differentiation precludes a discussion of the practical application of what it means to live in the present day reality of the Kingdom

¹⁴ John Wimber openly credits George Eldon Ladd's role in shaping his view of the Kingdom of God by stating that Ladd's "pioneering work on the Kingdom of God forms the theological foundation for power evangelism." See John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), 9.

¹⁵ Wimber and Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 157. For John Wimber, Ladd's perspective on the "already and the not yet" [provided] the interpretive key for understanding why physical healing that Christ secured for us in or through the atonement is not always experienced today." See John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Healing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 157.

of God. The Vineyard movement credits Ladd's theology with helping to validate the present day activity of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Others claim that this view of the present day reality of the Kingdom and God's kingly rule helps avoid a more dispensational perspective. Ladd would have served his readers well if he had embraced a less rigorous understanding of the difference between biblical theology and systematic theology by spelling out some of the present day implications of his theology.

Empowered Evangelicals: Bringing Together the Best of the Evangelical and Charismatic Worlds, by Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson

In *Empowered Evangelicals: Bringing Together the Best of the Evangelical and Charismatic Worlds*, authors Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson develop the thesis "that a synthesis of the best of the conservative evangelical and charismatic worlds"¹⁸ offers "the marriage of conservative evangelical's historic target—salvation of the lost—with charismatic power to get the job done."¹⁹ This premise advocates that conservative evangelicals and charismatics have much to learn from each other.²⁰ Conservative evangelicals need to value the Spirit's power, and charismatics need to value the full range of the Spirit's gifts, not just supernatural gifts.²¹ In addition, many charismatics need to value and appreciate modern medicine and the role of therapy and counseling.²²

¹⁸ Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals: Bringing Together the Best of the Evangelical and Charismatic Worlds* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1995), 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 103-104.

Nathan and Wilson also contend that within conservative evangelical thought, the idea persists that “feelings, experiences, and intuition are, by definition, suspect while reason is not.”²³ They suggest that conservative evangelicals adopt a supernaturalistic paradigm in which the supernatural world of God, angels, and demons regularly interacts and affects the physical world through “signs, wonders, healings, prophecies, visions, dreams, blessings and curses.”²⁴ They also promote the balance between the Word and the Spirit by holding them together. If we hold the Word up at the expense of the Spirit, “we dry up,” and if we hold the Spirit up at the expense of the Word, “we blow up.” Only when we value both do “we grow up.”²⁵

This book informs this doctoral project by helping to steer a balanced ministry approach, allowing for the full range of the Spirit’s gifts within the life of the local church. At the same time, this approach validates those who give prominence to the Word and value rational thinking and logical arguments. As the Terrace church plant seeks to help people grow and mature in Christ through spiritual formation, it is important to value the clear thinking and the priority given to evangelism within conservative evangelicalism. It is also important to learn from the openness to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit’s power found within charismatic circles.

The Terrace church plant will also seek to build a local church identity on a foundation of maturing and growing in Christ, rather than an identity where denominational background and heritage becomes the primary defining characteristic. By

²³ Ibid., 93.

²⁴ Ibid., 95-96.

²⁵ Ibid., 53.

drawing theological perspective and meaning from diverse traditions, it is possible to avoid a more restrictive denominational framework. This approach also appeals to the postmodern mindset that thrives on adoption and synthesis.

While *Empowered Evangelicals* illuminates strengths in charismatic and conservative evangelical beliefs and practices, it fails to consider what mainline churches can offer. Mainline churches have much to teach evangelicals and charismatics about the value of history, and in particular the Church's long history of evangelism, spiritual formation, and openness to the Holy Spirit that predated American revivals led by Finney, Moody, and more recently, the Azusa Street Revival and the large crusades of Billy Graham. In addition, mainline churches have a much longer history of caring for the earth, and of living simply, a theme and emphasis that needs more attention today from those within the evangelical and charismatic communities.

Growing in Christlikeness through Spiritual Formation

This section will examine how believers can grow and mature in Christ. Focus will be given to Dallas Willard's thesis that believers can change and grow in Christlikeness when they engage in the type of practices that sustained Jesus.²⁶ James Wilhoit's book, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*, will also be explored.

²⁶ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 9.

The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives,
by Dallas Willard

In *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard develops the thesis that disciples and followers of Jesus “become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in.”²⁷ As believers give priority to the types of activities that Jesus practiced, they change and experience authentic Christ-likeness. In particular, Willard suggests that believers practice activities such 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.”²⁸ Willard claims that by engaging in these activities, Christians “become like Christ in character and in power and thus realize our highest ideals of well-being and well-doing.”²⁹ Willard asserts that authentic spiritual transformation is desperately needed as modern Christianity is viewed in the larger community as “powerless, even somehow archaic, [and] at the very least irrelevant.”³⁰

The main argument of this book is that living the life that Jesus lived requires persons to shift their focus, from trying to behave as Jesus did, to engaging in the type of practices that enabled him to act “within the moment.”³¹ Willard maintains that “the secret of the easy yoke, then, is to learn from Jesus Christ how to live our total lives, how to invest all our time and energies of mind and body as he did.”³² As people seek Christ

²⁷ Ibid., ix.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., viii.

³¹ Ibid., 7-8.

³² Ibid., 9.

and engage in “activities such as solitude, silence, fasting, prayer, service, celebration—disciplines for life in the spiritual Kingdom of God and activities in which Jesus deeply immersed himself,” they have the capacity to change.³³ These people also experience deliverance “from the concrete power of sin and how they can make the experience of the easy yoke a reality in life.”³⁴

Willard makes an accurate assessment of powerless Christianity. In many ways evangelical Christianity within North America has been largely preoccupied with growing churches and adding saints, rather than helping saints grow and mature in Christ. He also makes the insightful point that change will only come about within a Christian community when people “take the need for human transformation as seriously as do modern revolutionary movements.”³⁵ Then, churches will be in a position to show the way forward, and “clarify and exemplify realistic methods of human transformation.”³⁶

It is also important to take seriously that growing in Christ flows from a decision within the individual.³⁷ Regrettably, this decision is viewed by many believers as an advanced option for those who take their faith very seriously. Yet growing and maturing in Christ is hardly optional; it is a basic dimension of disciple-making, a living out of the command of Christ whereby he instructed the Church to make disciples of all nations.³⁸

³³ Ibid., 10.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., ix.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 68.

³⁸ In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus instructs his disciples to be disciple makers by baptizing others and teaching them to obey everything he commanded. The western Church today has stressed the first half of

Willard makes a significant contribution to this doctoral project by clearly arguing that “the spiritual and bodily are by no means opposed in human life [rather] they are complementary.”³⁹ He further develops this theme by asserting that “the physical human frame as created was designed for interaction with the spiritual realm.”⁴⁰ Humankind was created and designed to live with God. This basic dimension of human existence lies within each person and is the reason why growing as a spiritual disciple and follower of Jesus Christ has such a profound ability to “mold and shape” one’s “embodied human self.”⁴¹ As one grows and matures in Christ through individual spiritual practice and the corporate life within a healthy church, it becomes evident to friends, relatives, and coworkers that a profound transformation has taken place.

One limitation of this book is that it falls short of providing an adequate overview and assessment of the main developments within the long history of the development and practice of spiritual disciplines. While a chapter is devoted to the “History and Meaning of the Disciplines,”⁴² it fails to provide an awareness of the historical development of the spiritual disciplines and their role in church history. In addition, Willard’s evaluation of monasticism is largely negative, for while he acknowledges the deep commitment of men

the Great Commission, but has failed to take seriously the command to teach people “to obey everything I have commanded you.”

³⁹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 75.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 130-155.

such as Anthony and Benedict,⁴³ he is very critical of the excesses of monasticism and misses the opportunity to help readers appreciate what motivated the monastics and “fired the imagination of those who [were] hungry for God.”⁴⁴

Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community,
by James C. Wilhoit

In his book, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*, James C. Wilhoit develops the thesis that “spiritual formation is the task of the church. Period.”⁴⁵ This task of spiritual formation is so foundational for the local church that it reveals “the heart of its whole purpose for existence.”⁴⁶ Regrettably, Wilhoit finds that in spite of all the programs and resources available to the local church, spiritual formation “has not been the priority in the North American church that it should be.”⁴⁷

Through this book, Wilhoit offers a systematic “curriculum for teaching believers to follow Jesus,”⁴⁸ a “lifelong course of study designed to promote spiritual transformation.”⁴⁹ He advocates that “the teaching of core Christian knowledge, service

⁴³ Ibid., 139. It is unfortunate that Willard takes the extreme position that “nothing in the history of the Western world has done more harm to present-day prospects of a sensible and necessary asceticism than the emergence of monasticism as a form of Christian life.”

⁴⁴ Robin Mass and Gabriel O’Donnell, O.P., eds., *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 56.

⁴⁵ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 15.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

learning opportunities, training in key spiritual practices and the continual representation of essential spiritual truths such as forgiveness, handling conflict, stewardship of time and money [and] authority in spiritual conflict” shape the contours of this program in spiritual formation.⁵⁰ Wilhoit also wisely promotes a curriculum that repeats and revisits key concepts, for he understands that foundational change and growth do not come easily and come about over time as basic issues are addressed.⁵¹ He also delineates four spiritual commitments—receiving, remembering, responding, and relating—in which believers seek to become apprentices of Jesus and respond to his great invitations, especially the invitations to love God and to love one’s neighbor.⁵²

Wilhoit’s discussion on the need for the local church to understand its true brokenness helps this doctoral project, for “unless brokenness is a prominent orientation,” one will not embrace the truth that “the church is not a museum for the saints, but a hospital for sinners.”⁵³ Within his discussion of sin, Wilhoit makes the insightful observation that those who “see sin as a grievous problem that they cannot simply will away,” yet also have “deep optimism about the power of grace to set things right,” have

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 45. For Wilhoit, receiving involves “cultivating spiritual openness and continual repentance,” practices found in “confession, worship sacraments [and] prayer. Remembering involves “transformational teaching” which helps believers become aware of their place in God’s family. Remembering includes “teaching, preaching, evangelism, and small groups.” Responding involves service where believers grow and change by helping others. Relating describes the formation that takes place “in and through community,” and believers’ direct involvement with others. See Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 50.

⁵³ Ibid., 58.

the right perspective of sin and are most open to change.⁵⁴ As people embrace their brokenness and look to God for his forgiveness, they realize that true change within their souls needs God's activity and grace. Then they become open to spiritual transformation.⁵⁵

While Wilhoit claims that spiritual formation is the goal of the local church, he neglects to integrate spiritual formation with the changing cultural backdrop of a post-Christendom, postmodern world. He does acknowledge that the practices of systematic expository preaching, Sunday evening services, and summer camp meetings may have "become stale and unattractive,"⁵⁶ yet he neglects to examine why these practices no longer engage and resonate with people today and why they are not effective means of spiritual transformation within hectic, busy lives. In addition, while Wilhoit gives the Bible a primary role in his approach to spiritual formation, he does not address the pervasive impact of a secular culture on the local church. He also fails to acknowledge that the world today discounts the Bible and its commitment to truth and meta-narratives.

Living as a Community of Authentic Christ-Followers

This section considers how Christians can live together as communities of authentic Christ-followers. The need to discern the impact of various outside forces on the missional integrity of the local church will be examined. Next, the communal witness of the Church will be discussed. The section concludes with an exploration of both the sudden and gradual conversion experiences depicted within the New Testament.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 63.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 13.

The Continuing Conversion of the Church, by Darrell L. Guder

The Continuing Conversion of the Church, by Darrell L. Guder, is part of “The Gospel and our Culture Series,” a series of books seeking to foster the missional encounter of the gospel within North American culture.⁵⁷ The book develops the thesis that evangelism needs to be rooted in the *missio Dei*, God’s mission to a lost world, and this mission, in order to be effective today, must be “directed both to itself as well as to the world into which it is sent.”⁵⁸ Churches that seek to become effective evangelistically must first become evangelized themselves and experience their continuing conversion.⁵⁹

Guder contends that the churches of the Western world have been moulded by a history where many of the dominant thought patterns and philosophies of the day had a penetrating effect on the development of the theology and life of the Church.⁶⁰ Today these mindsets “are, by now largely unconscious. They define the air we breathe as Western Christians.”⁶¹ In earlier eras, “the emphasis had been upon the witness to Jesus Christ as the ruling and reigning Lord whose kingdom was coming and yet to come.”⁶² Yet, when the Christian Church encountered the Hellenistic world, “the emerging

⁵⁷ In 1996, Darrell Guder edited *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996). Initially, he had intended to revise this earlier book; however upon further reflection he felt compelled to write an entirely new book. See Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), xiii.

⁵⁸ Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, 26.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 102.

⁶² Ibid., 106.

Christian theology shifted from the event character of the gospel, to the formulation of a defined faith system.”⁶³

In the New Testament era and subsequent centuries, the emphasis had been witness to the rule and reign of Jesus Christ, whose Kingdom was both here and yet still coming.⁶⁴ Now, however, within this Hellenistic environment, the gospel message “became more and more a truth system, borrowing heavily from the metaphysical categories and definitions of Hellenistic philosophies.”⁶⁵ In effect, the gospel was reduced and changed. Guder argues that this type of “reductionism impedes God’s work in us and through us.”⁶⁶ Without perceiving it, believers are much more culturally captive than they frequently think they are.

This book improves this doctoral project by cultivating the realization that the Terrace church plant needs to experience conversion. Guder rightly advocates that “our missional challenge is a crisis of faith and spirit and it will be met only through conversion, the continuing conversion of the church.”⁶⁷ As the Terrace church plant “hears, responds to, and obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ in ever new and comprehensive ways,”⁶⁸ it will discern the gospel compromises, the reductionisms that impact its ministry. This awareness comes about as God’s Spirit leads and moulds the community “so that it risks being intentionally alternative to the dominant pressures of its cultural

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 106-107.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 132.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

setting.”⁶⁹ This conversion process will not be easy. It will require honesty, historical awareness, cultural awareness, and a strong sense of the basic gospel message.

One of the limitations of this resource is the failure of the author to clearly credit the work of the Holy Spirit as a source of blessing, affirmation, and empowerment in the spread of the gospel. While Guder acknowledges that “from Pentecost on, the Church must be understood primarily and centrally in terms of its mission as God’s people,”⁷⁰ he does not adequately develop a theological perspective that openly acknowledges the strategic, empowering role that the Holy Spirit plays in the release of evangelistic witness and effectiveness. For instance, in Chapter 7, Guder states that “the benefits of the gospel, as I have emphasized, equip and empower the mission community for witness.”⁷¹ Unfortunately, Guder makes the gospel itself, rather than the power of the Holy Spirit, the source that equips and empowers a missional community.⁷²

Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness,
by Bryan Stone

In *Evangelism after Christendom*, Bryan Stone argues “that the most evangelistic thing a church can do today is to be the church—to be formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic

⁶⁹ Ibid., 151.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁷¹ Ibid., 159.

⁷² The power of the Holy Spirit is present within the gospel message. However, the Book of Acts clearly portrays that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ushered in a new era and empowered the newly formed Church to spread the gospel message to all nations on earth. See Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:36-47.

sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ.”⁷³ Such a church community, in Stone’s view, would be so “grounded in the biblical narrative of the people of Israel, the life and work of Jesus, and the Acts of the apostles,”⁷⁴ that they would in fact be a subversive, alternative society.⁷⁵ Stone is more intent in shaping the culture of the local church, this communal witness to the world, through “confession, testimony, and peaceful witness” than efforts to commend and defend the faith.⁷⁶

At the heart of Stone’s argument is the need for the Church to offer “serious theological inquiry about evangelism as a practice.”⁷⁷ The local church must in effect “reimagine evangelism” so that it is able to respond “to post-Christendom realities” in a helpful and constructive manner.⁷⁸ The task of reimagining evangelism will not be straightforward, for many powerful forces such as the Enlightenment, the cost effectiveness of the market, liberal social notions, and the chaplaincy accommodation of Christendom will all need to be unmasked.⁷⁹

⁷³ Bryan Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 15.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 20. As Stone evaluates the impact of the Constantinian story he relies heavily on the work of John Howard Yoder and ends up endorsing a pacifist position, because he does not want any allegiance to the state to compromise allegiance to Jesus. It is unfortunate, for many people who are otherwise very agreeable with Stone’s insightful critique of the history of the Church might reject much of what he has to say due to this open endorsement of pacifism. See Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom*, 120-121.

Stone constructively develops the thesis that the witnessing presence of the church community itself, by “offering a story and a people that are peaceful and beautiful,”⁸⁰ becomes the most effective form of evangelism today. This emphasis on the communal witness of the local church helps this doctoral project, by redefining witness from simply telling others about Jesus and his offer of salvation, to understanding that witnessing includes living out communally what it means to follow Jesus and live for Jesus today. While this doctoral project previously viewed the main apologetic of this new church plant to be the transformed lives of individuals, it is now apparent that the apologetic of this new community should also include the communal witness of the community as a whole.

This perspective of communal witness also enables a transformational church to engage the larger society in numerous ways that are challenging and prophetic.⁸¹ It also encourages a softer, more accessible church culture for those who are new, those who are seeking or just beginning to follow Jesus. When newcomers discuss with their circle of friends what their new church is all about, these new people are able to talk about things that their friends can fully understand. For example, explaining to an unchurched friend that a church community is serving the poor in a given area of town is much easier than comprehending the message of salvation and adequately conveying that to a friend. As new people grow and mature through the ministry of this new church plant, there will be

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ For instance, a local church community may feel the need to speak out regarding social, economic, or environmental issues. A local church may also feel the need to take direct action by doing something in the community that serves an under-resourced segment of society.

many opportunities to learn how to share one's personal faith story, key stories from the life of Jesus, and the good news of the gospel.

Stone's extensive emphasis on helping people understand and comprehend all the rival narratives, such as the Constantinian story and the story of modernity, is so pronounced that he begins to demarcate what the Christian life is all about. While it is helpful to instruct people in the negative effects of the Constantinian Church and the story of modernity, it is unhelpful and potentially legalistic to promote or to suggest how one should now relate to the state. A more helpful approach would be to teach on the damaging effects of the Constantinian story and the story of modernity upon the Church and allow the Holy Spirit to mold individual and corporate responses to this material, rather than have a leader advocate for a pre-determined social and political disposition.

Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve, by Richard V. Peace

Richard Peace's book, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve*, asserts that while sudden Pauline style conversions are valid, "the process oriented paradigm for conversion found in Mark's gospel" is equally valid.⁸² Giving credence to more gradual conversion experiences is very helpful. The majority of people come to faith gradually, not suddenly.⁸³ In addition, by making room for gradual conversions, a church is able to "develop a more holistic way of doing evangelism," at a time when there is openness and receptivity to spirituality and Christianity.⁸⁴

⁸² Richard V. Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 5.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Peace develops his argument by looking at the conversion experience of St. Paul as recorded in the book of Acts, and he delineates the basic constituents of conversion as involving three parts: insight, turning, and transformation.⁸⁵ At the outset, conversion begins with insight, gaining a new awareness of one's true state before God.⁸⁶ This insight can be embraced or rejected. The choice rests with the individual who has received this insight. If the insight is received and the person chooses to turn from the old way to a new way, the stage is set for the next step.⁸⁷

The second stage, turning, involves "turning away from that which is against God and God's way (sin, idols, darkness, Satan) and is a turning to God, (the Lord, the Living God).⁸⁸ This turning is not simply a turning away; it is a turning toward Jesus.⁸⁹ Peace explains, "The old has been renounced and the new is embraced."⁹⁰

The third stage of conversion involves a decision to act, choosing to walk in a new way, along a new path.⁹¹ In Paul's case, he chooses to follow the Lord's instructions and goes into Damascus, where he meets Ananias and subsequently embraces God's new missionary calling on his life (Acts 9:10-19). Paul now has experienced a complete conversion.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 49-50.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 54.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 352.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 87.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁹¹ Ibid., 89.

While the twelve proceed through each of the three successive steps, they do so over a substantially more protracted period of time and the process is glacial by comparison. Initially the twelve simply choose to follow Jesus and be with him. It is not until Peter denies Christ in Mark 14:31 and the others by implication follow suit that the stage is set for the disciples to come to saving faith in Jesus.⁹² The disciples now discern their true heart condition, and they grasp that they too need Jesus. Although Mark does not record the change that took place in the disciples,⁹³ it is clear that all of them, with the exception of Judas, choose to turn back to Jesus, put their faith in him, and become true followers and disciples.⁹⁴

This doctoral project benefits from the perspective that gradual conversions are biblically valid and a legitimate way for new people to come to faith. The majority of unsaved adults who will engage with participants in the Terrace church plant are skeptical of Christianity and will need time, space, and the development of trust before they will begin to consider the claims of Christ. This perspective validates the gradual journey of these seekers and helps to create awareness within the church plant of how people typically come to faith.

This resource provides a solid biblical understanding of gradual conversions and enables this church plant to provide perspective on the nature of conversion to those who come from church backgrounds where punctiliar, sudden conversions are viewed as

⁹² Ibid., 276-277. Immediately after Peter denies that he knows Christ, the rooster crows and Peter remembers the words of Jesus, and he kneels down and weeps (Mark 14:66-72).

⁹³ Ibid., 277.

⁹⁴ In John 21:15-19, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him. He also indicates to Peter that in the future his love for Jesus will cost him his life, for he will die a martyr's death.

normative and expected. This frame of reference is especially pertinent in the life of a church community that values power evangelism and power healing. Even searching or seeking people who begin to experience God's power in their lives typically do so over a protracted period of time and after numerous different encounters, even though many advocates of power evangelism assume that Pauline-style sudden conversions are the prescriptive outflow of power encounters within an evangelistic context.

One of the limitations of this book is that while the process of conversion outlined applies to all cultures, it is important to realize that the majority of people encountered in ministry today may not be as receptive to the gospel as Paul and the twelve. Paul and the twelve were all Israelites and shared a similar monotheistic background. As Jews they were also looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. However, the majority of people encountered in ministry today do not come from within a single culture. They also do not have deep longings for a coming Savior. Instead, the multi-cultural make-up of Canadian society generates an audience that is much more diverse and contains a much wider spectrum of thought and belief.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter 2 observes that the present reality of the Kingdom of God validates the experiential dimension of one's faith and builds a potential bridge to postmoderns who are eager to experience meaning and depth in their lives. Also, by acknowledging the ontological reality that human beings were designed to know God and live with him, one is able to understand the profound capacity for human change and transformation that can come about as one grows and matures as a follower and disciple

of Jesus Christ. This chapter also notes that effective evangelism today flows from authentic Christian communities who live out their faith and provide seekers time and space to process the good news of the gospel. Chapter 3 will examine the theology of this new ministry initiative by exploring some of the foundational components of Vineyard theology and looking at how one can grow and mature through basic spiritual practice.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGY OF THE NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVE

This chapter examines the theology of a Vineyard church plant in Terrace, British Columbia. It explores a Vineyard theological framework by articulating biblical perspectives on the Kingdom, worship, spiritual gifts, and creation. This chapter also considers what it means to live as followers and disciples of Jesus, and how to cultivate spiritual growth through various spiritual disciplines.

Vineyard Theological Framework: Living with King Jesus in His Kingdom

The founders of the Vineyard Church built their theology upon the present reality of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that Jesus ushered in through his life and ministry. King Jesus calls people to follow, worship, grow, and mature as his disciples. He also calls disciples to care for his creation. As followers of Jesus seek to live for the King, he empowers and equips them with spiritual gifts in order to extend his rule and Kingdom.

Theology of the Kingdom

The Greek word *metanoia* means “to turn around.”¹ The specific act of turning has much broader and holistic implications than a mere “change of mind”² or an “intellectual change of ideas;”³ “rather the decision by the whole man to turn around is stressed.”⁴ John the Baptist uses this Greek word *metanoia* in the phrase, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near,”⁵ in Matthew 3:2.⁶ Jesus uses the same word following his baptism by John the Baptist, when he announces the launch of his ministry by preaching “repent for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17). The message of repentance connects Jesus’ ministry to that of John the Baptist, and the blunt call to produce “fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8), while not overtly spoken by Jesus, is nevertheless the overall context in which this message is delivered.⁷

¹ Jurgen Goetzmann, s. v. “*metanoia*” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, gen. ed., translated with additions and revisions, from the German, *Theologisches Begriffslexikon Zum Neuen Testament*, eds. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 357.

² *Ibid.*, 358.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ All biblical references are taken from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

⁶ The word *metanoia* that John the Baptist used is “discerned first and foremost in the preaching of John the Baptist in light of the Qumran movement. The Qumran Community called itself the ‘covenant of repentance,’ *berith teshuba*.” See Richard V. Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 350.

⁷ John the Baptist had attracted huge crowds from “Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan” (Matthew 3:5). Upon the confession of sin they were baptized by John in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:6). In the gospel of Luke, John calls the crowd to share their tunics and their food with those who are lacking. John also admonishes the tax collectors for their dishonesty and calls the soldiers to avoid extortion and false accusations and to be content with their pay (Luke 3:10-14).

The phrase, “the Kingdom of the heavens,” is unique to Matthew.⁸ Matthew commentator Robert H. Gundry contends that the word *heaven* “does not indicate the sphere of rule, but its source. In particular heaven stands for God.”⁹ While the word translated as *Kingdom, basileia*, may refer to either a literal or figurative rule,¹⁰ Gundry asserts that in this case it refers to the literal rule.¹¹ Thus, the divine Kingdom that Jesus calls people to enter by way of repentance is a tangible, present Kingdom. Entering this Kingdom involves turning—a change of direction of one’s life—and involves both the belief and action of those who wish to enter its domain.

Understanding the Kingdom of God as a present reality, that is both here and yet coming, lies at the heart of Vineyard theology. For John Wimber, “the future age—the Kingdom of God—[has] invaded the present age—the Kingdom of Satan. To use an expression of George Ladd, we live in the presence of the future.”¹² The life and ministry of Jesus repeatedly demonstrated this rule as he proclaimed the Kingdom of God and demonstrated the reality of that kingdom by healing the sick and casting out demons.¹³

⁸ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 43. See also Walter Bauer *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 4th rev. ed, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 134.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, Compact Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), ref. no. 932.

¹¹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 43.

¹² John Wimber with Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*

For Wimber, entrance into the Kingdom of God, is a “call to the lordship of Christ and membership in his army.”¹⁴ He lamented the fact that the Kingdom is frequently portrayed like a Caribbean luxury liner rather than a warship ready for war.¹⁵ Being born in 1934, Wimber lived through World War II,¹⁶ and while the comparison he uses may not be relevant to current generations, the point remains: we are not passive bystanders in this present kingdom. Repentance requires a full change in thinking and action.

Theology of Worship

In John 4 Jesus interacts with the Samaritan woman at the well, and he begins the dialogue by asking her for a drink. As the discussion shifts and they begin to dialogue about appropriate places and times to worship, Jesus builds momentum and drama into his statements. He begins by saying, “A time is coming” (John 4:21), moving on to declare the present reality with the statement, “A time is coming and has now come” (John 4:23). Finally, he openly declares that the time of the Messiah is here by stating, “I who speak to you am he” (John 4:26). The Greek word *hora* means the time in which “something is taking place.”¹⁷ As commentator George R. Beasley-Murray explains, the

¹⁴ Ibid., 21.

¹⁵ Ibid. In John Wimber’s own life, entrance into the Kingdom of God involved giving serious consideration to the potential cost of commitment. Once he became a Christian, he felt his previous lifestyle as a high profile musician was no longer compatible with his newfound faith, and he promptly said goodbye to his friends in the music business and found a different job. See John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Growth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 120-121.

¹⁶ Carol Wimber, *John Wimber: The Way It Was* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), 26. While I agree with his warship analogy theologically, I do not think this is a helpful metaphor in trying to communicate the nature of the Kingdom of God with today’s generation of Gen-Xers and Millennials. Born in 1934, Wimber was clearly a “builder.” He had lived through World War II as a child and was very much at home with militaristic imagery and an up-front confrontational approach to evangelism.

¹⁷ Ibid.

“saving sovereignty of the future is in the process of being established through Christ.”¹⁸

Jesus makes it clear that the time of Jesus the Messiah is now here, a time in which significant new dimensions in worship are available.

Jesus states that in this new era, the Father is seeking true worshipers who will worship him in spirit and truth (John 4:23). The word “spirit” here refers to the newness within one’s personal being. The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*, meaning “a part of the human personality”¹⁹ that is both pure and within oneself.²⁰ This newness comes about as a result of the new birth that Jesus talks about in John 3:5, where he states, “No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.” According to Catholic author Raymond E. Brown, “The Spirit is the Spirit of God, not the spirit of man,”²¹ for as Jesus states in John 4:24, “God is Spirit.”

Not only must one be born again to enter the Kingdom of God, worship within this Kingdom is in contrast to Israel’s previous practice of worship, which was tied to specific historical sites.²² In this new period, explains commentator Leon Morris, “genuine worship is spiritual. It is not dependent on places and things.”²³ Jesus also makes truth a characteristic of true worshipers. The Greek word *aletheia* simply means

¹⁸ George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: Vol. 36: John* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1987), 62.

¹⁹ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 681.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Raymond Brown S. S., *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John: (I-XII)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 180.

²² Jews and Samaritans had bitter disputes between “the rival claims of Jerusalem and Gerizim as places of worship.” See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 267-268.

²³ *Ibid.*, 267.

“truth.”²⁴ John employs this word twenty-five times in his gospel,²⁵ pointing to the reality that “Jesus is the truth (John 14:6) in the sense that he reveals God’s truth to men (John 8:45, 18:37).”²⁶

By looking carefully at this passage in John 4 in which Jesus presents the need to worship God in Spirit and truth, one can gain a new perspective regarding how to potentially approach local Millennials and Gen Xers. Many of these people love the environment, claim to worship God outdoors, and may be spiritually open. This passage makes it clear that authentic Christian worship does not need to be limited to worship within a church building, for in this new era, writes Ladd, one “can worship God anywhere if they are motivated by the Holy Spirit.”²⁷ The John 4 passage also makes it clear that worship directed to the Father in Spirit and truth is more basic and fundamental than the denominational identity of the various Christian faith traditions that are present within the City of Terrace.

Theology of Spiritual Gifts

The Church of Jesus Christ, following Christ’s ascension into heaven, received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). This was a prophetic fulfillment of Joel 2:28, which states, “In the last days I will pour my Spirit on all people.” The outpouring “turned the people of God into a missionary people, opening

²⁴ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 35; see also *Strong’s Concordance*, ref. no. 225.

²⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 294.

²⁶ Brown, *The Anchor Bible* 180.

²⁷ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 292.

their ranks to receive men and women of all nations, tongues, races, and classes; forming them into a new community; and empowering them to move out into all the world.”²⁸

In Romans 12:3-8 Paul elaborates on how church members endowed with gifts from the Holy Spirit are to relate to one another. Each believer, according to Paul in verse 3, receives a gift or gifts from the Holy Spirit. The Greek word *charisma* means “gift,” something that is “freely and graciously given.”²⁹ For Strong, *charisma* involves “spiritual endowment.”³⁰ Hans-Helmut Esser states that for Paul *charisma* means “a personal endowment with grace” that is intended for “service” in the life of the “community,” having both “inward and outward-looking aspects.”³¹

Earlier, in Romans 12:3, Paul stresses that each person should use his or her gifts with humility and “not think of yourself more highly than you ought.” In the use and exercise of spiritual gifts, it is possible to become proud, a condition that Paul is warning against here. To counteract the danger of pride, Paul develops an analogy from the human body and argues that just as the human body has many members, so “in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:4).

The greater body benefits from gifts bestowed upon the individual. The Greek word *suma* that Paul uses here means “living body.”³² In *God’s Missionary People*, Charles Van Engen writes, “Here is a completely different model of organization, with no

²⁸ Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 50.

²⁹ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 887.

³⁰ *Strong’s Concordance*, ref. no. 5486.

³¹ Hans Helmut-Esser, s. v. “grace,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, Colin Brown, gen. ed., 121.

³² Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 806.

room for rugged Western individualism. Instead, the members of the body gain their identity, their function, their reason-for-being, and their place for ministry as they participate in the body.”³³

The diverse giftings of the Holy Spirit, whether they are encouraging gifts, helping and serving gifts, or higher profile gifts of leadership or prophecy, “cannot work independently. Furthermore, each member profits what the other members contribute to the whole.”³⁴ This biblical perspective validates the importance of all spiritual gifts and values each believer within the life of a new church plant; for it does not assign special importance to people whose giftings include the more overt demonstrations of the Holy Spirit’s power. Within this biblical perspective, everyone has place and value.

Theology of Creation

Psalm 24 begins by making the bold declaration that “the whole earth and all the creatures that dwell therein belong to God as their Lord and are subject to him.”³⁵

Creation belongs to God because he called it into being.³⁶ The repetition of the Hebrew

³³ Charles Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 155.

³⁴ Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Vol. 10: Romans*, Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 130.

³⁵ Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary: The Old Testament Library*, trans. by Herbert Hartwell, gen. eds. G. Ernest Wright, John Bright, James Barr, and Peter Ackroyd (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 232. Psalm 24 is a liturgical psalm commemorating the return of the ark by David. See C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Psalms: Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol V, trans. by James Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 334.

³⁶ Ibid.

words *tebel*, “the world,” and *eres*, “earth” is used for poetic emphasis,³⁷ and “it is doubtful if, in this context, the former is any more cosmological than the latter.”³⁸

This declaration in Psalm 24 makes God, not humankind, the owner of the created order. While people inhabit the earth, creation is not simply for men and women to use as they desire. God is creator of the world that men and women and all other living beings inhabit. This statement, made within an Old Testament liturgical context, helps provide a basic definition of humankind’s position within the sphere of the physical world.

Although humankind has a unique and privileged role within the created order, all human beings need to be mindful “that our world belongs to God—not to us or earthly powers, not to demons, fate and chance. The earth is the Lord’s.”³⁹ This Reformed confession statement also makes clear that we image-bearers of God have also been “appointed earth keepers and caretakers”⁴⁰ for we are to “tend the earth, enjoy it and love our neighbors.”⁴¹ This confession also acknowledges that man has abused creation, and brought lasting damage to the world by “polluting streams and soil, poisoning the air, altering the climate, and damaging the earth.”⁴²

³⁷ A. A. Anderson, *The New Century Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, Psalms 1-72* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 201.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Christian Reformed Church in North America, *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* (adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America in 2008), [http://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/Our%20World%20Belongs%20to%20God%20\(2008%20version\).pdf](http://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/Our%20World%20Belongs%20to%20God%20(2008%20version).pdf) (accessed March 1, 2015).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.* While “earth keeping” validates humankind’s role in the development of the earth’s resources, earth keeping also requires responsible, non exploitive development.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Learning to Live as Followers and Disciples of King Jesus

This section explores what it means to live as followers and disciples of King Jesus. A study of the word *disciple* is offered, followed by a look at the call that Jesus extends to Simon, Andrew, James, and John in Mark 1:16-20. Next, an examination of the nature of evangelistic discipleship is given. The section concludes with a look at spiritual growth and maturation in the ancient Church.

Definition and Word Study of the Word *Disciple*

The Greek word for “disciple,” *mathetes*, occurs approximately 260 times in the New Testament.⁴³ In over 230 of those instances, the word appears in the gospels.⁴⁴ Typically in Jesus’ day, students would select their teacher; in contrast to this, Jesus chose his disciples himself.⁴⁵ Jesus also differentiated himself from the usual style of rabbis as “he had no ‘formal’ education beyond the synagogue schools and he himself did not become a disciple of a rabbi.”⁴⁶ Jesus also calls his disciples to himself, while both “the rabbi and the Greek philosopher are at one in representing a specific cause.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Robert P. Meye, s. v. “disciple,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. For instance, Jesus issues a call to Simon and his brother Andrew, “Come, follow me,” adding the promise, “and I will make you fishers of men.” See Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17.

⁴⁶ Dallas Willard, “Discipleship,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Gerald McDermott (Oxford University Press, 2010), 4-5, www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artiD=134 (accessed March 3, 2015).

⁴⁷ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, s. v. “*manthano*.”

In the New Testament, the word *mathetes* “denotes the men who have attached themselves to Jesus as their master.”⁴⁸ The word *akoloutheo*, “to accompany or follow,”⁴⁹ and the word *opiso*, “to make or do,”⁵⁰ are also used to describe disciples or the actions of disciples. Within the great commission, Matthew utilizes the verb *matheteusate*, which means “to make a disciple or teach,”⁵¹ this usage is the only time this “verb occurs in the imperative mood” in the New Testament.⁵² Disciples then are persons who “were literally where [Jesus] was and progressively engaged in doing what he was doing.”⁵³

For David J. Bosch, even the commissioning of the disciples in Matthew 28:19 needs to be understood as “a logical consequence of (the disciples) being ‘discipled unto Jesus.’”⁵⁴ To be committed to making disciples is the natural outcome of those who are discipled by Jesus. Bosch explains, “To be involved in mission is to receive a gift, not to obey a law, to accept a promise, not to bow to a command.”⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Ibid., 441.

⁴⁹ *Strong’s Concordance*, ref. no. 190.

⁵⁰ Ibid., ref. no. 4160.

⁵¹ Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 486.

⁵² David J. Bosch, “The Structure of Mission: An Exposition of Matthew 28:16-20,” in *Exploring Church Growth*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 232.

⁵³ Willard, “Discipleship,” 5.

⁵⁴ Bosch, “The Structure of Mission,” 243.

⁵⁵ Ibid. For Win Arn and Charles Arn, the great commission in Matthew 28 is a command which Christ gives to his followers. See Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples: How Every Christian Can Be an Effective Witness through an Enabling Church* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1982), 19.

Jesus Calls the First Disciples to Be with Him and to Become Fishers of Men

In Mark 1:16 the author provides a snapshot of Jesus walking beside the Sea of Galilee. Jesus has just completed a forty-day fast in the desert, where Satan has tempted him (Mark 1:12-13). Subsequently, John the Baptist is imprisoned (Mark 1:14) and Jesus begins to preach, “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). While John’s message had “centered upon the urgent demand for repentance,”⁵⁶ Jesus adds the announcement that “the kingdom of God is near” and then calls people to “repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15).

As Jesus begins his ministry in this gospel, Peace explains that his “initial act . . . is the calling of four men to be his disciples. This is what his ministry is all about: disciple making.”⁵⁷ Jesus calls and the disciples follow.⁵⁸ Even though Jesus preaches a message of repentance, the disciples at this point do not repent, and “the faith response, while substantial, is based more on assumptions about Jesus than insight into him.”⁵⁹

Jesus calls the four fishermen, Simon, Andrew, James, and John, with the Greek word *deute*. The English equivalent of *deute* is “Come!”⁶⁰ The King James translates the word *deute* as “come ye,” while Strong defines *deute* as “come hither!” “come,” or

⁵⁶ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 64-65.

⁵⁷ Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 225.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* It is easy to overstate the action of the new followers of Jesus. For instance, Gerhard Kittel states that the Greek word *akolouthe* “signifies self-commitment in a sense which breaks all other ties.” See *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, s. v. “*akolouthein*.” While the four disciples do leave their boats and nets, it is unrealistic to assume that they cut family ties due to their newfound allegiance to Jesus, for Peter continues to have relationship with his family (see Mark 1:29-31).

⁶⁰ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 175.

“come follow.”⁶¹ Jesus calls the fisherman to come and be with him and learn from him. The call here is evangelistic because it sets in motion the beginning of a process in which these newly minted disciples “will be taught how to be” fishers of people.⁶²

As they learn to become fishers of people, Jesus exposes the disciples to the parables, the short pithy insightful stories that he told. As Jesus tells his stories, his parables reveal the depth of his heart and he builds bridges to his disciples, for “storytelling carries within it the seeds of community.”⁶³ The parables that Jesus tells help create the close-knit kinship and community that the disciples experience with Jesus. For when Jesus tells his parables, he is doing much more than simply communicating with his gathered audience; he is imparting values, learning, and healing.⁶⁴

Through his storytelling, Jesus participates in the art of transmitting meaning and depth to both history and the future, for storytellers “construct, reconstruct, [and] in some ways reinvent yesterday and tomorrow.”⁶⁵ For instance, in the telling of the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus redefines the concept of loving one’s neighbor and challenges the

⁶¹ *Strong’s Concordance*, ref. no. 1205.

⁶² Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 225-226. J. A. Thompson adds that “the imagery of calling for fishermen to fish out the people of Judah occurs also in Ezek. 12:13; 29:4-5; Amos 4:2; Hab. 1:14-17. The figure was evidently well known.” See J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 410.

⁶³ Richard Stone, *The Healing Art of Storytelling: A Sacred Journey of Personal Discovery* (New York: Hyperion, 1996), 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9. We do not typically view Jesus’ parables and private explanations as having a healing effect on the disciples. Yet, the disciples also had deep longings for the Messiah. As the disciples progressively come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, they also experience healing within their identities.

⁶⁵ Jerome Brunner, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 93.

“self interest and ethnocentrism”⁶⁶ found in Jewish families by making the Samaritan the righteous one. The Samaritan’s actions display love and mercy to the wounded man lying at the roadside (Luke 10:25-37). This simple story told by Jesus has such a far-reaching effect that it has “become part of our culture and vocabulary.”⁶⁷

When we hear a well told story, “we are joined with the teller in a remarkable dance that opens us up to new places, people and ideas.”⁶⁸ Jesus was such a storyteller. Although many elements contribute to the transformation that the disciples experience, it is important to note that Jesus uses simple stories, parables crafted from everyday life experiences, to help explain the message of the kingdom. Well-told stories not only change us, but we remember them and have the capacity to share these stories with others.⁶⁹ As we develop this church plant, we will need to create local Jesus stories that tell who we are, why we are here, and what God has done for us.

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl: Evangelistic Discipleship

The twin parables of finding the treasure in a field and finding the pearl of great value in Matthew 13:44-46 had a significant and defining impact on John Wimber and his conversion to Christ.⁷⁰ In both parables something of “inestimable value is to be sought

⁶⁶ Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 167.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁶⁸ Stone, *The Healing Art of Storytelling*, 57.

⁶⁹ After an extensive literature survey, Kendall Haven asserts that there is virtually unanimous agreement that stories are one of the most effective ways to teach, inspire, and educate. See Kendall Haven, *The Science Behind the Startling Power of Story* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), 7.

⁷⁰ Carol Wimber, *John Wimber*, 65. These two parables are commonly viewed as a pair and only appear in Matthew’s gospel. See Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus*, 53.

above all other possessions.”⁷¹ In ancient Palestine, it was not uncommon for people under the imminent threat of war to bury treasure.⁷² The theme of the pearl merchant seeking pearls would have been an identifiable theme in Jesus’ day, for pearls were highly valued items in antiquity as they were fished by divers in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean.⁷³

The message of these twin parables caused John Wimber to probe his soul, prompting him to wonder if God might be asking him to give up his music career in order to follow Jesus.⁷⁴ John Wimber was processing basic discipleship issues prior to becoming a believer in Christ. By the time he made a commitment to Christ, he had decided to lay down his music career, for he wanted to pursue the pearl of great price, relationship with Jesus, even though he knew it would be costly. Throughout this time Gunner Payne, the Bible study leader, never pressured John to make any commitments, for he believed “the baby will be born in its time.”⁷⁵

The conversion story of John and Carol Wimber highlights a number of basic components of evangelistic discipleship. First of all, John and Carol met and came to know Gunner Payne, an evangelistic person who was a credible, believable disciple of

⁷¹ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 100.

⁷² Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 198.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 199. Some of the jewelry made out of pearls worn by the elite ruling class was worth millions. See Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 198.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

Jesus.⁷⁶ While John and Carol were impacted by what they were learning about God in the Bible study that Gunner led, they were equally impacted by the faith and trust in Jesus that this man displayed.⁷⁷ Second, Gunner gave John and Carol time to process the claims of Christ and his call to commitment. Since Gunner believed that “a premature baby is not a healthy baby,”⁷⁸ he gave them extensive time to process belief and trust in Christ even though Carol Wimber believed “he could have closed the deal months before.”⁷⁹

Spiritual Growth and Maturation within the Ancient Church

The ancient Christian church viewed spiritual progress in the Christian life as three progressive steps, a process that was frequently called the threefold way.⁸⁰ The first stage, called *praktike*, consisted of repentance or conversion, the development of virtue, and the love of neighbor.⁸¹ Next came the second stage, called *physike*. This stage involved indirect contemplation of God,⁸² the ability “to discern God’s presence in three

⁷⁶ Ibid., 63.

⁷⁷ Ibid. As the Wimbbers got to know Gunner Payne, they were moved by his story. Nine years earlier a young man had tragically murdered their teenage daughter. Gunner chose to forgive the murderer, visited him in prison, and led him to Christ prior to his gas chamber execution. See Carol Wimber, *John Wimber*, 68.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁷⁹ Ibid. In the Terrace church plant, the intention is to help people process and understand the call to follow Jesus. Seekers will not be encouraged to pray a prayer of commitment prior to a basic understanding of Christian discipleship.

⁸⁰ Diogenes Allen, *Spiritual Theology: The Theology of Yesterday for Spiritual Help Today* (Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications, 1997), 10.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 11.

areas, the physical universe, human nature and the Bible.”⁸³ The third and final stage, *theoria*, is a rare direct face-to-face encounter with God,⁸⁴ an experience most people only “enjoy after death in the [eternal] Kingdom of God.”⁸⁵ These ancient writers also valued and validated mystical encounters with God. These encounters often were life changing, seminal experiences that provided focus and direction for their lives and ministries.⁸⁶

Another dominant quest within the ancient era that was to have a long and lasting influence was the “hunger for communion with God and peace with one another.”⁸⁷ Initially this desire drew men and women in the fourth and fifth centuries to the harshness and loneliness of the desert.⁸⁸ As leaders emerged, they “set down their experience in the form of monastic ‘rules.’”⁸⁹ The Rule of Benedict, one such rule, mapped out a “clear, orderly, concise way of life.”⁹⁰ The experience and perspective of these ancient, spiritual writers informs this project, for they underscore the importance of journey and the

⁸³ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 14. Allen also writes, “All accounts of this path stress the need for preparation and the purgation of vice.” See Ibid., 17.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 28-29. Eight spiritual pioneers who had life-defining encounters of this magnitude are: Patrick of Ireland, Benedict of Nursia, Hildegard of Bingen, Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, Ignatius of Loyola, and Francis de Sales. See Peace, *Noticing God*, 27.

⁸⁷ Gabriel O’Donnell, O.P., “Monastic Life and the Search for God,” in *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, ed. by Robin Maas and Gabriel O’Donnell, O.P. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 56.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 61.

⁹⁰ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 111. The Rule of Benedict was usable and adaptable, and in addition to the vows of poverty, charity, and obedience, Benedict added the vow of stability, a vow which required the monk to stay in the same monastery for life. See Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well*, 111.

mystical aspects of life found within the ancient Church. These characteristics are points of connection for Millennials and Gen Xers who are looking for expressions of faith and community that have deep historical roots and proven staying power.

Cultivating Spiritual Growth through Spiritual Disciplines

The practice of spiritual disciplines help people mature and grow in their walk with God. This section will explore a number of key spiritual disciplines that are germane to this church planting project. A theological perspective will be offered on the disciplines of silence, fellowship, prayer, meditation upon God’s Word, and fasting.

Silence—Getting Away from Noise

One of the challenges to life in the early part of the twenty-first century is information overload. According to Daniel J. Levitin, “our brains are busier than ever before. We are assaulted with facts, jibber-jabber, and rumor all posing as information. Trying to figure out what we need to know and what you can ignore is exhausting.”⁹¹ For people suffering from information overload, both inside and outside the Church, the desire to experience silence is a real and tangible need.

As we seek true silence, we begin to engage in a “powerful and essential discipline.”⁹² We notice “that we do have souls, that we indeed have inner beings to be

⁹¹ Daniel J. Levitin, “Why the Modern World Is Bad for Your Brain,” *The Guardian*, January 15, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/jan/18/modern-world-bad-for-brain-daniel-j-levitin-organized-mind-information-overload> (accessed March 6, 2015).

⁹² Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 164.

nurtured.”⁹³ We also discover that we need to plan for times and places in which to experience silence, for “God will not compete for our attention.”⁹⁴ In his book, *Armchair Mystic*, Mark Thibodeaux advises those seeking God in contemplative prayer, but his words are equally applicable to those seeking God through silence and solitude. Thibodeaux recommends using the same place, at the same time each day, and beginning and ending in the same manner.⁹⁵

As we begin to experience silence, we are forced to listen to what is going on inside us.⁹⁶ We “listen to our own hearts.”⁹⁷ As we move beyond the noise in one’s soul and finding peace in silence, one is also able to hear God’s Word and whispers afresh. Mother Teresa comments, “In silence we will find new energy and true unity. Silence gives us a new outlook on everything. The essential thing is not what we say, but what God says to us and through us.”⁹⁸

⁹³ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 130.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Ruth Haley Barton contends that silence does not come easily for evangelicals. She writes, “I believe silence is the most challenging, the most needed and the least experienced spiritual discipline among evangelical Christians today. . . . We are starved for rest, to know God beyond what we can do for him. We are starved for quiet, to hear the sound of sheer silence that is the presence of God himself.” See Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God’s Transforming Presence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 18-19.

⁹⁵ Mark E. Thibodeaux, S. J., *Armchair Mystic: Easing into Contemplative Prayer* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2001), 12.

⁹⁶ Stephen Rossetti, “The Pure Gold of Silence,” in Maas and O’Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions*, 75.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Mother Teresa, *In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories and Prayers* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1997), 20.

Fellowship—Relating to Others

One of the great strengths of the ancient Celtic way of life and evangelism is that Celtic communities “invited seekers, refugees, and others, individuals and even families, to be their guests.”⁹⁹ As a guest within the monastic Celtic community, “you would be included at the abbot’s table at meals; if the abbot was in a period of fasting he would break the fast”¹⁰⁰ in order to accommodate his guests. Not surprisingly, one of the evangelistic strategies of the ancient Celts was to invite people to become a part of their community prior to coming to faith.¹⁰¹

Initially, it may appear that community and solitude are opposites. Yet Parker J. Palmer advocates that “solitude and community, rightly understood, go together . . . [for] we need both the interior intimacy that comes with solitude and the otherness that comes with community.”¹⁰² Dietrich Bonhoeffer also sees a strong correlation between solitude and community. He states, “If you refuse to be alone you are rejecting Christ’s call to you, and you can have no part in the community of those who are called.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ George G. Hunter, III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West . . . Again*, 10th anniv. rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 41.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰¹ A British research team led by John Finney surveyed the conversion experiences of over 350 converts and came to a conclusion that paralleled the experience of the ancient Celts. The chief finding of this study was that “for most people, ‘belonging comes before believing.’” See John Finney, *Finding Faith Today: How Does It Happen?* (Swindon, UK: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1992), 46-47, quoted in Hunter, *The Celtic Way*, 43-44.

¹⁰² Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life: Welcoming the Soul and Weaving Community in a Wounded World* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004), 54.

¹⁰³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 79.

As we grow together and seek to mature in Christ, we need to embrace the truth that “Christian redemption is not devised to be a solitary thing.”¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Boa, in his book, *Conformed to His Image*, writes, “Although community is never easy, we are impoverished without it and the benefits exceed its drawbacks.”¹⁰⁵ Benedictine sister Joan Chittister also comments, “The Rule of Benedict says if you want to be holy, stay where you are in the human community and learn from it. Learn patience. Learn wisdom. Learn unselfishness. Learn love. Then, if you want to go away from it all, then and only then, will you be ready to do it alone.”¹⁰⁶

Prayer—Talking with God

Within the Vineyard churches, there is a long history of praying for the sick. Vineyard prayer ministry was popularized through the writing, teaching, and conference ministry of John Wimber.¹⁰⁷ Even though John and Carol Wimber had a strong personal devotional life,¹⁰⁸ and a strong devotional life characterizes many Vineyard pastors,¹⁰⁹ the

¹⁰⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 187.

¹⁰⁵ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 419.

¹⁰⁶ Joan D. Chittister, O.S.B., *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 33.

¹⁰⁷ The book, *Power Healing*, written by John Wimber and Kevin Springer, was first published in 1987. Throughout the 1980s, John Wimber taught on “power healing” at numerous conferences around the world. See Bill Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard* (Cape Town, South Africa: Vineyard International Publishing, 1999), 130. The five-step model for healing prayer is laid out in Nathan and Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals*, 265-267.

¹⁰⁸ See Carol Wimber, *John Wimber*, 50. Carol also refers to prayer times in which she and John sought God for guidance and direction as individuals and as a couple. See Carol Wimber, *John Wimber*, 74, 113, and 121.

¹⁰⁹ Don Williams affirms that “most Vineyard pastors today are devotionally driven.” See Don Williams, “Theological Perspective and Reflection on the Vineyard Christian Fellowship,” in *Church*,

Vineyard as a movement has not placed a great deal of emphasis on equipping people in growing as believers in contemplative personal prayer or contemplative small group prayer.

The sayings of the third- and fourth-century desert monks provide a resource for growing in prayers from the heart. Catholic priest Henri Nouwen contends that nineteenth century Russian mystic, Theophan the Recluse, offers a concise formulation of the ancient prayer of the heart when he states, “To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all-seeing, within you.”¹¹⁰ For the Desert Fathers, the prayer of the heart touched and transformed their whole beings. Nouwen asserts that they saw themselves as “sinners embraced by the mercy of God.”¹¹¹ Through this type of prayer, they were able to move beyond “interesting words or pious emotions” and unmask illusions about themselves and God.¹¹² From the Desert Fathers we learn that “the prayer of the heart is the prayer of truth.”

As we seek truth in our prayers, we are at times embarrassed by the raw, primal, unvarnished realities of our lives. Viewing the 150 psalms as prayers can help us here, for “psalm language is not careful about offending our sensibilities; its genius is its complete

Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times, edited by David A. Roozen and James R. Nieman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 178-179.

¹¹⁰ Theophan the Recluse, quoted by Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God Through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 73. The word “heart” here is used in its full-orbed Jewish-Christian sense and refers to the “source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional and moral energies.” See Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, 74.

¹¹¹ Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, 76.

¹¹² *Ibid.* The Desert Fathers believed that the greatest spiritual battle lay within their own souls. Sittser writes, “They believed that the Christian life requires struggle against the darkness that resides in the heart, epitomized by the egoism that runs rampant in every human being.” See Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well*, 83.

disclosure of the human spirit.”¹¹³ While the psalms allow our prayers to be real, they also serve as a powerful antidote to an egocentric contemporary culture, for “the psalmists are not interested in human potential; they are passionate about God—the obedience-shaping, will-transforming, sin-revoking, praise-releasing God.”¹¹⁴ As we pray the psalms, we communicate with God and “we find our voice in the dialogue.”¹¹⁵ Praying the psalms also instructs us, for “no matter how much we suffer, no matter our doubts, no matter how angry we get . . . prayer always develops finally into praise.”¹¹⁶

Meditation and Study—Learning to Hear God’s Word

In their book, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Growth*, John Wimber and Kevin Springer focus on the spiritual disciplines of meditation and the study of God’s Word.¹¹⁷ While Wimber was open to receiving prophetic words, words that would need to be tested, his primary focus was always hearing God’s Word through Bible reading and Bible meditation for he states that for him. He writes, “Scripture study and prayer are the highest priorities of my life.”¹¹⁸ Wimber was not only committed to hearing God’s Word,

¹¹³ Eugene Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 41.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 127. Peterson views Psalm 145-150 as praise psalms. See Peterson, *Answering God*, 127.

¹¹⁷ Wimber and Springer, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Growth*, 13.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

but he was also deeply committed to acting on what he read, for his constant prayer was, “God, show me your truth, and show me how to live it and give it to others.”¹¹⁹

This strong emphasis on hearing God’s Word through Bible study and meditation has served the embryonic Vineyard denomination well. Pastors and leaders emerging within the movement soon found out that while the Vineyard was open to the “experience of all biblical gifts,”¹²⁰ the Vineyard was also committed to giving clear priority to Scripture and that all prophetic words and insights would be judged in light of the Bible and its teaching.¹²¹ When John Wimber gave corrective input to both the Kansas City prophets and the Toronto Airport Vineyard outpouring, he did so based on what he and the board believed were deviations from basic scriptural emphasis and priorities.¹²²

While many Christians would agree that the Bible is the primary way in which we encounter God,¹²³ the actual role that we give to meditating and studying the Bible often falls far short of our stated beliefs and intended practice. One helpful way to grow and learn the Bible is to engage in one of the oldest forms of engaging the Bible: *lectio*

¹¹⁹ John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Healing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 29.

¹²⁰ See Bill Jackson, *The Quest For the Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard* (Cape Town, South Africa: Vineyard International Publishing, 1999), “Vineyard Statement of Faith,” Appendix Four, 411.

¹²¹ Ibid. The Vineyard Statement of Faith states that “we receive the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament as our final authority, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”

¹²² Bill Jackson comments on some of the Vineyard board deliberations that took place regarding the Kansas City Prophets. While “the Vineyard had met the prophetic, it was now time for the prophetic to meet the Vineyard.” See Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle*, 229-231. John and Carol Wimber greatly appreciated the Toronto outpouring; however, John felt strongly that times of spiritual outpouring needed to have outward missional focus. See Carol Wimber, *John Wimber*, 181-182.

¹²³ Peace, *Noticing God*, 87.

divina.¹²⁴ *Lectio divina* means “divine reading” or “sacred readings” in Latin, and is a practice which began in the fourth and fifth centuries.¹²⁵ It is important to note that while *lectio divina* can be pursued in a group setting or individually, it is a “disciplined form of devotion and not a method of Bible study. It is done purely and simply to come to know God, to be brought before his word, to listen.”¹²⁶

Four steps are involved in practicing *lectio divina*. In step one, a person recalls and listens to the text.¹²⁷ In step two, one repeats “aloud the word or phrase to which you are drawn.”¹²⁸ Step three involves offering the thought or thoughts back to God, asking for his guidance in prayer.¹²⁹ In the fourth and final step, one moves to the quietness of contemplation. One simply rests in God and allows him to speak.¹³⁰ While this form of contemplative Bible reading can be done alone, it can become a wonderful group activity.¹³¹ Both the long history of this practice and the Spirit-led nature of this approach make this practice an ideal activity to engage postmodern minds who value ancient historical practice and personal engagement and discovery.

¹²⁴ Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading: Experiencing God through Scripture* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 11.

¹²⁵ Gabriel O’Donnell, O.P., “Reading for Holiness: Lectio Divina,” in Maas and O’Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions*, 45.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 47. Some people within the evangelical community would feel comfortable calling *lectio divina* a form of Bible study. See Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading*, 11.

¹²⁷ Peace, *Noticing God*, 99.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Fasting—Denying Oneself as a Means of Growth

Fasting involves intentional abstinence from eating food or from some other pleasurable activity in order to grow spiritually. Jesus practiced fasting (Matthew 4:2, Luke 4:2), and he taught his disciples to fast (Matthew 6:16). As a practice, fasting is not exclusively Christian, for all major world religions recognize the value of fasting.¹³²

One of the benefits of fasting is that participants are reminded in a tangible way that they are utterly dependent upon God as they “[find] him a source of sustenance beyond food.”¹³³ Our culture often believes the lie that in effect undermines our dependence upon God, which is the belief “that we can have it all and [even more preposterous] that we deserve it all.”¹³⁴ Fasting helps us come to grips with this false sense of entitlement and privilege that characterizes our contemporary consumer society.

When we join fasting with prayer, a Lenten practice, we utilize “two of the most effective tools in clearing away our self-preoccupation so that we can be more responsive to God’s life in and through and around us.”¹³⁵ Fasting combined with prayer is a discipline practiced in both the Old and New Testaments,¹³⁶ a practice that sharpens the prayer focus and increases the intensity of the prayers offered.¹³⁷ Fasting is a wonderful

¹³² Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 25th anniv. ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 48.

¹³³ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 166.

¹³⁴ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 80.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

¹³⁶ See Daniel 9:3, 17-19, and Acts 13:3 for examples of prayer joined with fasting.

¹³⁷ Siang-Yang Tan and Douglas H. Gregg, *Disciplines of the Holy Spirit: How to Connect to the Spirit’s Power and Presence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 130.

spiritual discipline that can deepen one's prayer life and break the grip of consumption on a person's life and soul. When encouraging the practice of this spiritual discipline in the life of a church plant, it would be helpful and productive to provide instruction on the nature and purpose of fasting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter 3 articulates the foundation for the theology of the Kingdom of God, providing this Vineyard church planting initiative with a biblical theological framework of discipleship. These disciples of Jesus seek to worship God the Father in spirit and truth, value the gifts and contributions of others, desire to be responsible stewards of creation, and are content to mature and grow over time. They live lives marked by times of silence, prayer, meditation on the Word, fellowship, and fasting, and they are known as credible followers of Jesus.

CHAPTER 4

GOALS AND PLAN

This chapter explores the theological implications of following Jesus and living as his disciple in the present reality of the Kingdom of God. The chapter presents a ministry strategy, including the content to implement a twelve-week contemplative Bible study group. Chapter 4 concludes with a discussion of the leadership required for this small group and a look at the target population.

Theological Implications and Ministry Overview of Evangelistic Discipleship

This section provides a brief synopsis of the pertinent conclusions of Chapter 3, beginning with an overview of the theology of the Kingdom. It also examines the need to live as transformational communities. Finally, it explores the need to cultivate spiritual formation through discipleship and the role that spiritual disciplines can play in spiritual formation.

Theology of the Kingdom

The central tenet of Vineyard theology, the theology of the Kingdom of God, draws on George Eldon Ladd's articulation of the Kingdom of God as a present, realized

eschatological reality.¹ For John Wimber, the founder of the Association of Vineyard Churches, the theology of the Kingdom of God provided a biblical theology for understanding the tension between the future age and our current experience of the Kingdom of God. In the future age, the Kingdom of God will be fully realized, and in the present, we taste and experience an in-between time, a time “between the inauguration and the consummation of the Kingdom of God.”² How we understand the Kingdom of God, and our personal relationship to that Kingdom as followers and subjects of Jesus, has profound and far-reaching implications. Vineyard churches view the Kingdom of God as a present reality that Jesus makes available to all who repent. Those who turn to Jesus in genuine faith and belief are in a position to experience living in the Kingdom not as “something to be ‘accepted’ now and enjoyed later, but something to be entered and enjoyed now (Matthew 5:20, 18:3, John 3:3, 5).”³

Living as Transformational Communities

Chapter 3 outlined three key areas in which members of this new church plant will seek to live out the communal implications of following Jesus as his disciples and living the present reality of his Kingdom. The first area is spelled out in John 4:21-26 when Jesus dialogues with a Samaritan woman at the well and reveals to her that a new era in worship has arrived through the presence of the Messiah. In this new era, authentic

¹ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 65-66. Ladd advocates that “modern scholarship is quite unanimous in the opinion that the Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus.” See Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 57.

² Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 19.

³ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 28. Those who enter this present Kingdom enjoy three new dimensions in their lives: the presence of new spiritual power, transformation of one’s identity and character, and power over present-day evils. See Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 40.

worship flows from a reborn heart and revitalized spirit. This worship is not restricted to specific, historically significant sites. While Christian worship is the activity of Christians, it must also be underscored that those who are seeking and exploring a possible spiritual journey with God frequently encounter God in an experiential way.⁴

Paul's theology of spiritual gifts as articulated in Romans 12:3 shapes this church plant, for in this community everyone has place and value, and each person's presence and contribution counts and is appreciated. This is antithetical to the prevailing pioneering, self-made mindset of western North America. Even though the cultural context is largely individualistic, as image-bearers of God, young adults new to Terrace are drawn to authentic expressions of community.⁵

It is important to recognize that God created the earth and everything in it and that he calls humankind to be stewards that treat the world in sustainable, non-exploitative ways. For many of the younger adults in the Terrace area protecting and caring for the natural environment is the most important issue facing the region.⁶ Since the wilderness is one of the most "awe-inspiring religious edifices"⁷ in the area, it would be

⁴ For John Wimber, encounters of this nature, while not restricted to worship, are the occasions in which the supernatural demonstrations of God's presence enable people to "experience the presence and power of God." See Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 46. Within the context of this church plant, opportunities to explore Christian meditation in an outdoor setting through a contemplative gardening experience or walk in nature provide a time and place in which spiritually seeking participants can potentially become open to the power and presence of God.

⁵ Wuthnow argues that young adults are attracted to congregations that offer love and a sense of community. See Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 223.

⁶ Quinn Barabash, interviewed by the author, Terrace, BC, January 29, 2015. Barabash is an adult in his early thirties who works as a producer and digital media specialist for Skeena Wild Conservation Trust, a Terrace-based environmental group that advocates for the protection of Skeena River salmon.

⁷ Todd, *Cascadia*, 19.

unfathomable to attract these people to spirituality that did not value the impressive and dominant natural order around them.⁸

Cultivating Spiritual Formation through Discipleship

One of the unfortunate mindsets still prevalent in much of the evangelical Church is that the missionary task of church revolves around making converts who believe in Jesus.⁹ The call to follow Jesus, however, is much more than simply believing in Jesus, experiencing forgiveness, and gaining access to heaven when one dies.¹⁰ This doctoral project advocates that the paramount call that Jesus extended to his first disciples in Matthew 4:19, “Come, follow me,” is the basic reorientation that needs to be embraced.

The ability to grow and mature as a disciple of Jesus Christ begins, then, with the proper horizon in view. The initial goal is to follow Jesus. Belief and trust in Jesus within this perspective typically grows and develops as one begins to journey and explore the reality of following Jesus. By emphasizing journey toward Christ and his Kingdom as a valid initial expression of the call to follow Jesus, people are given space and time to contemplate and weigh the implications of Christ’s call. Those who appraise Christ’s call

⁸ Here we can learn from the life of St. Francis, whose deep intense relationship with God enabled him to love and respect God’s created order. Reading St. Francis can also be a wonderful faith introduction to those who are concerned about the environment and are intrigued with ancient historical pioneers who championed respect and love for the natural order. See Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (1250; reprint, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 250-261.

⁹ Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, *Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 2011), 85.

¹⁰ Willard points to the gravity and seriousness of the present situation when he states that “most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have never decided to follow Christ.” See Willard, *The Great Omission*, 5.

decide whether they are prepared to reorient around a new center. This center is learning from Jesus how to live one's life in the here and now.¹¹

When people give serious evaluation to their willingness to follow Jesus as his disciples by considering their need to learn from him and their need to become more Christ-like, they are experiencing evangelistic discipleship. These people allow the call that Jesus extended to the first disciples to help shape their personal response to him. If these people choose to follow Jesus and learn how to live as his disciples, they will also be empowered to share with others the life and vitality that he imparts to them.

Cultivating Spiritual Formation through the Practice of Spiritual Disciplines

In Chapter 2 of this doctoral project, the observation was made that spiritual disciplines “are time-tested activities consciously undertaken by us as new men or women to allow our spirit ever-increasing sway over our embodied selves.”¹² The practice of spiritual disciplines does not impart depth and substance to our souls and lives. Rather, when we allow the practice of spiritual disciplines “to place us in God's presence, God can do his loving restorative work,”¹³ in and through us. As we practice basic spiritual disciplines, we discover that we can indeed shift our focus from trying to behave like Jesus to engaging in the spiritual practices that enabled him to act effortlessly

¹¹ Ibid., 7. Ben Campbell Johnson refers to the person who comes alongside the inquiring person as a spiritual guide. He likens it to “two persons on a journey, with one serving as a guide to enable the other to ‘see sights’ that otherwise might go unnoticed.” See Ben Campbell Johnson, *Speaking of God: Evangelism as Initial Spiritual Guidance* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1991), 69.

¹² Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 86.

¹³ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 93.

and naturally “within the moment.”¹⁴ The leaders of the Terrace church plant view Bible reading, prayer, and worship as the primary time-tested disciplines which foster and nurture spiritual growth in the Christian’s spiritual journey.¹⁵ Additional spiritual practices that receive attention within this church plant are solitude, fellowship, fasting, and the discipline of noticing God, particularly in the created natural world around us.

Strategy Goals

This section outlines the key strategy goals of the church plant in Terrace. It first examines the need to create an understanding of the call to follow Jesus. Then it looks at creating openness and desire toward spiritual practice. Next, it explores how to encourage living as a Christ follower in the present. The section also looks at the goal of crafting one’s personal story of following Jesus.

To Create an Understanding of the Call to Follow Jesus as His Disciple

The overarching strategy of this church plant is to help people become authentic Christ followers and disciples, whose lives are constantly being shaped and molded by their abiding allegiance and relationship to Jesus Christ. The call that Christ extended to the first disciples in Matthew 3:17, “Come follow me,” is the basic call that Christ puts before all people, calling them to be his disciples, that is, to be apprenticed by Jesus. The

¹⁴ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 7-8. Willard argues that those trying to behave like Christ in the moment without learning to live as he lived and adopting the practices that sustained him, “such as solitude, fasting, prayer, service, celebration—disciplines for life in the spiritual Kingdom of God . . . activities in which Jesus deeply immersed himself,” are doomed to failure. See Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 7-10.

¹⁵ Eugene Peterson suggests that daily praying of the Psalms, recollected prayers throughout the day, and weekly corporate worship are three primary disciplines which have sustained the historic Christian Church. See Eugene H. Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 105-108. He also recommends that other disciplines should “be used as needed.” Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 108.

Terrace church plant does not view discipleship by Jesus as the “advanced” option,¹⁶ or the option only for those who aspire to be leaders.¹⁷ Rather discipleship to Christ and his Kingdom, the basic call that he extended to the initial twelve men, is understood as the invitation that he extends to all people today in our contemporary postmodern context.¹⁸

To Create Openness and Desire towards Spiritual Practice

In order for people within this new church plant to engage in basic spiritual disciplines, Charles and Ann, the leaders of the church plant, will need to offer numerous well-planned teaching opportunities to present the spiritual disciplines. In addition, they will also offer various opportunities for participants to engage these disciplines by themselves or within a small group context.¹⁹ It would be helpful to have various members of the church plant share brief testimonies about their personal experiences with various spiritual disciplines and how these practices have helped them grow in their walk

¹⁶ Willard argues that the “gospel of forgiveness of sins and assurance of heaven after death upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ,” the message advocated by Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, created the “essential disconnection between post WWII evangelism and discipleship,” a disconnect which “still prevails today.” See Dallas Willard, “Discipleship,” *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Gerald McDermott (Oxford University Press, 2010), <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=134> (accessed May 2, 2015).

¹⁷ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7. As Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken transitioned their church from a seeker model into a model built around discipleship and spiritual formation, they received resistance from members who viewed “various abridged versions of the gospel” as normative. For many in their church, emphasis on spiritual formation took away from the centrality of the cross and the basic simple message that the “gospel centers on forgiveness of sins and heaven after death.” See Carlson and Lueken, *Renovation of the Church*, 61-62.

¹⁹ One way to acquaint young adult postmoderns with spiritual practice is to have a small team of people research and put together a mime drama in which someone plays the part of one of the spiritual pioneers such as Patrick of Ireland, St. Francis of Assisi, or Ignatius of Loyola. In addition to learning about various spiritual pioneers, participants become aware of how the specific disciplines shaped the lives, ministries, and the enduring legacies of these prominent spiritual leaders. A good initial resource is Richard H. Schmidt, *God Seekers: Twenty Centuries of Christian Spiritualities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

with God. Another tool to acquaint people in this church plant with various disciplines would be to engage in a guided practice of a particular spiritual discipline, such as silence, within a small group. After participating, group members could share their experiences and learn from one another.

To Encourage Living as Christ Follower in the Here and Now

While people may give intellectual assent to the idea of living for Christ and his Kingdom in the here and now, it will take patient explanation, modeling, and time to help people comprehend the radical implications of allowing their lives to be increasingly shaped by their allegiance to Jesus.²⁰ One practical spiritual discipline that can help a person have his or her daily life shaped by God and his Kingdom is the discipline of noticing God, as advocated by Richard Peace in his book, *Noticing God*. Peace's goal is to help people notice God's activity in their daily lives in order that God's activity becomes more tangible and immediate, as most of these involvements frequently go unnoticed.²¹

To Craft One's Story of Following Jesus

One of the dominant features of postmodernity is that metanarratives are viewed as suspect,²² a leftover relic of the modern era. As such, postmoderns no longer search

²⁰ It will be necessary to lay a strong biblical foundation through ongoing teaching on the present day reality of living with Christ in his Kingdom. The theology of the present reality of the Kingdom of God pervades the Vineyard statement of faith. See "Our Statement of Faith" in Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle*, 409-412.

²¹ Peace, *Noticing God*, 18. Some people from Pentecostal or Charismatic church backgrounds have an unhealthy preoccupation with seeking dramatic spiritual encounters and would benefit from learning to notice the ongoing everyday activity of God in their lives.

²² Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 45.

“for the one system of myths that can unite human beings into one people of the globe into one ‘world.’”²³ While grand stories, like the biblical history of redemption, are cast into doubt within a postmodern cultural backdrop, local personalized stories are welcome and sought out.

In order to help members of this church plant craft their own personal stories of walking with Jesus, the church plant will annually offer a twelve-week small group opportunity to work through Richard Peace’s book, *Holy Conversation: Talking About God in Everyday Life*.²⁴ While this book helps craft one’s own personal story, it also helps people understand the basics of the Christian message more fully. Given the reality of widespread biblical illiteracy, even among those who have church backgrounds, it is important to help people understand the gospel message and learn how to “talk about the good news in easy, comfortable ways without using theological jargon.”²⁵

Content for Strategy

This section begins with an examination of the basic components of living as authentic disciples. It then explores two practical teaching components: the twelve-week contemplative Bible study group and a look at the weekend retreat on meditative prayer. Next, this section observes how the church plant will encourage spiritual disciplines in

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Richard Peace, *Holy Conversation: Talking About God in Everyday Life* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006).

²⁵ Ibid., 15. A key component of this study program is to ask a non-Christian friend to become a conversation partner. It is vital to practice talking about what one learns in the small group and to receive feedback from those who are unfamiliar with the gospel message. See Peace, *Holy Conversation*, 15-16.

order to foster spiritual growth. It concludes with a survey of the resources on spiritual formation available to the church plant and also looks at the group covenant.

Presentation on the Basic Components of Living as Authentic Disciples

Charles and Ann will offer a two-hour presentation on a Sunday evening to those who show interest in the new church plant. The presentation will provide a synopsis of discipleship and spiritual formation within evangelical Christian churches since World War II, highlighting the impact of Dawson Trotman of the Navigators, and the resulting disconnect between evangelism and discipleship which continues to this day.²⁶ The talk will look at the call to discipleship that Jesus extended to his initial disciples and the difference between gradual-process conversions and sudden conversions. The need to learn from Jesus as his apprentice will be explained, along with the importance of engaging in basic spiritual practices such as Bible reading, prayer, and communal worship. The presentation will conclude with an invitation to take part in a church plant where members seek to grow and mature as followers of Jesus Christ as their primary and overriding purpose.

Contemplative Bible Reading Small Group and Retreat on Meditative Prayer

This small group will introduce participants to contemplative Bible reading by utilizing Richard Peace's study guide, *Contemplative Bible Reading: Experiencing God through Scripture*.²⁷ The group will meet at the Claus residence and be offered on a mid-

²⁶ Willard, "Discipleship," 1.

²⁷ Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading: Experiencing God through Scripture* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998). Making use of a study guide and adding opportunities to participate in a number of spiritual disciplines makes good use of the church planting team's resources and energy.

week night. This group would need a minimum of seven people and have a limit of twelve. In addition to exploring the practice of contemplative Bible reading, commonly referred to by its Latin name, *lectio divina*, this group will also provide participants an opportunity to become acquainted with the spiritual disciplines of meditation, silence, prayer, and service.²⁸ An optional retreat weekend will be offered in early October on meditative prayer. This retreat will take place at the Claus farm property on Braun's Island. Those who participated in the small group on contemplative prayer will be invited, and others who may be interested will be welcome as well. The purpose of this retreat is to introduce participants to meditative prayer, particularly meditative prayer within the context of a beautiful natural setting.²⁹

On Friday evening at the retreat, an introductory talk will be offered on meditative prayer, highlighting the role of silence and solitude and the prayer of *examen*.³⁰ In addition to learning and experiencing Christian meditation, it is hoped that retreatants will experience genuine Christian hospitality, a relaxed setting, encouraging company,

²⁸ The practice of meditation is already built into Session Six, "The Cost of Discipleship," of Peace's *Contemplative Bible Reading*. See pages 67-68. An exercise in three minutes of silence will be built into Session Seven, "The Priorities of Life." This exercise will replace the five to ten minutes allotted for group prayer found on page 76. Instead of a group prayer, the leader will conclude with a brief prayer. Participants will be encouraged to spend some time in silence during the upcoming week. Opportunities to pray for others in the group are already part of the small group time. Part of the homework following the ninth session will be to engage in a secret act of service.

²⁹ The Claus home is situated on a beautiful five-acre rural property. Their new two-story home was designed to house small groups, as it has four extra private sleeping rooms and a large dining living area that can easily accommodate up to twenty people. The retreat promotion would begin in August and continue through September and into October. The minimum number of participants to have a viable group would be seven while the maximum would be set at fifteen. In addition to sleeping quarters in the house, recreational vehicles could be parked on site to provide additional housing for Friday night.

³⁰ Following the talk, the group will watch the movie *Tender Mercies*, starring Robert Duvall, which highlights his personal and spiritual growth as he overcomes an alcohol addiction.

and delicious food. On Saturday, a number of different options will be made available to retreatants in order to have a protracted time of silence in nature.³¹

Growing in the Use of Spiritual Practices

One of the biggest challenges of building a new church community around the biblical themes of discipleship, spiritual formation, and evangelistic discipleship is the reality that “for at least several decades the churches of the Western World have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian.”³² While this church plant will call people to a vision of living life with Jesus and a full-orbed process of discipleship and spiritual formation, it will be necessary to take the long view and provide time and space for the vision to grow to fruition. As mentioned earlier, this church plant will prioritize the basic spiritual disciplines of weekly worship, daily praying the psalms, recollected prayers throughout the day,³³ and the disciplines of learning to notice God in our lives.³⁴

The Terrace church plant will value other spiritual disciplines such as silence, service, meditation, and fasting, and will encourage their use as needed. As the church planters and members embark on this journey together, the goal is to encourage people to make “space for God” in their lives, a term borrowed from Don Postema and his book,

³¹ People would choose from the following: relaxing in silence in an easy chair in one of the garden locations, watching an artist in silence for two hours as he or she creates a painting outdoors, hoeing the garden in silence for two hours, or floating down the Skeena River in silence with a trained commercial guide. This last option would require an additional fee of one hundred dollars, and would only be available if a minimum of six persons signed up and paid for this option at the point of registration.

³² Willard, *The Great Omission*, 4.

³³ Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 106-107.

³⁴ Peace, *Noticing God*, 14-15.

*Space for God: Study and Practice of Spirituality and Prayer.*³⁵ As the group journeys together and learns from Jesus as his apprentices, it will be important to avoid the pitfall of legalism. Spiritual disciplines are not what one must do to grow spiritually. Rather they are an invitation “to actually follow Christ—to live life as he lived.”³⁶ It is important to be gentle with oneself, for it is easy to “get so down on ourselves when we attempt something and fail to do it or fail in doing it.”³⁷ Thomas Merton comments that “one cannot begin to face the real difficulties of the life of prayer and meditation unless one is perfectly content to be a beginner and really experience oneself as one who knows little or nothing. . . . Those who think they ‘know’ from the beginning, never, in fact, come to know anything.”³⁸

Resources for Spiritual Formation

A number of authors who have written on spiritual formation and discipleship offer valued perspective and help shape and inform this church plant. Dallas Willard offers numerous insightful books that describe the need for spiritual formation and what spiritual formation entails.³⁹ The three books that will be used by the church plant as ongoing resources are the following: *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How*

³⁵ Don Postema, *Space for God: Study and Practice of Spirituality and Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1983). Postema borrowed this term from Henry Nouwen, a person who mentored him and helped him grow in his understanding of spiritual formation. See Postema, *Space for God*, 12.

³⁶ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 9.

³⁷ Postema, *Space for God*, 19.

³⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Climate of Monastic Prayer* (Collegeville MN: Cistercian Publications, 2005), 52-53, quoted in Postema, *Space for God*, 20.

³⁹ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 4.

*God Changes Lives, The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teaching on Discipleship, and Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice: Experiments in Spiritual Transformation.*⁴⁰

Richard Peace has also authored numerous resources that help shape this church plant. He also provides study booklets that can be used individually or in a small group setting. Peace's book, *Conversion in the New Testament Paul and the Twelve*, might be a bit daunting for some given its length, yet it offers an insightful detailed perspective on the nature of Christian conversion and the need to value gradual, process-oriented conversions, such as the twelve apostles experienced, rather than only valuing sudden, dramatic conversions, such as St. Paul experienced. *Noticing God*, a very accessible and readable book, helps people begin to discern and notice the presence of God in their everyday lives.⁴¹ *Holy Conversation: Talking about God in Everyday Life* is a study book which helps people talk about their faith and share their faith journey with friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Three other study guides written by Peace that will be employed in this church plant are as follows: *Contemplative Bible Reading: Experiencing God through Scripture*, *Meditative Prayer: Entering God's Presence*, and *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Personal Story*.⁴²

⁴⁰ Dallas Willard and John Johnson, *Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice: Experiments in Spiritual Transformation* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006).

⁴¹ A small group focused on reading this book and meeting weekly for discussion will be held on a yearly basis. The strength of this book is that it provides a nurturing, encouraging introduction to diverse spiritual practices. At the same time it provides informed, historical depth without overwhelming the reader.

⁴² All three of these study guides are designed for personal or group use. *Contemplative Bible Reading* will serve as a primary resource. It is the guide we will use in a twelve-week study group which introduces people to Bible study through *lectio divina* as well as basic spiritual disciplines such as prayer and meditation.

Richard Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline: The Pathway to Spiritual Growth*, provides an excellent introduction and overview of the various spiritual disciplines. This book could be used in a small group discussion or recommended as a basic book to read on the subject of growing in the practice of spiritual disciplines. James C. Wilhoit's book, *Spiritual Formation as if Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*, provides a detailed, long-term program for cultivating spiritual transformation. The emphasis in this resource on the need to continually return to basic core themes is helpful.⁴³ This resource also realistically assesses that spiritual formation comes to those who recognize that they are people in need of the grace of God and his healing.⁴⁴

A helpful guide and introduction to Ignatian Prayer is Timothy Gallagher's *An Ignatian Introduction to Prayer: Scriptural Reflections According to the Spiritual Exercises*.⁴⁵ This is a very flexible resource that could be used individually, in a small group setting, or over the course of a weekend retreat. The reflections are concise, well thought out, and are written by an experienced retreat leader and Ignatian scholar. The basic printed questions entitled, "After the Prayer," lead to heartfelt meditative reflection.

An edifying historical resource is Francis De Sales's book, *Introduction to the Devout Life*. This book lays out in detail the attitudes of the heart and mind that foster spiritual growth and maturation. It is infused with an awareness of God's prevailing

⁴³ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 50. While Wilhoit's emphasis on the need to re-present and re-appropriate basic core themes is helpful, his overall approach is quite cognitive. This book would be recommended, yet its limitations would be noted.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴⁵ Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV, *An Ignatian Introduction to Prayer: Scriptural Reflections According to the Spiritual Exercises* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2007).

presence and his activity in our daily lives.⁴⁶ The writing style might be a barrier for some. However, once one becomes familiar with the style, it becomes a rich resource to humbly and piously cultivate one's interior life.

The workbook by Canadian Vineyard pastor Tim Davidson entitled, *Passport: A Believer's Guide to the Kingdom of God*, provides an accessible overview of Christian basics and introduces people to the beliefs and theology of Vineyard churches.⁴⁷ This book is designed to be used with a mature believer serving as a coach with either one person or a small group of people. This book has the additional benefit of having the group participants memorize one Bible verse each week.

Group Covenant: Commitment to Spiritual Formation

The Vineyard church plant in Terrace will not have formal church membership, yet it will provide an opportunity for participants to express their basic commitment to the values, goals, and beliefs of this church planting venture through a group covenant. The covenant will allow people to commit to the process of journeying together with others in intentional spiritual formation. The basic commitment will be to learn and grow as a follower of Jesus Christ, seeking to live as his disciple.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. John K. Ryan (1609; repr., New York, Image Books, 1950), 73. Francis champions awareness of "God's absolute presence, that is, that God is in all things and all places. There is no thing or place in this world where he is not present." See de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 73.

⁴⁷ Tim Davidson, *Passport: A Believer's Guide to the Kingdom of God* (Cape Town, South Africa: Vineyard International Publishing, 2006).

⁴⁸ The covenant will read as follows: "As a participant in this Vineyard Church plant in Terrace, BC, I seek to live as a follower and disciple of Jesus Christ. As his follower I will commit myself to the spiritual disciplines of daily Psalm reading, prayers throughout the day, and weekly communal worship. I will also seek spiritual growth through other spiritual practices as needed. As I seek Christ and his

Target Population and Leadership

This section presents the process of selecting the first leaders, the initial target population of this church planting project. Next, it looks at how leadership development will be managed by the church planter, and at an open house which highlights the role of discipleship and spiritual formation in the church plant. This section concludes with a description of small group participants who will make up the twelve-week contemplative Bible study, followed by a weekend retreat for those small group participants.

Target Population: Selecting the Initial Group

One of the dominant features of church planting within North America during the last several decades has been to launch a church plant and gain size and momentum as quickly as possible.⁴⁹ This church plant takes a different approach. Instead of launching a church in a community where one has few relational connections, the church planters have taken the long road and have sought to become active participants in the community on numerous levels prior to the formal launch of the new church plant. By allowing themselves over five years to become acquainted with the larger community, Charles and Ann are in a much better position to evaluate potential leaders who wish to assist them.

Kingdom I humbly ask that the power of the Holy Spirit would transform my life so that I may live a life that reflects my union with the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

⁴⁹ Canadian church planter James R. Nikkel advocates that the grand opening service have a goal of 125 persons. See James R. Nikkel, *Church Planting Road Map* (Belleville, ON: Essence Publishing, 2004), 133. Vineyard church planter Steve Sjogren and Rob Lewin also have a built-in understanding of a sizeable group when they advocate “that most of the first 200 people you gather will leave within two years.” See Steve Sjogren and Rob Lewin, *Community of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Planting and Growing a Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 45-46. David Fitch takes a different long-term approach when he argues that what is needed today in contrast to “planting an organized set of services [is to] inhabit a neighborhood as the living embodied presence of Christ.” See David Fitch, “50 Years of Church Planting: The Story as I See It,” in *Text and Context: Church Planting in Canada in Post-Christendom*, ed. Leonard Hjalmarsen (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2013), 41.

Initially their main task in leadership selection will be to simply watch and observe. They will be looking for people who demonstrate maturity, gifts for various ministry tasks, and commitment to the church plant and to them as people.⁵⁰

Leadership Development: Managed by the Church Planter

One of the basic strategies to grow leaders in this church plant will be a weekly prayer group that prays for the health and the vitality of this new church. People who are willing to invest in prayer in a sustained way to help birth a new venture often have leadership potential.⁵¹ Another strategy for leadership development will be a group that works through the study guide, *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story*, by Richard Peace. Persons would be invited to this group by the church planter. In addition to these two groups, it will be necessary to simply watch and observe the various people who become involved in this church plant. One of the most basic ways to observe emerging leaders within a group is to notice which people actually do what they say they plan to do, which ones are open to input from the leader and others, and which ones listen to and interact with others in a loving, respectful way. Not all people with these qualities will necessarily be leaders in the making, but these qualities are

⁵⁰ At this point the Clauses have focused on building an extensive relationship network and have not held any intentional preliminary church planting meetings. They have had numerous gatherings at their home and at their farm. Forming a steering committee and holding intentional church planting meetings will begin in the summer and fall of 2015. The Terrace church plant will form an initial steering committee in the fall of 2015 that will work with Charles and Ann. This committee will be made up of persons who have had previous ministry history and a long-term relationship with Charles and Ann. The group will meet several times a year. This type of arrangement provides oversight and input and avoids entrusting ministry oversight to persons in the church plant prior to a proven track record.

⁵¹ This is the author's personal observation based upon his church planting experience.

highly desirable for those who take on leadership roles and responsibilities in this new church plant.⁵²

Recruitment: Invitation and Open House on Spiritual Formation

An open house will be available to those people in the community of Terrace and the surrounding area who have an interest in the church plant. Young adults who are new to the area, including those who have a church background yet are not connected to a church, would make up part of this group. Others might include young adults with whom Charles and Ann have developed a personal relationship and who are intrigued by the church planting project. In addition, some older adults who may be in their forties and fifties could also be expected to be part of this initial open house on spiritual formation. Since both Ann and Charles have built extensive relationships with numerous unchurched people who are open and spiritually curious, they expect at least one third of the persons in this initial open house to be spiritually curious people who have not yet made a commitment to follow Christ.

During the open house,⁵³ Charles will lay out a synopsis of the view of spiritual formation as discussed in this project, stating that the call that Jesus extended to his first disciples is the same call that he extends to us today in Terrace, British Columbia: “Come

⁵² In order to be a potential leader in this church plant, one would need to be a professing Christian, agree to the ministry covenant, agree to the Vineyard statement of faith, and tithe to this church plant on a regular basis. For the Vineyard statement of faith, see Vineyard USA, “Statement of Faith,” www.vineyardusa.org/sites/files/aboutstatement-of-faith.pdf (accessed April 15, 2015).

⁵³ The open house would be held at the Claus home. It would be advertised extensively in the larger community. When promoting previous events in the community of Terrace, the following means have been highly effective: free newspaper announcements, free radio announcements, posters, handouts distributed throughout the community, emails, and Facebook announcements. Charles and Ann will also personally invite people and give them a handout with the information. The open house will be held on a Sunday night from 6:45 pm to 9:00 pm. Pie and finger food will be served at 6:45 pm.

follow me and learn how to be my disciple.” Charles will present the pervasive problem of non-discipleship Christianity,⁵⁴ the current norm in western churches. He will call people to a lifestyle in which the decision to become an apprentice to Jesus becomes the overriding focus of one’s life.⁵⁵

Small Group Participants: Interested, Curious, and Open

Throughout the beginning stages of this church plant, there will be a regular Sunday evening meeting in which worship, teaching, fellowship, and prayers are offered. Those who display interest in the vision of discipleship and spiritual formation are potential candidates for the twelve-week group on contemplative Bible reading. The group that comes out on a regular basis on a Sunday evening displays a degree of interest and openness to the vision of planting a church built around spiritual formation and discipleship. Those who sign up for the twelve-week on contemplative Bible study display an even higher degree of interest to grow and mature as Christ’s disciples. There will be some homework required each week to prepare for this group, and it will be necessary to commit to a basic small group covenant.⁵⁶

Eight Weeks Later: Retreat to Share Experiences

Following the twelve-week group on spiritual formation, an overnight retreat will take place during which experiences in spiritual formation will be discussed. This will

⁵⁴ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁶ The small group covenant asks participants to commit to attendance, preparation, participation, praying for others in the group, respect for each other, and confidentiality. See Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading*, 9-10.

give people some time to practice the spiritual disciplines on their own prior to a time of reflection and reconnection with others. The group will travel out of town for this retreat and utilize one of the Christian camps in the area. It will be important for people to hear about each other's experiences, both what worked for them and what did not seem to go as planned. During this time away, the retreatants will use the book *Space for God* by Don Postema as a primary resource. The group will have meals together, times of sharing, silence, prayer, and free time over the course of the overnight retreat and day together.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter 4 spells out the goals and plans of a church planting strategy built upon discipleship and spiritual formation. This church planting strategy seeks to create an authentic community of Christ followers by helping people understand the call to follow Jesus as his disciple, creating openness towards spiritual practice, and providing opportunities to explore and experience spiritual practice. As those involved create a community marked by living for Jesus as his disciples, they will be freshly empowered to reach out and share the good news of the gospel with others around them.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

This chapter offers a plan to implement a process of spiritual formation through participation in a twelve-week contemplative Bible reading group. A summary of the small group activities will be presented along with the time frames involved in planning and completing the group. This chapter also presents the leadership development plan for the small group. It concludes with an overview of the resources for this group, the assessment plan, and the reporting strategy for the results.

Pilot Project Summary: Twelve-Week Spiritual Formation Small Group

The pilot project will be a twelve-week contemplative Bible reading group which will utilize the ancient spiritual practice of *lectio divina*. The main resource will be the study guide, *Contemplative Bible Reading*, by Richard Peace.¹ The focus of this group will be to introduce participants to contemplative Bible reading.² While many people are familiar with cognitive study of the Bible, learning to read the Bible in a contemplative

¹ This workbook is part of the Spiritual Formation Study Guides Series by Richard Peace.

² The four steps involved are as follows: reading and listening to a short Scripture passage; meditating on key phrases or words that appear to stand out; prayer, offering thoughts and thanks to God; and a time of contemplative stillness and openness to God and his voice. See Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading*, 12-13.

manner offers potential to resonate with postmoderns who hunger for experience and seek a more holistic approach to life.³

The twelve-week group will also introduce participants to the spiritual disciplines of meditation, silence, prayer, and service. An overnight retreat on meditative prayer will also be offered to those participating in the small group. One unique feature of this retreat is to provide time, space, and value to meditating in the midst of nature.

Timeline

This timeline begins by noting the theological research conducted in the spring/summer of 2015 and the development and acquisition of resources. Next, the timeline gives an overview of small group leadership identification and the small group training to be conducted in the fall of 2015. A look at recruiting small group participants in the fall of 2015 and early winter of 2016 follows. The section concludes with a plan to conduct the contemplative Bible reading group in winter/spring of 2016, with the evaluation and analysis to be held in the spring/summer of 2016.

Theological Research—Spring/Summer 2015

The theological research that forms and shapes this church planting project in Terrace, British Columbia is a doctoral project as part of the Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Theological Seminary. This project lays out the theology, rationale, design, and implementation of an evangelistic, non-nucleus church plant which includes an

³ Ibid., 12. Understanding the text is a key part of contemplative Bible reading. However, as Peace explains, “the primary focus is on helping us hear God’s word through the text.” Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading*, 12. Larry Warner adds that *lectio divina* “must involve the whole person: mind, heart, body and spirit. It is reading for formation, not information, and for encounter with the living God in such a way that heart and life are transformed.” Larry Warner, *Journey with Jesus: Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 2010), 35.

intentional process of discipleship and spiritual formation. The project also seeks to understand the current context and find creative ways to engage young postmodern adults through various groups and activities focusing on spiritual formation.

Development and Acquisition of Resources—Spring/Summer 2015

The research and writing of this Doctor of Ministry project has enabled Charles, the church planter, to develop a theology of ministry which undergirds this church planting project.⁴ Through Doctor of Ministry courses at Fuller Seminary, extensive reading and research has been done. Through the writing of this doctoral project, Charles has had the opportunity to both develop an awareness of the needs of local young adults and possible ways and means to engage them by offering opportunities to grow and mature spiritually. The doctoral project advocates the use of various short-term small group experiences, retreat opportunities, and one-evening seminars in order to teach both believers and seekers about the opportunities for spiritual formation and growth.

Identification and Training of Leaders—Fall 2015

This church planting project proposes that leaders be identified largely through their ongoing involvement and participation in the basic group and activities which this church plant will offer. The church plant will provide numerous opportunities for people to serve and help prior to any ongoing ministry responsibility. The church plant will not formally call someone a leader until he or she has been active in the new church for at

⁴ The theology of the Kingdom, as articulated by George Eldon Ladd and embraced by the Association of Vineyard Churches, provides a theology that allows for the Kingdom of God to be both a present experiential reality and future hope for present-day believers. While this project embraces the need to pray for the sick and reach out through “spirit-empowered ministry,” a hallmark of Vineyard theology and practice, it also embraces the need to invite the power of the Holy Spirit into one’s personal life and into private and corporate discipleship strategies and practices.

least one and a half to two years.⁵ Potential leaders will be invited by the church planter to join him in praying for this new church plant on a weekly basis. New persons will also have an opportunity to help stage retreats, help with service projects to the community, attend the Sunday evening home meeting, and tithe to this church plant on a regular basis.⁶

A six-week training course will begin in the early fall of 2015 for hosts and small group leaders in training. Hosts and small group leaders will be selected by the church planting couple and will work through the first six sessions of the study book, *Contemplative Bible Reading*, by Richard Peace. Other resources will also be utilized during the training time.

Recruitment for the Contemplative Bible Reading Group—Fall 2015/Early Winter 2016

The recruitment of those participating in the twelve-week contemplative Bible reading group will take place in the fall of 2015 and the early winter of 2016. This small group will be promoted in the regular Sunday evening meetings. During this time people have the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about this upcoming group. Also during the Sunday evening meetings, copies of *Contemplative Bible Reading* will be available for people to peruse. A simple one page handout will also be made available

⁵ The author agrees with the perspective of Vineyard church planter Steve Sjogren and fellow author Rob Lewin, who caution church planters to “make minimal commitments to new people, no matter how gifted they are.” See Sjogren and Lewin, *Community of Kindness*, 44.

⁶ Since this church plant is not in a rush to get to a certain size, it frees up potential leaders to grow over time and catch the vision of this new church. Noting what takes place in the small group meetings that run for eight to twelve weeks is a great way to observe people in action. Eventually, who they are and how they choose to relate to this new church and its vision will become apparent. For example, many people reveal their maturity levels and level of commitment when they encounter a negative answer and find the need to work through their personal response.

(see Appendix 2). This handout will include the dates, times, place of meeting, and the purpose of the twelve-week contemplative Bible reading group.

In addition to inviting those who are taking part in the regular Sunday evening meetings, this group will also be promoted in the community by way of the radio, newspaper, and television community announcements. Unchurched persons who have expressed interest in the church planting venture and its approach to spiritual growth will be invited. The open house meeting at the church planter's home also provides an opportunity to promote and invite people to this upcoming twelve-week group.

Conduct Contemplative Bible Reading Group—Winter/Spring 2016

The group will meet from 7:00 to 9:00 PM on Wednesday evenings, beginning in mid-January at the home of Charles and Ann Claus. A host will be assigned to help welcome guests and prepare coffee, tea, and light snacks. It will be announced that people can arrive at 6:45 PM so that the study time can begin promptly at 7:00 PM. An appropriate amount of chairs and places to sit will be secured and arranged ahead of time. At 6:59 PM the host will invite people to gather in the living room so that the group may begin. After welcoming everyone, Charles will offer a brief prayer, thanking God for each participant and for the opportunity to grow through this experience.

The group will meet for twelve weeks by working its way through the successive sessions in the study guide. At the outset, the small group covenant will be explained, which highlights attendance, preparation, participation, prayer for others, confidentiality,

and respect.⁷ Participants in the group will be expected to adhere to the covenant. It will be noted that sessions will start on time at 7:00 PM and end promptly at 9:00 PM.

Completing one's homework will be stressed as a basic component of the small group.⁸

Evaluation and Analysis of Small Group—Spring/Summer 2016

In order to help develop future contemplative Bible reading groups, the group will undergo evaluation, analysis, and refinement. At the outset of the first meeting, following the introduction of the small group covenant, the group leader will introduce and make available a two-page questionnaire to assess participants' past experience with contemplative Bible reading and their incoming expectations.⁹ By filling out the questionnaire, participants can indicate their past experience, if any, with contemplative Bible reading, what they hope to gain from the study, and any concerns they may have about their involvement in the small group. The input on the questionnaires will be anonymous, confidential, and privy only to group leaders who will use the feedback to strengthen future groups.¹⁰

⁷ The small group covenant is taken from Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading*, 9-10. See Appendix 1 for the full version of the covenant.

⁸ The group will be made aware that various people in the group are at different stages of their spiritual journey and that during the times of discussion there will be no right or wrong answers. It will be emphasized that group participants are here to journey and learn together.

⁹ See Appendix 3 for the Initial Questionnaire.

¹⁰ The group leader will mention that a two-page follow-up questionnaire will be made available at the conclusion of the twelve-week group, providing participants opportunity to give feedback on their experience.

Leadership Development for the *Contemplative Bible Reading* Leadership Team

This section discusses identification and selection of leaders for the twelve-week contemplative Bible reading group. It also presents the training to be offered in the fall of 2015 on spiritual practice, small group dynamics, and basic leadership skills. During the training, participants will also practice exercises on spiritual formation. This section concludes with reflection on the spiritual formation exercises and group dynamics during the training.

Identification and Selection of Bible Study Leadership Team

Charles and Ann will discern and determine which participants in the life of this new and emerging church plant might be best suited to hosting and offering additional leadership to the contemplative Bible reading group. While only one host and one additional leader would be required, having two hosts and two leaders in training would be prudent in case of an emergency which prevents a host or leader in training from attending on a given evening. Having two additional people also makes the training an authentic small group experience.¹¹

Leaders in training would also be selected from participants who have already been active in the ongoing meetings of this church plant. Leaders in training would be persons who show an interest in contemplative Bible reading, relate well to others, and demonstrate a beginning commitment to this church plant through their attitude,

¹¹ The church planters will look for potential hosts who are friendly, inviting, and not over-bearing. They should be interested in the contemplative Bible study group and play an active part in the emerging church plant. It is expected that both the hosts and the leaders in training would be believers. Charles and Ann must be in agreement regarding the selection of hosts and leaders in training.

participation, and regular financial contributions.¹² Hosts and leaders in training would need to commit to the six-week training small group set to begin in the early fall of 2015.

Training Offered by Church Planter

In order to learn about contemplative meditation and grow in awareness of small group dynamics and basic small group leadership skills, both the hosts and leaders in training will participate in a six-week small group experience offered at the Claus home. The group will work through the first six sessions of *Contemplative Bible Reading*, the book that will be used in the small group. In addition, Jan Johnston's *Savoring God's Word: Cultivating the Soul—Transforming Practice of Scriptural Meditation* will be a helpful resource, enabling participants to become more aware and acquainted with contemplative Bible reading.¹³ Two chapters of this book will be read by group participants each week by way of preparation. This training will begin each evening at 6:30 PM with a potluck meal. A simple, hearty meal will be prepared ahead of time.¹⁴

The first training session will introduce contemplative Bible reading, also known as *lectio divina*, by working through material in the study guide entitled, "How to Use this Guide."¹⁵ The group will discuss the history of *lectio divina*, the attendees' openness

¹² The church planters will tithe towards this new church plant. Those training to be leaders will be expected to tithe as well.

¹³ Jan Johnson, *Savoring God's Word: Cultivating the Soul-Transforming Practice of Scripture Meditation* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004). While this book could be used as a study guide or in a retreat setting, it also provides an informed, engaging introduction to contemplative Bible reading.

¹⁴ The meal will be hosted by Charles and Ann. Ann will prepare food ahead of time and be present for the meal, which begins at 6:30. However, due to her need to get up at 3:00 AM each morning to begin work at the bakery, she will retire for the evening following the meal. Ann will also read the assigned materials ahead of time even though she will not be part of the formal training time.

¹⁵ Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading*, 7-10.

to participation in the small group, the length of each group, and adherence to the small group covenant. During the remainder of the first evening, the group will discuss the introduction to *Contemplative Bible Reading*, examine more of the history of *lectio divina*, look at the four-step process of *lectio divina*, and work through a contemplative Bible reading exercise based on Matthew 11:28-30. The session will conclude with a time of questions, interaction, and prayer.

Subsequent training groups will work through sessions one to five. Participants will read the leader's notes, appropriate to each session, prior to the meeting.¹⁶ After the first meeting, the two hosts will take turns acting as the host for the evening. They will welcome people, prepare refreshments, and help keep the group on time. During weeks three through six, the leaders in training will facilitate the discussion questions.

Practice and Reflection on Contemplative Meditation, Silence, Prayer, and Service

The ongoing training exercise will give participants the opportunity to experience contemplative meditation. The training group will also participate in the disciplines of silence, prayer, and service. The respective disciplines of silence and prayer will be explained the week prior to participating in the training time in each of these disciplines. The opportunity to engage in an act of service will be a homework assignment to do in one's own time. An important component of the training time is the opportunity to reflect with others on one's experience of these various disciplines. Each training session will give priority to both experiencing the various disciplines and opportunity within the group time to share one's experiences and learn from the experiences of others.

¹⁶ The leader's notes are found on pages 105-112 of *Contemplative Bible Reading*.

Reflections on Small Group Dynamics

Participants in this small group training will be given time to reflect on the small group dynamics present within the group. This focused reflection will take place for the last ten minutes prior to the conclusion of each group. In addition, the group will explore how history-giving allows participants a chance to get to know each other and helps them fill the subjective need to find their place in the group.¹⁷ The training group will also talk about patterns of interaction, such as the overly talkative person, the shy person, the observer, the comic, the side tracker, and the argumentative person.¹⁸ The importance of a positive group atmosphere will be covered, as well as the need for acceptance, honesty, and love within a healthy group.¹⁹

Resources

This section outlines a plan to ensure the necessary resources are in place prior to the first session of the contemplative Bible reading group. These include the location being used to host the meetings, the spiritual formation resources needed, and the audio-visual resources. All of these resources need to be in place prior to the start of the training group in the fall of 2015 and the pilot contemplative Bible reading group to be held in the late winter and early spring of 2016.

The Claus home will be secured for Wednesday evenings from mid September 2015 through mid April 2016 to accommodate both the training group and the twelve-

¹⁷ Richard Peace, *Small Group Evangelism: A Training Program for Reaching Out with the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1985), 85-86.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 90-92.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92-95.

week contemplative Bible reading group. Charles and Ann will prepare the living room before each meeting, with seating available for the number of people attending. They will also prepare the main dish for the potluck meal.

Resources for the training group and the contemplative Bible reading will be ordered in the summer of 2015. Although *Contemplative Bible Reading* is no longer in print, it is possible to order copies of this book online. Johnson's book, *Savoring God's Word*, is also no longer in print; however, it is possible to order the book online as well. Copies of the New International Version of the Bible, the Pew Edition, will be ordered.²⁰

The printed materials for this small group will be limited to four items (see Appendices 1-4). The first is the flyer which promotes the event. The second is the group covenant which spells out agreed upon commitments in order to ensure a healthy, safe group. The third item will be the brief questionnaire which participants will fill out at the first meeting. The questionnaire seeks to determine expectations of group participants at the outset of the group. The final printed item will be the small group questionnaire, which will be made available to group participants during the last session.²¹ All materials will be printed prior to the first group meeting.

Regarding audio-visual resources needed, the weekend retreat will make use of video resources. On Friday night the group will watch the movie *Tender Mercies* starring Robert Duvall. A DVD player, television, and speakers are set up in the Claus living

²⁰ Persons who take part in the training or in the study group will purchase their own books. The Bibles will become the property of the church plant. Everyone using the same Bible within a group is advantageous, for it is possible to give out page numbers for a reference, making it easier for people unfamiliar with the Bible to find a particular chapter and verse.

²¹ Small group participants will be asked to complete the small group questionnaire prior to leaving the meeting.

room and are available for use. The Clauses also own two copies of the movie *Tender Mercies*, both of which will be available.

Assessment Plan

This section discusses how the small group leadership team will interview small group participants. Next, it presents the questionnaire that will be made available to group participants. The section concludes with a discussion of the plans for analysis and interpretation of the results.

Participant Interviews

The leaders in training who comprise the small group leadership team will conduct semi-structured interviews, which “allow for planned questions around specific issues but also employ the freedom of an unstructured approach.”²² These interviews will take place in the Cafenara Coffee Shop, located on Lazelle Ave. in downtown Terrace.²³ The small group leader will mention these interviews during the first initial meeting, and again during the last two meetings, giving opportunity for group participants to sign up. Charles will explain that the leaders in training will conduct the interviews and that this feedback will help to strengthen and improve future groups.²⁴

The interviewers will ask how participants became aware of the group and how they felt about the study guide. They will ask about the amount of homework and

²² Scott L. Thuma, “Methods for Congregational Study,” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 206.

²³ This coffee shop has a side room that offers privacy, quiet, and can be reserved at no charge.

²⁴ It will also be mentioned that the conversations will be taped to help the leaders in training recall the information. The material on the tapes will be deleted once the information has been recorded.

advance preparation as well as the amount of material that was covered at each meeting. Participants will be asked to comment on what they learned and how participation in the group benefitted them. Beyond these questions, the interviewers will simply let the participants talk about their experiences in the group. The interviewers will take notes and also have a small recording device on the table to record the conversations.²⁵

Questionnaire

A brief two-page questionnaire will be made available to small group participants just prior to the close of the last meeting (see Appendix 4). It will be explained that the purpose of this questionnaire is to help improve and strengthen future small groups focusing on contemplative Bible reading. It will also be stressed that feedback will be anonymous and that the content of the questionnaire will remain confidential.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Evaluation Tools

The leadership team will tabulate the results from both the questionnaires and the personal interviews. Once results have been tabulated, the original questionnaires that were completed by participants will be destroyed. The answers given during the interviews will also be organized and typed out for safe keeping, and the original notes and recordings will be destroyed.

In order to have an effective review of the group, it would be helpful if all those who are part of the leadership team were present, including the hosts, the leaders in training, and the leader. This meeting will take place at the church planter's home two

²⁵ Persons who are interviewed will be aware of the desire to record the conversations and they must be willing to agree to recording or the conversations will be simply recorded with notes.

months following the conclusion of the small group.²⁶ Copies of the summarized tabulations will be made available for all those present at the meeting. The results of the questionnaire will be reviewed first, followed by the results of the interviews. The findings of both questionnaires and interviews will be presented prior to any attempt to summarize and interpret the data.²⁷ Once all of the findings have been reviewed by the small group leadership team, the team can begin to organize and record the key findings of the assessment process. Potential areas of improving the group will also be noted and recorded. Here it may be necessary to choose the primary areas that need improvement.²⁸

A summary of the findings of this meeting will be made available to the steering committee that currently is overseeing the church plant. Prior to this, Charles and Ann will compile the summary and email a copy to each host and leader in training, and these leaders will have an opportunity to comment on the summary. The summary will then be discussed at the fall 2016 meeting of the steering committee.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter 5 presents a detailed outline and plan in order to implement a twelve-week pilot project spiritual formation group. While the spiritual

²⁶ While it might be advantageous to meet sooner than two months after the group, realistically it will take some time to conduct the interviews and tabulate the results.

²⁷ It will be helpful to keep the assessment as positive and forward looking as possible by noting what went well, how the group benefitted participants, and how participants may have grown in their ability to practice contemplative Bible reading.

²⁸ Having a long list of potential improvements can potentially deflate and negatively affect future groups. Once the group feedback has been discussed, organized, and recorded, it would be helpful to solicit the feedback of the hosts and leaders in training. They will discuss the following questions: What did they feel went well? What improvements might they suggest to improve future groups? How have they grown personally through this experience? While the group was designed to help participants become exposed to contemplative Bible reading and to introduce them to other spiritual disciplines, the group was also an opportunity to develop and grow leaders for this church plant.

disciplines of silence, prayer, and service will be explored, the small group will focus on contemplative Bible reading and seek to acquaint participants with *lectio divina*, an ancient, experiential approach to Bible reading and meditation. This plan lays out the recruitment process, training, resources, personnel, and assessment strategies necessary to offer an effective small group, and it empowers this church plant to share God's Word in a creative and effective way.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

For most of the past three decades, I have been involved in planting churches within the province of British Columbia, Canada. During this time, my overriding interest and passion has been to see new people come to faith in Christ. I have also had a desire to see them grow and mature as disciples of Jesus. Over time I began to notice that it was becoming increasingly hard to gain a hearing with people who might have some initial interest and aspirations.¹ It became apparent that a logical, well presented Christian apologetic was no longer engaging searching hearts and minds as it once did. In order to seek answers to a number of basic questions and gain a fresh perspective on the ministries of evangelism and discipleship within a North American context, I decided to enroll in Fuller Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry Program.

This doctoral project is an attempt to lay out a detailed church planting program based on discipleship and spiritual formation. This project has also provided me with an opportunity to reflect on current evangelistic and discipleship strategies within North America and explore alternatives. One of the key findings of this doctoral project is the need for fresh biblical thinking on the nature of Christian conversion and a fresh approach to discipleship. For many people in the Christian community today, Paul's dramatic conversion illustrates "what conversion looks like its pure form."² Paul gains fresh insight into his situation, and then realizes that he needs to turn away from his old

¹ During our time church planting in Campbell River, British Columbia from 1988 to 1998, Ann and I found it relatively straightforward to attract a diverse crowd of people, including those with no church background, to an educational group on such topics as parenting, marriage, or stress management. While the church we planted continued to offer community educational classes in Prince George from 1998 to 2010, the church focused its outreach efforts by offering Alpha classes on a regular basis.

² Richard Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 19.

way of living and turn toward God.³ The conversion experience of Paul is complete when Paul chooses to walk in a new way, along a new path.⁴

And while Pauline-style dramatic conversions continue to be the dominant paradigm that defines popular understanding of conversion within the western world, in reality most people experience something that is more protracted and drawn out.⁵ It is helpful to observe that the conversion experience of the twelve was a protracted journey in which they gradually came to comprehend the full implications of what it meant to follow Jesus.⁶ The twelve also respond to the call to follow Jesus and eventually develop into his disciples. They set off to be with Jesus, and through “an attitude of observation, study, obedience and imitation . . . [they] learn how to do what he did.”⁷ In distinction from praying a simple prayer in which one asks for forgiveness of sins and secures eternal salvation, the twelve follow Jesus and choose to spend time with him in order to become disciples of their master. This process of being with Jesus and learning from Jesus allowed the twelve to undergo spiritual formation and spiritual transformation.

Instead of only securing a future heavenly life when one dies, this process of spiritual growth enables one to live differently in the present. Willard explains, “Spiritual

³ Ibid., 352.

⁴ Ibid., 89.

⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁶ Ibid., 280-281. Brian McLaren describes an ongoing dialogue that he had with a postmodern seeker that lasted two years before she was able to make a full commitment to Christ. See Brian McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 137. Don Everts and Doug Schaupp argue that friends who come alongside postmodern seekers need to be patient, for “patience gives the gift of space and permission to explore.” See Don Everts and Doug Schaupp, *I Once was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us about Their Path to Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 71.

⁷ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 6.

formation in Christ is the process whereby the inmost being of the individual (the heart, will or spirit) takes on the quality or character of Jesus himself.”⁸ This doctoral project benefits from this insight, for Christ calls us to a life that is full orbbed and potentially life changing, not simply to belief in him and forgiveness of our sins. Christ calls us to become his disciples, his apprentices, people who consciously choose to follow him and learn from him what it means to be disciples. Another key insight that I began to grasp over the course of writing this doctoral project is the dominant pervasiveness of the perspective that separates salvation and discipleship. In fact, non-discipleship Christianity—the belief that we trust in Jesus to forgive our sins so that we may secure heaven when we die—is the predominant Christian mindset in North America.⁹

This church plant makes the intentional choice to give people time to consider the claims of Christ and his Kingdom. As we call people to a life of discipleship, of following Jesus and learning how to live as he lived, we are able to offer a vision of Christian living that is fresh, compelling, biblically based, and a counter-cultural alternative to most visible expressions of Christianity. Against the backdrop of fresh biblical thinking on conversion and the nature of discipleship, we also wish to introduce and call participants in this new church community to practice spiritual disciplines and take responsibility for their personal spiritual growth and transformation. While numerous spiritual disciplines can be explored, I have found the basic rhythm of daily reading the Psalms, recollected prayers throughout the day, and weekly communal

⁸ Ibid., 53.

⁹ Carlson and Lueken, *Renovation of the Church*, 58-59. It is ironic that a great many people within the Christian community are so familiar with a message of grace and freedom in Christ that they view calls to discipleship and spiritual formation as somehow at odds with the simple message of believing in Christ and trusting him as savior and Lord. See Carlson and Lueken, *Renovation of the Church*, 58-63.

worship to be both helpful and achievable. These comprise the cluster of practice which Eugene Peterson recommends and suggests as being the primary disciplines of the historic Christian Church.¹⁰ Peterson also makes the sane suggestion to be familiar with the other disciplines and to use them as needed, while giving priority to “the basic rule of common worship/Psalms-Prayer/Recollected Prayer.”¹¹

When one views the Kingdom of God as a present, realized dimension of reality, a hallmark of Vineyard theology, it also follows that the power and presence of the Holy Spirit would be available to those seeking spiritual growth and transformation. However, the person seeking to follow Christ should not assume that the present-day availability of the Holy Spirit offers transformational shortcuts. Yet, for those who seek to live in relationship with the triune God, desire to humbly walk with God, and make time and space available for God to work in their lives, the experiential dimension of living with God and knowing God’s love and power offers the capacity to breathe vitality and hope into one’s day-to-day existence. Persons who know God in such a manner and seek to orient their lives around living as disciples of Jesus have the potential to demonstrate to the people around them that something remarkable is at work in their lives. Through proper encouragement and training, such credible witnesses have the capacity to nurture faith and hope in the spiritually hungry and curious people around them.

The next steps in implementing this ministry project will be to take the practical steps necessary to launch the steering committee and the Sunday evening home meetings, and to secure an ongoing supportive relationship with a sponsoring Vineyard Church.

¹⁰ Peterson, *Under the Predictable Plant*, 106-108.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

The steering committee will be made up of four or five individuals, beyond Ann and me, who have had a long-term relationship with us and are supportive of this church plant. It will be helpful if the pastor and his or her spouse of the sponsoring church were part of this group, as they have the vantage point of being in a senior leadership role, and they will be in a position to offer strategic support of this new ministry.

Initially, Sunday evening will consist of a time of worship, basic Bible teaching, fellowship, and opportunities to pray for this new church. During these initial times of worship, one could utilize a Vineyard worship CD and simply sing along. Printed song sheets also work well and enable people to follow along. The times of teaching will focus on the basic themes of discipleship, spiritual formation, and the present reality of the Kingdom of God. If needed, basic child care could be offered. The group may also choose to meet and have a simple meal together, at an earlier time in the late afternoon or early evening, in order to accommodate families with younger children.

Once a week, I will also gather interested persons together to pray for this new church and the community of Terrace. Depending on people's availability, this group could meet either in the morning or in the evening. The group will meet for one hour and intercede in a sustained manner for this new ministry and the local community. They will pray for guidance, discernment, and for harvest workers.

The sponsoring church will be another Vineyard church in British Columbia which is willing to offer ongoing support and encouragement to this Vineyard church plant in Terrace. The sponsoring church will pray for this new church plant on a regular basis and keep their church members up to date on prayer needs and new developments.

Once a year, a ministry team from the sponsoring church would travel to Terrace to offer practical support and encouragement through some tangible ministry.¹²

The steering committee will meet a couple times each year and provide timely input and support to the church plant and to Ann and me as church planters. Once a year, members from this steering committee will visit the church plant in order to see progress and developments. As mentioned above, it would be preferable if the senior pastoral couple of the sponsoring church played an ongoing role in the steering committee.

A number of dimensions of this church planting project have potential implications for the larger Christian community. First, it is significant that this church plant chooses to identify with the community that it will reach prior to beginning any formal ministry that would launch the new church. This has only been possible because Ann and I have chosen to be self-supporting and have secured other means of employment. One of the major benefits of this approach is that we are not simply relating to the larger community as pastors in the area, rather we are an actual functioning part of the larger community. Through the bakery business, the ongoing vegetable production, and involvement in tree seminars and participation in environmental causes, Ann and I are active, ongoing players in the community of Terrace. Numerous people have also worked at our small farm and at our farmers market stand.

The second significant dimension of this church plant that has significance to the larger Christian community is the desire to be involved and active in caring for our creation. This church plant cares deeply about God's created order and wishes to ensure

¹² Potential ministry projects could be events such as a worship celebration, acts of kindness and service in the community, or help with a fall harvest celebration.

that industrial development in this area does not exploit God's creation. This deep value to care and protect the natural environment is something this church plant shares with many younger adults in this area. By working on various projects together, deep bonds and relationships have been developed. We have become friends and experience community together.

The third significant ministry dimension that this church plant offers to the larger community is Christian meditation in the midst of nature. By providing opportunities to practice Christian meditation in the midst of an environment that many people consider special and possibly sacred, we are providing a safe and logical place to begin to explore the Christian message. For many on the West Coast, nature in all its glory is the equivalent of a majestic, glorious European gothic cathedral, something that inspires awe, admiration, and possible thoughts of divinity and life beyond the ordinary.

The fourth dimension that has implications for the larger Church is the consideration of the nature of the evangelistic call that is presented to searching people. This church plant seeks to call people to follow Jesus and to make a choice to be his disciples, to learn from him. The simple basic call that Christ extended to his first disciples in Matthew 4:19 when he said, "Come, follow me," is the call that he extends to all people. As people choose to become disciples and followers of Jesus and allow Jesus to become the primary molding and shaping influence in their lives, they are empowered to live for him and they become salt, light, and credible witnesses of Jesus.

APPENDIX 1

SMALL GROUP COVENANT

1. *Attendance*: I agree to be at the meetings unless a genuine emergency arises.
2. *Preparation*: I will practice *lectio divina* during the week as I am able and share with the group some of what I find.
3. *Participation*: I will enter enthusiastically into the group discussion and sharing. I will participate in the group *lectio divina* experiences willingly.
4. *Prayer*: I will pray for members of my small group and for our experience together.
5. *Confidentiality*: I will not share with anyone outside of the group what is said during group discussion.
6. *Honesty*: I will be forthright and truthful in what I say.
7. *Openness*: I will be candid with others in appropriate ways. I will allow others the freedom to be open in ways appropriate for them.
8. *Respect*: I will not judge others, give advice, or criticize.
9. *Care*: I will always be open to the needs of each person in appropriate ways.

Signed: _____

Small Group Contemplative Bible Study

You are invited to join a twelve-week contemplative Bible study that will introduce participants to Bible meditation and the ancient practice of *lectio divina*. In addition, we will explore the spiritual disciplines of silence, prayer, and service. We will use the study guide, *Contemplative Bible Reading: Experiencing God through Scripture*, by Richard Peace.

Wednesdays 7:00 – 9:00 pm
January 20 – April 6

Hosted by Vineyard Church planter Charles Claus
For information or to register, call 250-638-8996

APPENDIX 4

EVALUATION

Evaluation

Small Group on Contemplative Bible Study

1. What percentage of the small group meeting did you attend?

____30-40% ____50-60% ____ 70-80%____ 80+%____

2. Did the small group experience increase your awareness of contemplative Bible study?

____very much ____some ____ no effect____

3. To what degree have you been able to practice contemplative Bible reading on your own?

4. To what degree has the practice of contemplative Bible reading enriched your relationship to God?

5. How helpful was it to explore the disciplines of prayer, silence, and service in this small group?

6. How might we improve future small groups on contemplative Bible study?

Thank you for completing this survey. Your answers are important to us.

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