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As the Father Sent Me, So I Send You: A Strategy for Training Storehouse Church Members to Activate their Sent Nature

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Doctoral Project Approval Sheet

This doctoral project entitled

AS THE FATHER SENT ME, SO I SEND YOU: A STRATEGY FOR TRAINING STOREHOUSE CHURCH MEMBERS TO ACTIVATE THEIR SENT NATURE

Written by

JONATHAN R. RUSHIK

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

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AS THE FATHER SENT ME, SO I SEND YOU:
A STRATEGY FOR TRAINING STOREHOUSE CHURCH MEMBERS TO
ACTIVATE THEIR SENT NATURE

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JONATHAN R. RUSHIK
APRIL 2020
ABSTRACT

As the Father Sent Me, So I Send You: A Strategy for Training Storehouse Church Members to Activate Their Sent Nature

Jonathan R. Rushik
Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
2020

This doctoral project will create a training resource that will equip the members of Storehouse Church to activate their sent nature.

Storehouse Church was founded in 2001 by a seven-person church-planting team of young adults. The church has grown consistently over the years, moving from one rental facility to the next. In 2012, Storehouse Church was able to purchase an existing church building nestled on 8 acres in Plymouth Meeting, PA. The specific need of the church is to train, and equip members to embrace their sent nature and engage in missional activity.

Part 1 of this project will describe the unique context of the Plymouth Meeting community, specifically its proximity to urban centers and suburban development. The project will highlight the history and ministry of Storehouse Church. Detail will be provided about the challenges Storehouse Church leaders must overcome to fully participate in the training experience titled “The Sent Lab.”

Part 2 of the project will review books that provide a biblical foundation for understanding missional activity. The works that have been chosen for this project consist of the thought leaders in this important topic. The insights from this section will form the foundation for the development and implementation of The Sent Lab.

Part 3 will draw upon the work in Part 2 to present a two-part strategy for activating missional activity in the local church. First is a retreat environment where participants are taught the biblical, theological, and practical aspects of missional activity. Second, utilize personal coaching based on personal application of the material. The objective is to mobilize church members to engage in specific steps toward application. The feedback from the participants will be utilized to refine the process thereby creating a reproducible strategy for mobilizing believers in missional activity through the local church.

Content Reader: Larry Walkemeyer, DMin

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INTRODUCTION

The room was electric. Emma’s heart was overflowing with emotion, tears streaming down her face. I am not sure if everyone in the room could see the tears, but I saw them. And if the congregation could not see the tears, they could feel them. Tears of joy. Tears of fresh hope. Of forgiveness and restoration. Of new life in Christ.

As Emma\(^1\) came up out of the waters of baptism the room erupted with cheers, hoots, whistles and hollas. The decibels of celebration multiplied in response to Emma’s public declaration of faith in Jesus through the sacrament of baptism. This type of celebration is a hallmark of Storehouse Church. In some churches the experience of baptism is a reflective moment marked by quiet reverence, but not at Storehouse. Our church body resonates with Jesus’ telling of the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son where He describes the response in heaven: “I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk 15:10\(^2\)). We share that heavenly response. There is much rejoicing during our baptism service. And that was certainly the case today.

What made this moment even more powerful was what brought Emma to this point in her faith journey. In Emma’s case, it was not our vibrant music, practical preaching, or menu of programs that introduced Emma to Jesus. Emma decided to follow Jesus through a friendship with one of our church members named Steve.

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\(^1\) The story is a true account of her experience. Her name has been changed for privacy.

\(^2\) All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.
Steve had recently had a personal awakening. He had faithfully followed Jesus for many years, but in the nine months prior to Emma’s baptism, God had been doing a new thing in him. He came alive, in part, due to a fresh understanding of God’s active work in this world. Steve recognized that God was at work creating spiritual openings in Emma’s life, and he chose to join God there. He listened to Emma’s story. He shifted the conversation from work, sports, and the weather to her spiritual journey. He obeyed the promptings of the Holy Spirit to speak with and pray for Emma. He was on the front lines of ministry. His faith was stretched as he participated in the mission of God. God did the work; Steve joined God. Steve was activated and sent as Jesus was sent (Jn 20:21).

The Problem

Steve’s newfound passion for missional activity was a change from the past. For more than eight years prior Steve went through the motions as an irregular church attender. This was not always the case. Steve had been a irregular attender of Storehouse Church for more than eight years. His wife was active in the church. Steve showed up when he could. At times, attending church was a nice supplement to his busy life, not to mention it made his wife happy for them to worship together every third week or so. Steve enjoyed the high quality music and practical messages. The people were friendly and there were a handful of helpful programs to choose from. Sadly, Steve’s irregular worship pattern was typical of many of our attenders. Steve attended and we counted him.

The strategy and measurable of Storehouse Church led Steve into a pattern of casual Christianity. Our church had established patterns that rewarded the attractional
model of ministry. Our pastoral staff would never publicly admit to making Sunday attendance the primary expression of faith, but our ministry would convict us. What started as a missionally-focused church planting team, marked by community outreach and personal evangelism, had drifted toward an inward-focused worship gathering.

The drift from missional to attractional was not intentional nor strategic. The church was founded on a conviction to make a difference in our region. And we did. God opened doors. Amazing things happened. We launched the church in a local community center, then moved to an elementary school, graduated to a middle school auditorium, and finally, we were able to take the monumental step of purchasing our own property: eight acres with an existing church building, located just four blocks from the middle school that we had rented for the previous seven years (and minutes from the Plymouth Community Center which served as our inaugural location). The driveway to our new home waves to over 49,000 cars per day that travel one of the busiest roads in the county. The combination of the location, visibility, and below-market sale price made this new home a miraculous find.

At the same time we were rejoicing over a permanent church home, we began to get comfortable. Our focus shifted inward. We lost traction with our missional heritage. Our evangelism flat lined. Church members like Steve were rewarded for just showing up. Our focus was on counting the number of people who attended on a Sunday and our work emphasized getting more people to show up the following week. On the surface this is a good thing as each number represents a person, but I knew something was off. We

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3 Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Montgomery County, 2017 Traffic Volume Map, Published December 2018.
were not doing the wrong thing. Part of what we were called to do was to gather people around the Lordship of Christ in the context of a local church. The problem was that the ministry of the church was narrowly focused on church attendance and we were not experiencing the fullness of what God would have for our local church body.

The Start

It was time to get back on mission. The refresh originated with the pastoral staff. Recognizing a need for new direction, we earnestly sought the Lord for clarity on our local church’s unique contribution in His kingdom in this region. We refined our values, aligned our strategy, and evaluated our measurables. We reflected on the ways in which God has moved during the course of our ministry. Story after story emerged of our church members putting their faith into action throughout the years of ministry at Storehouse. We overlaid those stories with our theological conviction of God’s ongoing activity in the world and our commitment to join him. A simple three-word mission statement emerged: a sent people. The phrase, “A sent people” is the application of Jesus’s words in John 20:21, “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” We are not there yet, but our aim is to become a family of disciples finding our identity in Jesus, and carrying His love and His truth into the world.

With the pastoral staff solidified around our revised mission we began to introduce it to the congregation. We dipped our toes in the water with a six-week sermon series titled, “Sent.” The response was encouraging as our people began to capture the heart of God for this world. At the conclusion of that series we mobilized over 350 people for a day of serving in the community. The corporate day of serving was an
exciting expression of our mission, but it was still only a programmatic one. The best response occurred on the personal level. During this series several people, including Steve, began to engage in missional activity. They prayed for “eyes to see and ears to hear” how God was at work.⁴ They boldly joined God in His mission for the world.

This shift that we are making is an emphasis on incarnational ministry. As Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch assert, “It implies something of a Go-To-Them approach to mission and evangelism. Instead of asking non-Christians to Come-To-Us, to our services, our gatherings, and our programs on our terms, the incarnational church seeks to infiltrate society to represent Christ in the world.”⁵ The gears began to turn as the congregation made significant strides to follow the invitation of Jesus to join him in his work in this world. This was the catalyst for Steve to reach out to Emma resulting in Emma surrendering her life to Jesus. Steve’s participation in God’s work in Emma’s life contributed to the moment of Emma’s public declaration of faith at our baptism service.

**The Challenge**

We baptized a number of people that day. These numbers represented far more than attendance at a church service, they were stories of life-change. It is this type of numbers that we are committed to count. As the cheers died down, I dried my face with a towel and sat on the edge of the stage praying that this trajectory of incarnational ministry would not just continue, but would be the standard for our church. That prayer captures

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⁴ Is 6:10; Jer 5:21; Ez 12:2; Mt 13:15; Acts 28:27; Rom 11:8.

the ministry challenge and the impetus for this doctoral project. The goal is to create a training resource that will equip the members of Storehouse Church to activate their sent nature.

**The Project**

This paper contains three parts: 1) Ministry Context and Challenge, 2) Theological Reflection, and 3) the design and implementation of a learning experience to activate missional activity. The focus of part one is on the unique ministry context of Storehouse Church. Chapter one explores the unique context of the Plymouth Meeting community, and more specifically, the geographic and socio-economic impact of being a suburb within the major metropolitan area of Philadelphia. The history of Storehouse Church as it experienced slow and consistent growth will be reviewed and critiqued, including the resulting ministry shift during the transition from rental facilities to purchasing a permanent church property. Special attention will be paid to the clarification of the vision to produce disciples who are characterized as “a sent people.” The specific challenges of compartmentalization of faith, busy schedules, reliance on programs, and insecurity in the authority of Jesus will be articulated with regard to activating the sent nature of the members of Storehouse Church.

Part two lays the theological foundation for the project. Chapter 2 identifies crucial books by thought leaders in the topic area. The literature review will highlight the necessity of missional activity in the context of the local church. Chapter 3 will present a biblical and theological foundation for activating the sent nature of disciples in participation with the *missio Dei*. The backdrop is found in the words of Jesus on the
evening of the resurrection, “As the father has sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20:21). The example of the father sending his son is the standard for disciples today. The context of joining God on His mission is understood through the Wesleyan theology of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. The biblical mandate is for disciples to join God in His work in the world, for the world. The disciple must be trained to see the missio Dei outside of the walls of the church and equipped to activate their sent nature. The authority for missional activity is found in submission to the authority of Jesus combined with courage to, “Go!” and proclaim, “the kingdom of God has come near.” (Mt 10:7).

Part three outlines the specific curriculum and strategy for implementation in the local church. Chapter 4 will introduce the learning experience to activate missional activity. Members of Storehouse Church will be challenged to apply a missional approach through practical experience and application-based group coaching. Chapter 5 will report on the implementation and assessment of the learning experience with a small group of members of Storehouse Church. The course will begin with a retreat followed by application and group coaching sessions over the subsequent seven weeks. Observations from the learning experience will utilize an adapted form of Kirkpatrick’s Model of Learning Evaluation. Portions of the training manual will be included in the appendix.

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PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE
CHAPTER 1:

PLYMOUTH MEETING, A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE SUBURB NEAR THE CULTURALLY DIVERSE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Plymouth Meeting is a census-designated place (CDP) in Montgomery County. Plymouth Meeting is a primarily white community located in Plymouth Township. The average income is $92,935. Eighty percent of the adults have a high school degree or higher.\(^1\) The majority of residents in Plymouth Meeting own single-family homes and commute to work alone in their personal car. Residents enjoy access to a network of parks and public spaces, Plymouth Meeting being an exceptional place to live, work, and play.

**Escape from the Big City**

The census reports that it is a small, 3.8 mile radius, community of 6,177 residents. Looking at the statistics alone would indicate that Plymouth Meeting is a small town, but the statistics do not tell the whole story. Plymouth Meeting is a bedroom community in the expanding suburbs of Philadelphia. There is a degree of protectionism among the people of Plymouth Meeting. The residents have a desire to protect and

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preserve the quiet and safe experience found in the neighborhoods. In this way they tend to resist the influences that threaten to invade from the big city. There is a tension of being connected to the city, while striving to remain isolated from its effects. This tension is amplified because Plymouth Meeting is more than an individual suburb of Philadelphia; it is one of the central hubs of transit and commerce in the region.

**Transient and Isolated**

The major highways that intersect Philadelphia all arrive at the crossroad of Plymouth Meeting’s Mid-County interchange. In this way, Plymouth Meeting serves as the region’s onramp to the big city. Further, the county’s two most traveled surface streets, Germantown Pike and Ridge Pike, escort thousands of motorists per day on and off of the major highways. These roads cement Plymouth Meeting as a central hub in both Montgomery County and to the city of Philadelphia.

Conshohocken and Norristown, Pennsylvania boarder Plymouth Meeting. Conshohocken is divided along the Schuylkill River as high-rise office building line the shoreline. The Conshohocken community is home to significant corporate influence including the US headquarters for IKEA, the National Lacrosse League headquarters, and a number of health and medical corporations. Similar to Plymouth Meeting, Conshohocken is primarily a white, middle class community.

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2 Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-276), the Blue Route, the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-476) and the Schuylkill highway (I-76) all intersect at the Mid-County interchange.

3 The US Census reports that Plymouth Meeting is 83 percent white and Conshohocken 88 percent white with above average household income.
Two miles west on Ridge Pike is Norristown. Norristown is the county seat of Montgomery County. It is the second most populous borough in Pennsylvania.\(^4\) Norristown’s residents are 40% white, 30% black, and 20% Latino. Norristown has a troubled reputation as evidenced by their ranking as one of the 100 most dangerous cities in the US.\(^5\) The census reports that the average household income for Norristown is $47,000 less than that of the average Plymouth Meeting household. Norristown’s diversity and income disparity are contributing factors in its isolation from its neighboring communities. In *The Geography of Nowhere* James Kunstler takes a critical look at the history and impact of urban sprawl in America, “Segregation by income would become a permanent feature of suburbia, long after servants were replaced by household appliances. Factory workers would eventually get suburbs of their own, but only after the rural character of the countryside was destroyed. The vast housing tracts that were laid down for them had all the monotony of the industrial city they were trying to flee and none of the city’s benefits, nor any of the countryside’s real charms.”\(^6\) The diverse communities of Conshohocken, Norristown, and Plymouth Meeting all neighbor one another, but tend to remain isolated and independent.


Kunstler goes on to say that modern communities are folded into a knot of freeway loops and strung together by interstate highways.\textsuperscript{7} He describes the resulting communities with dismal pessimism, “Eighty percent of everything ever built in America has been built in the last fifty years, and most of it is depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy, and spiritually degrading.”\textsuperscript{8} Plymouth Meeting could be a case study for Kunstler’s work. Plymouth Meeting was a quiet, rural community that was caught in the wave of the expanding Philadelphia region. Two conflicting types of architecture divide the community. At one end there is the Mid-County Interchange. As drivers loop off the highway gas stations, Starbucks, and the Plymouth Meeting Mall welcome them. This serves as the business center grafted into the small town. Travel just one mile along Germantown Pike and you will find local schools, parks, and a community center. This is where the locals call home. The community is divided between highways and homes. The highways bring strangers to this quiet community from all points on the map.

**Educated and Success Driven**

The relational connectedness of Plymouth Meeting is a microcosm of its geographic make up. The community is fragmented and isolated. In Community: The Structure of Belonging Peter Block sees this as a prevailing characteristic of modern suburbia. He writes, “Our isolation occurs because western culture, our individualistic narrative, the inward attention of our institutions and our professions, and the messages

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
from our media all fragment us. We are broken into pieces."⁹ He goes on to describe the cost of the detachment and disconnection extends beyond personal isolation and loneliness, it limits the potential of the people who make up the community. As much as the residents of Plymouth Meeting want to remain a quiet suburb with a small town feel, they are often strangers within their own neighborhoods. The reflection from Next Door as it is in Heaven provides a fitting explanation, “In nearly every American setting, people are indeed living relationally impoverished lives marked by a sense of isolation. Far too many people are alone and lonely.”¹⁰ Fear is one of the drivers of the isolation found in Plymouth Meeting. Cars are locked in the garage. Doors are secured by a keyless entry system. The back yard is fenced and private. The environments of suburban life are safe and secure. There is rarely an opportunity venture out to befriend a neighbor.

There is also a fear that the evils from neighboring Norristown will contaminate their safe community. The expectation is that the needy of Norristown stay in Norristown. Consequently, Norristown is home to homeless shelters, food banks, and an array of social service agencies. None of these exist in Plymouth Meeting. If the needs are in Norristown then the service institutions belong there too. The problem is that it further divides the neighboring communities. For example, when a home for battered women petitioned to move to a renovated facility within the boundary of Plymouth Meeting the neighbors protested and turned them back to Norristown. The town hall meetings, newspaper articles, and council ordinances all illustrated the fear of the

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⁹ Peter Block, Community: The Structure of Belonging, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009), 3, Kindle.

¹⁰ Lance Ford and Brad Brisco, Next Door as It Is in Heaven: Living Out God's Kingdom in Your Neighborhood (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2016), 7, Kindle.
brokenness that might spill over into Plymouth Meeting. Block explains that this type of reaction is due to a limited understanding of the brokenness that we all face. He writes, “The dominant narrative about our cities is that they are unsafe and troubled. Those we label “homeless,” or “ex-offenders,” or “disabled,” or “at risk” are the most visible people who struggle with belonging, but isolation and apartness is also a wider condition of modern life. This is as true in our gated communities and suburbs as in our urban centers.”

The protesting residents of Plymouth Meeting believed a false narrative. They failed to grasp the reality of the condition that we all share in our patterns of isolation and apartness. There is a divide between Plymouth Meeting and Norristown. This divide illustrates a desperate need for a true connection to occur among the neighboring communities. At the same time, there is also a divide among the suburban families of Plymouth Meeting indicating a desperate need for belonging to occur among their literal neighbor next door. It is clear that there are a number of challenges in and around the Plymouth Meeting community. Peter Block’s main thesis is to shift the focus from the problems to the possibilities. Block writes, “The key is to identify how this transformation occurs. We begin by shifting our attention from the problems of community to the possibility of community.”

Instead of seeing the Mid-County interchange as a source of congestion, we must view it as an on-ramp for regional impact. Instead of viewing the separate and diverse communities of Plymouth Meeting and Norristown as examples of modern day segregation, we must view it as an opportunity to

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11 Ibid., 4.

12 Block, Community, 3, Kindle.
minister to all nations. And instead of labeling Plymouth Meeting as resistant to the outsider, we are given an opportunity to equip its people to reach out to their neighbors who are in a similar place in life, and two, challenge them to extend hospitality to those neighbors who are in a different place.

Storeshouse Church, A Maturing Church Plant (2001 – 2011)

There was nothing typical about our method of planting Storeshouse Church including the fact that the selection of our location in Plymouth Meeting was born out of a single internet search. Three years prior to planting Storeshouse Church I was the Pastor of Student Ministries at Light and Life Christian Fellowship in Long Beach, California. Light and Life Christian Fellowship, led by Senior Pastor Larry Walkemeyer, is a vibrant multi-cultural church located three blocks from Compton. Pastor Larry cast a vision of planting churches throughout Long Beach. I shared that vision and became a leader on one of the first church planting teams. The method of church planting was innovative at the time. In today’s church context they would be called a campus, but in the late 1990’s the concept of multi-site and campus churches was a budding, but still not common, practice. Our church plant met on Sunday nights, this allowed Pastor Larry and I to continue our full time ministry roles at the main location while we started the new work. The multi-site church plant arrangement provided a unique opportunity for me to experience church planting while remaining engaged in ongoing ministry at a healthy mother church. This experience sparked a fire within me for the potential of church planting. God began to awaken my heart to the calling to plant a church.
Originally from the east coast, I found my way to California to attend seminary. It made sense that I would be drawn to return to the east to plant a church. The spring of 2001 marked my graduation with a Master of Divinity and was an appropriate time to transition to the next ministry adventure. My wife, Kim, and I began to assemble a small church planting core team and began exploring locations on the East Coast. We knew we wanted to be in a growing area near an urban center. I was not from Philadelphia, but growing up I had visited my grandparents who lived in the area a number of times and had fond memories of the region. These memories prompted us to focus our attention in the Philadelphia region.

We did not know anyone nor did we have any connections in the city. We were acting on a simple prompting from the Lord to settle near Philadelphia. Researching a location for a church plant from 3,000 miles away is a challenge. We spoke to everyone we knew who had a connection back east. The small conversations and insights were enough to give us the courage to finalize the plans to launch a new church. The next question was, “where?” Philadelphia is a big city and the surrounding region was even expansive. Our prayer, “God, please lead us to the right place?”

The recommended next step would be to perform demographic studies of the region and pinpoint the location that has the most likelihood for success. Our next step was on a different path. I recalled the suggestion to look into community centers as a good starting location for a church plant. On that suggestion, I logged onto the internet and searched for community centers near Philadelphia. The first listing was for the Plymouth Community Center. The grand opening for the community center was just a few months early. The top ranking in the search engine was likely because of the
promotional energy behind the newly constructed facility and website. I jotted down the phone number, picked up the phone and called, “Do you rent meeting rooms?” They said, “Yes, it will be $25 per hour per room.” The price was so low that I immediately agreed, and just like that, without ever setting foot in Plymouth Meeting or entering the Plymouth Community Center, the location for our church plant was confirmed. This is definitely not the typical approach to deciding on a location, but it turned out to be a divine appointment for our team.

Plymouth Meeting was a divine opportunity, but also a spiritually dry place. Upon moving to the area and in speaking with area pastors I found out that among the clergy Plymouth Meeting had been nicknamed the graveyard of churches. Several church plants had started, but failed to establish an ongoing foothold. The soil was tough. This was an indicator that the community was in desperate need of a new work. We pressed on and opened the doors for Storehouse Church in the fall of 2001.

Our team was made up of seven people all in our twenties. My wife and I were the eldest, aged 26, and the only ones who were married. One of the team members was not a Christian at the time. Danny was a good friend and was looking for a fresh start and new adventure in life. True to form, a non-Christian core team member was not standard practice in church planting, but we knew that God’s prevenient grace was at work in his life. We walked with Danny and had the courage to trust God’s leading in his life. As Danny started a new job in the area and began to establish friendships with coworkers and neighbors it was clear how God was working through him. Danny connected with the unchurched in a way that removed obstacles and objections to faith. Several of the inaugural people to attend Storehouse came through an invitation from Danny. God was
at work through Danny. At the same time God was working within him. During one of our services, four months after we started the church, Danny surrendered his life to Jesus.

The first service of Storehouse Church was held on Sunday, September 23, 2001 in the Plymouth Community Center. By Christmas of that year the church moved to the Plymouth Elementary School where is grew to around 200 people in attendance. The fall of 2007 marked the transition from the elementary school to a larger auditorium at Colonial Middle School. All three locations are in Plymouth Meeting and within 2 miles of one another. Although the church first opened its doors in the local community center, the first attenders were not from the community, most lived in outside communities and commuted to the Sunday service. This is an example of the resistance that Plymouth Meeting tends to have toward outsiders.

Over time a positive reputation of our start up church would permeate into the Plymouth Meeting community. Neighbors began to drop their guard and attended our services. This was a good start, but our goal was to do more than simply hold a church service, we were committed to being a catalyst of change in the community. Our prayer was to be the church, not just do church. As Alan Hirsch challenged, “Church is not simply a building or a formal community meeting, it is who we are—a people who have been formed out of a direct encounter with God in Jesus Christ.”13 In order for Storehouse Church to impact the community it had to become much more than a church service. One of the benefits of starting a church in rental facilities is that it necessitates creative spaces to meet. This thrust the church into the community. Small groups met in

homes, but also in coffee shops and public spaces. Our people began to incarnate in the community. We were committed to being a church with out walls and experienced considerable fruit, but after a dozen years of rental facilities we began to realize that the absence of a permanent home was a bottleneck to our ministry. We began to raise funds and search for a church home. On January 2014 Storehouse Church purchased an existing church building nestled on eight acres located in the heart of Plymouth Meeting.

**Purchase of a Permanent Facility and the Corresponding Need to Clarify the Mission, Vision, and Values (2012 – Present)**

The move to a new facility was an exciting time as we celebrated the stability, consistency and convenience of a permanent facility. It also marked a turning point for many of our church family. The new facility was a major change from our grassroots beginning. The edgy church in a box culture of our church plant that drew young adults to travel from other communities weakened. Consequently, a number of the pioneers of our church began to transition to other places of worship near their home. Having a church building pressured the staff to provide a traditional set of ministries. We drifted toward an impersonal mission. As Peter Drucker points out, “A mission cannot be impersonal; it has to have deep meaning, be something you believe in—something you know is right. A fundamental responsibility of leadership is to make sure that everybody knows the mission, understands it, lives it.”

14 We fell into the trap of trying to please everybody in order to attract more people. The result was that we lacked clarity on the

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specific purpose of the church. Growth plateaued and frustration among the leadership team increased as we failed to pursue our mission.

The Theological Significance of Our Commitment to Make Disciples Who Are Characterized as “A Sent People”

This led the staff on a journey of clarifying the unique kingdom contribution of Storehouse Church. It was clear that our church needed to be more than an attractional destination. We had to reject the pressure to define success as, “growing bigger, collecting more resources, consolidating power, creating strong hierarchical structures and growing rapidly.”¹⁵ Instead, we recalled our history of incarnational ministry and committed to be a place that focused on mobilizing our members for incarnational ministry. We strengthened that commitment around four core values, “Jesus, Formation, Together, and Mission.”

We value Jesus and our true identity is found wholly in Him. There is nothing we can do to make Him love us more, there is nothing we can do to make Him love us less. We belong entirely to Him.

We value spiritual formation as the journey of becoming more like Jesus. We are works in progress. We are being made new daily by the Holy Spirit. We are not finished, but we are participating in God’s work in us to make us more like Him.

We value community and find that we are better together. We are adopted into the family of Christ. We are inextricably linked. We live, work, love and follow Jesus together.

We value participating in God’s work in this world. We have a purpose and a call on our lives. We are not consumers of God’s grace, but distributors of it. We are the last hope of a dying world and we have work to do.

The list of values culminates in the high calling of missional living. Our unique contribution was coming into focus. We committed to be more concerned about our ‘sending capacity’ than our ‘seating capacity’. We embraced a variation of the quote by Darrell Guder, “It’s not that the church has a mission, it’s that God’s mission has a church.”16 The culmination is to become ‘a sent people’. The phrase, “a sent people” is a theologically rich statement.

The “a” in a sent people is a singular declaration of unity. The two words, “a people” illustrates our identity in Christ. The Old Testament describes the Israelites as the People of God (Is 51:15, “You are my people.”) with a high calling to humility and prayer (2Chr 7:14, “If my people humble themselves and pray, …they will hear from heaven.”). The New Testament stands on this foundation with God’s affirmation that we are His people (2Cor 6:16, “I will be your God, and you will be my people,” cf. Ex 6:7; Jer 31:33; Ez 11:20). Further, 1 Peter 2:9 declares that we, “are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” “a people” is what we are in Christ and it is who we are becoming. We are being formed in the image of Christ as His people; sanctified and set apart for His purpose and glory (2Tim 2:20). Include the word sent and the phrase, “a sent people” is a description of those who share the same

characteristic of individual participation in the mission of God. It is the application of Jesus’ words in John 20:21, “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” The unique kingdom contribution of Storehouse church is to mobilize people to become ‘a sent people’ who are joining God in his mission in this world.

The Present State of Discipleship and Missional Activity

The primary expression of discipleship occurs through the community groups of the church. Group members choose from groups focused on Bible study, book study, and discussion questions based on the sermon. The community life offerings at the church also expand into men’s and women’s ministry, marriage and family resourcing, celebrate recovery, and affinity groups.

Small groups provide an important function within the life of the church, but with the renewed vision we knew that we had to put additional emphasis on that which worked to achieve our mission. Peter Drucker directs organizational leaders to think about the programs of the organization in terms of stewardship of talents, “Need alone does not justify continuing. Nor does tradition. You must match your mission, your concentration, and your results. Like the New Testament parable of the talents, your job is to invest your resources where the returns are manifold, where you can have success.”17 With that principle in mind we decided to elevate three ministries as the primary learning environments for the purpose of aligning our strategy of spiritual formation with our vision and values.

17 Drucker, The Five Most Important Questions, 54, Kindle.
The first is of the three learning environments is called “The Beginning.” The Beginning “is an intentional Bible study for new disciples of Christ” that “introduces the basic practices and elements of the faith, including the centrality of Christ, the crucial practice of prayer and Scripture reading, community, and what it means to be on mission for God.” The second elevated environment utilizes Pete Scazzero’s material, “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality” (EHS). EHS outlines a roadmap for discipleship that focuses on the individual’s inner journey of spiritual formation. The third is the focus of this doctoral project and scheduled to be titled the Sent Lab. The objective of the Sent Lab curriculum is to equip disciples to align their everyday life with the mission of Jesus in their workplace, neighborhood, and relationships.

Specific Challenges for Activating the Sent Nature among the Members of Storehouse Church

Now that the leadership of the church is aligned around the vision, values and strategy of becoming a sent people it is time to mobilize the congregation. Four challenges for the introduction and application of this material is, first, the compartmentalization of faith as evidenced by the sacred and secular divide. Second, the congregation made up of professionals, many with young children. They have busy schedules and the low priority of missional living. There is a reliance on programs over intentional relationships. The shift from church attendance to engaging in incarnational ministry is the third essential and challenging obstacle to activating the sent nature of the

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Compartmentalization of Faith as Evidenced by the Sacred-Secular Divide

The sacred-secular divide is the separation of the spiritual parts of life from the rest of life. The person divides their activities into two categories. Sacred activities like Bible study, prayer, and the usage of one’s spiritual gifts are reserved for sacred spaces, specifically during church services and activities. The remainder of their engagement with the world is kept separate and distinct from any spiritual activity. The sacred-secular divide is in opposition to the instruction of scripture and does damage to the individual’s faith by limiting their participation with God and deprives the world of a conduit of God’s grace (Mt 15:13-16). The sacred-secular divide leads to the compartmentalization of faith unconnected to work, money, relationships, and everyday activities.

Tim Keller describes the danger of the sacred-secular divide as having a dualistic application. He places the dual responses on a continuum with each extreme as dangerous as the other. One extreme necessitates that every action is done “overtly in his name.”19 A distinct Christian label must accompany every action that is done. According to Keller, “This kind of dualism comes both from a failure to see the panoramic scope of common grace and the subtle depths of human sin.”20 On the opposite end of the continuum is the barring of all sacred actions from secular life. In this form of dualism, the believer

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20 Ibid.
reserves spiritual activity for church services. This is the more common application of the sacred-secular divide. “Their Christian life is what they do on Sundays and weeknights, when they engage in spiritual activities. The rest of the week they have no ability to think circumspectly about the underlying values they are consuming and living out.”

In my experience, the majority of members of Storehouse Church are not functioning at either extreme. However, there are clear indicators of both influencing the lives of the people of the church. A handful of families hide in the first extreme. They only participate in that which is distinctively Christian and steer clear of anything that is tainted with a non-Christian influence.

Most drift toward a private faith that has little crossover on their weekly activities. Few, if any, would say that they are intentionally removing their faith outside of Sunday. More accurately, they struggle with how to integrate their faith in the context of their secular life experience. Keller writes, “While the first form of dualism fails to grasp the importance of what we have in common with the world, this form fails to grasp the importance of what is distinctive about the Christian worldview—namely, that the gospel reframes all things, not just religious things.” The sacred-secular divide limits their ability to be an active participant in God’s work in this world.

Busy Schedules and the Low Priority of Missional Living

The first challenge in activating a culture of missional living in the congregation is the sacred-secular divide. The second is tied to the first. Without a strong conviction

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21 Ibid., 196-197.

22 Ibid., 197.
that God is inviting believers to join him in his work in the world, the priority for
missional living is reduced or diminished. In addition, even with the best intentions the
fast-paced and full schedules of the suburban families force any missional activity into
the margins. The problem is that when missional activity is viewed as an additional
obligation and not integrated into the fabric of everyday life then it is easy to miss
opportunities. Missional living must not be relegated to a ministry program. It is not a
program. It is a way of living with faith as a filter for every occasion. It is a way to
approach the world believing that God is at work in every person, everywhere, every day.

This way of living must be taught, as it does not come naturally. The prevailing
current of society is to focus on what is necessary for earthly success. Missional living is
focusing on kingdom fruitfulness. The people of Storehouse display sincere hearts for the
Lord and have active expressions of faith. They are also fully immersed in the busy
world. Many have professional careers, young children, and active social lives. The
number and frequency of engagements is a constant strain on their schedule. The concept
of missional living is appealing, but the rigors of modern life make it difficult to, ‘add
one more thing to the calendar.’ There is little time for free time. As Peter Block points
out, ‘There is a particular isolation in the spaciousness and comfort of our suburbs. In
these neighborhoods we needed to invent the “play date” for our children. Interaction
among kids must be scheduled, much like a business meeting.’\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{23} Block, \textit{Community}, 4.
The realities of suburban life make it imperative that the training on missional living be done in a way that integrates it into the regular activity of the week and not as an extra obligation overlaid on an already overloaded schedule.

Reliance on Programs over Intentional Relationships

The New Testament word for the church is translated as the called out ones. It is a description of a people who live set apart for God’s purposes. The word church was never designed to describe a building or a set of programs. Unfortunately, the definition of the word church has been diluted. It is common for people feel that if they can just attend the right program at the church then they are accomplishing all that is necessary for the Christian life. Brad Brisco, the director of Bivocational Church Planting for the North American Mission Board, describes the intention of this thinking as a desire to go “to church to hear the Bible taught “correctly,” to participate in the Lord’s Supper and baptism and, in some cases, to experience church discipline.”

This approach to the church weakens the power of the church and limits the potential of the individual. As limited definition of the church permeates into the rhythm of the individual’s life the church is considered “a vendor of religious goods and services. From this perspective, members are viewed as customers, for whom religious goods and services are produced. Churchgoers expect the church to provide a wide range of religious services, such as great worship music, preaching, children’s programs, small groups, parenting seminars,

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and so on.” The danger is not with what the church is providing, the danger is that the work of the church is then limited to the location of the church building. In this way the church is seen to exist for the benefits of its members instead of the proper understanding of the church as a people called and sent by God to participate in his redemptive work in this world. A major shift is needed in the heart and mind of the church attender. The church is not the building. The church is not the Sunday service. The church is not the menu of ministry programs. The church is the people. The people need to gather in worship, but the gathering must be for the purpose of sending. Brisco says, “the difference is that we don’t simply gather for our own sake; instead for the sake of others or, better yet, for the sake of God’s mission. We come together as a collective body of followers of Jesus to be equipped through prayer, worship, and study and then to be sent out into the world. The church is to be a gathered and scattered people.”

The challenge with implementing a learning experience geared to mobilize people into ministry is compounded by the ‘church as a location’ mentality in our culture. One of the biggest obstacles to overcome in writing this training material is convincing a person that they are the church and their weekday activity is just as sacred as Sunday. Further the relationships outside of the church are an opportunity for strategic ministry. When you are engaged in these relationships you are the church at work in the world. This is not a

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
program of the church, but the church on mission with God. In this way we stand on the vision from John Wesley who said, “I look upon all the world as my parish.”

Insecurity in the Authority of Jesus for the Priesthood of Believers

The fourth obstacle in activating the sent nature of the believers at storehouse church is personal in nature. Every believer is part of the priesthood of believers. Not only are disciples invited to be recipients of God’s grace, but they are called to be distributors of it. The invitation to be a vessel through which God works is intimidating. It is hard for many to believe that God would use them in that way. In the church today many believers find themselves stuck in a consumerist stage of spiritual formation and never experience their fullness as disciples of Jesus. Alan Hirsch writes, “We cannot consume our way into discipleship; and yet consumerism has become the driving ideology of the church’s ministry.” This is as true today, in the modern church, as it was for the first disciples. When Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin for teaching the people about Jesus. The religious leaders were infuriated that these common men would stand in in public as one’s with spiritual authority: “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Peter later teaches in his pastoral epistle that followers of Jesus are “a royal priesthood” with all of the rights and authority that accompanies that title (1 Pt 2:9).

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In Matthew 28 Jesus declares the authority given to him as he transfers that authority to the disciples in the great commission. Christians have authority to do ministry because they are under the authority of Jesus. The key to understanding our authority in Christ is to understand what it means to come under his authority. In Matthew chapter nine Jesus has an encounter that gives great insight into the topic of authority. A centurion soldier approaches Jesus and pleads for Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus offers to go and heal him. The centurion does not feel worthy of a visit from Jesus and replies, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it” (Mt 8:8-9). His response is insightful. He says that he is a man under authority and as a result his soldiers obey him. Interesting that he did not say that he is a man with authority. Instead, he declares that he is under authority. By placing himself under authority he is declaring the source of his authority. The centurion is authorized to command soldiers by the authority of Rome. In the same way, the disciples have authority to do ministry by placing themselves under the authority of Jesus. Jesus has been given authority, and when believers come under his authority, they are an extension of it.

The members of Storehouse Church have an understanding of the theology behind the authority of Jesus and the priesthood of all believers. The challenge is to move past a theoretical understanding and apply it in their life. This requires confidence in the power of God to work through the individual. Unfortunately, many Christians claim the power of God over their life but live with a great deal of insecurity in God’s power to flow
through them. These insecurities limit them from activating their sent nature as an integrated part of their spiritual activity. The curriculum will equip the individual to understand the authority found in Christ and empower them to take simple next steps in activating their sent nature.

The challenges of the sacred-secular divide, busy schedules, reliance on church programs, and personal insecurity are obstacles that will be address in the training material and small group instructions.
PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

This project is guided by several resources that expound on the specific aspects of
the objective of creating a training resource that will equip the members of Storehouse
Church to activate their sent nature. In this chapter I will review six books that address
missional activity in the context of disciple making through the local church. The
Community of the King examines the relationship of the kingdom of God and the local
church. The Journey to the Common Good examines the shift from anxiety to
neighborliness. The Mission of God’s People is a study of God’s plan to direct his people
to bless the world. Free Methodist Bishop Matthew Thomas unpacks the courageous
activity of inviting someone to salvation in Living and Telling the Good News. The
Shaping of Things to Come presents a fresh perspective on the organization and
mobilization of the church. The Underground Church is the account of a multiplying
movement centered on missional activity.

**Missional Context: Join God in His Work in the World**

The first two books serve as a foundation for a missional context. Both supply a
breadth of information. Only the pertinent sections are noted in this review.
The local church is the sacred gathering of God’s people united around the mission of God in this world. Howard Snyder explains, “People and community together constitute what the New Testament means by *ekklesia*, the called-out and called-together church of God.”

His two-fold definition of the church (the called-out and called-together) is essential to the character and conduct of a follower of Jesus. The first part (called-out) is to identify as the people of God. The follower of Jesus is extracted from the world and listed as citizens of the kingdom of God. They are now part of the global, universal church, and grant allegiance to Christ in his rightful place as the head of the body. In this way, all Christians are united as the people of God, citizens of the kingdom of God. The second (called-together) involves commitment to participate in the unique contribution of a local church. It is God’s plan that every believer is part of a local community of God. Snyder insists that the church must function as a community of the King. It is comprised of a rhythm of being a people and a fellowship of people within a broader global and local context. “The two key elements here are the church as a people, a new race or humanity, and the church as a community or fellowship—the koinonia of the Holy Spirit.”

The two key elements that Snyder are significant for the thesis because they lay the foundation for the broad and reaching impact of the work of God around the world and also for the necessity of inclusion in the local community of believers. Both

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1 Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), Loc. 956, Kindle.

2 Ibid.
expressions are described as the church. This strikes an appropriate balance wherein every believer must identify with a local congregation and at the same time work in harmony with other churches. In the universal sense we are all on the same team. In the local sense we are expected to participate in the unique contribution of our local congregation.

Snyder is careful to separate the programs of the church from the people of the church. While programs are important, participation with the mission of God must not be limited to a list of church programs. Programs are helpful and often essential for the order and practice of the church, but they are not the full extent of the work of God. Snyder contrasts the church as institution against the kingdom of God. This is especially important as we function in a post-Christian culture that devalues the role of the institutional church. It presents a great opportunity for the people of God to embody the presence of God outside the boundaries of what is commonly described as the church.

Here the church becomes the visible and active expression of God in this world. Not dependent on buildings, the people of God are the hands and feet of Jesus. Snyder purposely speaks of “the church as the agent of the kingdom, rather than merely as a sign or symbol of the kingdom or as an inanimate tool in God’s hands. Agent comes from the Latin verb *agere*, ‘to act.’ It is an action word. God acts creatively and redemptively. His action involves ‘a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things’ in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:10 RSV).”

The community of the King is the active presence of God. Wherever good unfolds in the world, it is in partnership with the goodness of God. “The church does the

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3 Ibid, Loc. 96.
work of God, yet this continues to be, literally, the work of God. So the church in relation to God’s kingdom is not just an event; it is an act. More than a symbol, it is an agent.”

The church is an agent of God participating in His good work in this world. To categorize the good that unfolds is difficult as God’s work has enormous breadth. The Bible does not provide a comprehensive list of kingdom tasks, so Snyder introduces a fivefold test for determining what good works are part of God’s plan and conversely, which one’s fight against it. He summarizes this test by saying, “Wherever Christians are working in Jesus’ name for reconciliation and liberation in the world, working to mend the brokenness of the world and to heal the sickness caused by the Fall, and where such activity springs from Christian love and a true sense of Christian vocation, there God is at work and his kingdom is evident.”

The scope of this summary definition is refined by his fivefold test: “Christians are accomplishing God’s foreordained design whenever their works (1) spring from Christian love, (2) are based on obedience to the gospel and the stewardship of spiritual gifts, (3) are done in the name of Jesus, (4) work toward reconciliation, healing and beauty in the world, in whatever area, and (5) glorify the Father.”

The weakness of Snyder’s test is that it calls into question the motive of the individual in regard to their good works. This subjective judgment filters the good deeds through the heart and intent of the human who is performing them. In this way, Snyder’s test is helpful for discerning how to personally engage in missional activity, but it

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., Loc. 1167.

6 Ibid., Loc. 1167.
presents a limiting view of God’s activity in the world. There are numerous examples in Scripture of God working through individuals who have wrong or impure motives. God’s goodness benefits from but is not dependent on human goodness. God is at work in this world and, at times and according to His divine wisdom, will leverage the brokenness within the world for His holy purpose. From this perspective, Snyder’s test cannot be used to identify all of God’s good works; instead, it is a valuable tool to evaluate our motives behind the kingdom tasks that we engage.

Clearly the main thesis of Snyder’s work is not to limit God but to highlight the importance of the people of God, both universal and local, in the movement of God through the community of the King. For this reason, this book is a helpful guide to understanding the believer’s part in the mission of God in this world.

*Journey to the Common Good* by Walter Brueggemann

The second book in this section tackles the crucial aspect of trusting God in the midst of all forms of uncertainty. *Journey to the Common Good* presents a shift in mindset from anxiety and scarcity to trust and generosity. In the Western Church there is a tendency to focus on our immediate needs and expend energy to receive all that we are entitled to receive. Brueggemann describes this as a scarcity mentality and observes that the power of scarcity is experienced primarily through entitled consumerism, “in which we imagine that something more will make us more comfortable, safer and happier.”

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This insatiable desire for more is described as consumerism in the local church. When a person inflicted with consumerism participates in the local church, they become a limiting factor to the kingdom impact of the church. The focus is on them. They desire their needs to be met and exist in a state of anxiety and self-preservation. Brueggemann describes this consumerism as the roadblock to the common good. The answer is to rise above the mindset of anxiety and fear. He provides insight and application through the account of the exodus story. The comparison of the Israelites moving from slavery to freedom illustrates that people “living in a system of anxiety and fear have no time for the common good.” A generation of Israelites were raised in a context of slavery. They could not understand true freedom. They dreamed about it, but had never experienced it. Consequently, when Moses led the people to freedom they were still trapped in the anxious cycle of self-centeredness and fear. They could not experience the fullness of God through them, because of the consumerism that plagued them. In the same way a new believer must navigate this journey from anxiety and fear to true freedom in Christ. The conversion experience begins with repentance from sin and a reliance on the grace of God for salvation. In a way, the new believer is a consumer. However, as the redemptive work of God unfolds, the individual journey transitions from a recipient to a vessel of God’s grace. If a person does not mature beyond their initial need to receive from God, then they can become stuck in the limiting pattern of demanding that God provide them more comfort, safety, and happiness. All good things, but when they masquerade as the source of peace they are damaging to the journey of spiritual formation. This pattern is defined by a system of fear, anxiety, and greed. These systems channel all attention back to the individual at the expense of the common good. The answer, according to
Brueggemann, is generosity: “An immense act of generosity is required in order to break the death grip of the system of fear, anxiety, and greed.”

God is the example of immense generosity. He is the provider and sustainer of all that is needed for life and ministry. His grace sets us free. The Israelites experienced this first through the exodus and subsequently through the provision of God in the wilderness. “Those who are living in anxiety and fear, most especially fear of scarcity, have no time or energy for the common good.” Fear and anxiety is relieved by casting it upon Him (1 Pt 5:7). This required a process of getting their minds off of themselves and on to the common good. It is only through reliance on God that the scarcity mentality can be broken and repurposed toward others. The Israelites realized this in response to the Mount Sinai covenant. “They discovered at Mount Sinai that they could give energy to the neighborhood because the grip of scarcity had been broken by God’s abundance.”

The journey to the common good is realized first in the strength of God. When there is confidence that God is the sustainer and provider then there is freedom to serve others from that solid foundation.

Confidence in the sufficiency of God is important to this project because the objective of ‘the Sent Lab’ is to mobilize believers to join God in His work in this world. This can only be accomplished when consumerism is defeated through confidence in the provision of God. Anxiety, fear, and greed are the roadblock to the common good. Only when a person functions from a place of generosity are they able to engage in the fullness

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8 Ibid., 28.
9 Ibid., 7.
10 Ibid., 22.
of the mission of God. First, they must recognize and find peace in the generosity of God and, second, they must orient their life as a vessel of God’s generosity toward others. As Brueggemann points out, Generosity is the answer.

**Missional Activity: Activating Disciples to Follow Jesus into the World**

*The Mission of God’s People* by Christopher Wright

*The Mission of God’s People* provides a comprehensive study of the people who make up the mission of God. It is a description of the people of God sent in partnership with the mission of God. The book begins with the grand question, “What does the Bible as a whole in both testaments have to tell us about why the people of God exist and what it is they are supposed to be and do in the world?”

This question invokes the narrative of Scripture as the guide. The Bible is a story of our missionary God who invites His people to join Him in His redemptive work. Understanding the biblical narrative is important for believers because it provides the proper context for our missional activity. The people of God are on mission with God. The word mission, according to Wright, refers to everything that God and His people are called to be and do in this world. He states it this way: “So when I speak of *mission*, I am thinking of all that God is doing in his great purpose for the whole of creation and all that he calls us to do in cooperation with that purpose.”

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12 Ibid., 25.
releases every person to be actively engaged in the mission of God in every aspect of daily life.

The early chapters deal with the characteristics of missional people. Chapter two builds on the first by urging believers to identify themselves with the story of God. Wright illustrates the biblical narrative with a four part timeline, (1) Creation (2) Fall (3) Redemption in History (4) New Creation, and challenges the reader to describe it as God’s own mission and then to engage with their part of the mission. Specifically participating in “its last great act, as God’s co-workers (1 Cor. 3:9).”

The next six chapters dive further into the characteristics of missional people. Chapter three elevates the Biblical standard for creation care. Chapter four addresses ethics and Christian living. His primary illustration in this chapter is that of a person walking on a path. One way to walk in the path is to follow someone’s footsteps. This illustrates the value of imitating God’s example. Or as the apostle Paul said, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). A second way is to walk in the path in response to the instruction provided. In this way, a person would read a map and then set out on the journey relying on the step by step guide. This application highlights the need for obeying God’s commands in obedience-based discipleship. Jesus said, “Teach them to obey all that I have commanded” (Mt 28:20). Both applications have value for the people of God. The subsequent chapters in the first half of the book provide similar application to the individual’s spiritual formation. The second half of the book focuses on the tasks that God calls His people to do, specifically to become a people who bear witness to the

13 Ibid., 47.
living God and proclaim the gospel of Christ. The gospel is the central and defining characteristic of a people who are sent. “Our whole gospel, then, must be drawn from the deep well of the whole Bible, and our mission must be integrated accordingly around its great and resonant narrative of saving grace.”14 God’s people bear witness the gospel, personal experience, then proclaim the good news for all creation. The witness and proclamation of the gospel is central to the curriculum I have developed for this project. The first half of the curriculum focuses on the student’s understanding and application of the grace of God in their own life. The second half challenges the student to deepen their faith experience by becoming an agent of gospel proclamation.

The concluding chapter of this section of the book is the most powerful and profound. Titled “People Who Praise and Pray,” chapter fourteen highlights the importance of missional praise and missional prayer in the activation of one’s sent nature. Often the conversation around missional living is centered on the individual’s action of participating in God’s work in this world. Activating faith is important and essential to missional living. However, there is often neglect of the source of spiritual power. God is the missionary. He is at work in this world. The people of God join God in His work. The primary conduit is a robust practice of praise and prayer. This is what empowers His people to be a blessing to the nations and victorious in spiritual warfare. Wright argues, and I agree, that worship is the goal of mission. In his words, “The goal of all human life is to love, worship, glorify and enjoy God,” and “The mission of God, therefore, is that dynamic divine love that drives God to seek the ultimate well-being and blessing of

14 Ibid., 199.
human beings by bringing them into a relationship with himself in which they love, worship, and glorify him, and find their greatest joy in doing so. So also the mission of God’s people is to be agents of that redemptive love of God.”¹⁵ This must be the source and motive of the missional activity of God’s people. It is from a place of deep dependency on the sufficiency of Christ that the people of God can be sent into the harvest field to proclaim the gospel.

*Living and Telling the Good News* by Matthew Thomas

Evangelism has taken on many forms in the history of the church. Many forms are fruitful, some rotten, still others offer a mixed bag. Thousands, even millions, of people since the time of Christ have heard the gospel through large group gospel presentations. Over three thousand people surrendered to Christ following Peter’s sermon in Acts chapter two. Large gatherings for worship, preaching, and evangelism, led by people such as George Whitfield and Billy Graham, have been effective over the years. Yet even with the large crowds and overflowing altar calls the most effective form of evangelism is not found in a big tent; the most effective form of evangelism comes in the form of one person bearing witness to Christ and sharing the good news with their neighbor. In *Living and Telling the Good News*, Bishop Matthew Thomas provides a concise guide to personal evangelism. The book does not start with tricks and tips, key verses, or persuasive salvation illustrations; instead it starts with the importance of knowing Jesus in a deeply personal way. “We must know what good news is to share it. It is only the

¹⁵ Ibid., 244-245.
person who has received grace and knows it who can tell the story of grace.”\textsuperscript{16} The gospel is a story of grace, God’s grace that is extended to all people. Thomas explains that the good news has everything to do with grace. It is the grace of God that is the motivation for sharing the gospel. Once someone has experienced it, they cannot help but to share it. Grace is received in the context of love. Thomas uses two illustrations to capture the depth and power of God’s love. First, it is like a deep well with pure and uncontaminated water. When a person draws from this well, they are sustained, needing nothing else. The source is God. The second illustration builds on the first by highlighting a flowing river where the source of the river is higher than the river itself. “The source of holy love is always higher than the person who channels it to others.”\textsuperscript{17} In both cases the point is that love is outside of our own thoughts, feelings, or actions. God is love and love comes from God. In order to know perfect love, we must know God. We experience this only by His grace.

The grace of God is the source of salvation. This is important because it puts us in the proper place of being a vessel, not the source. An effective evangelist is first a recipient of the grace of God and then they share what they have received from the source. Thomas anchors this point in the personal story of the loss of his son, Mitchel. The source of love and the extension of grace is often realized during a season of pain. Not that God causes the pain, but that people are more open to experiencing His grace.

\textsuperscript{16} Matthew Thomas, \textit{Living and Telling the Good News} (Indianapolis: Free Methodist Church, 2018), 38.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 17.
and love when they are suffering. C.S. Lewis said, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”\(^\text{18}\) The point that Bishop Thomas is making is that we will know God more fully as we receive from His grace in love during our suffering and, subsequently, as we look for opportunities to share the gospel, we must be aware that when people are suffering they are more receptive to look outside of themselves and their circumstances for help. True help comes from God.

The emphasis on personal experience is crucial to this project as it centers all missional activity around the source. A personal encounter and ongoing relationship with Jesus is the means, motive, and method of missional activity. There are volumes of how-to books on evangelism and missional activity, and there is a place for best practices and practical application. However, the key to fruitful implementation is an unwavering commitment to the source. Knowing God is paramount and is a crucial component of this project’s Sent Lab curriculum.

Following a poignant look at the nature and character of God, Thomas describes the type of person who is effective at sharing the gospel. This person, as stated earlier, knows God personally and is dependent on Him. Further, they are a person who is curious, asks questions, and is a good listener. Thomas asks the question, “Who are the best ‘tellers’ of the good news of Christ? Those who are genuinely interested in the story, plight, circumstance, relationships and dilemmas of their audience.”\(^\text{19}\)

\(^\text{18}\) This quote originates from *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis, and has become widely used in sermons and various online sources. I read the quote at http://www.cslewis.com/the-problem-of-pain/.

\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., 44.
that the motivation for evangelism is born out of a personal relationship with Jesus, the method of evangelism is rooted in a genuine and personal concern for the individual. With attentiveness to the needs of others, there is ample opportunity to share the good news. The simple, yet powerful move is to share what from personal experience. This does not require extensive training or expertise in apologetics. In fact, Thomas recommends that it is better to not engage in a didactic approach, but instead to openly share from personal experience with Jesus. Personal testimony carries the message in the context of relationship with a genuine concern for the individual.

**Implementation of Missional Activity in the Local Church**

*The Shaping of Things to Come* by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch

The stated intent of *The Shaping of Things to Come* is to call the church to return to its true self and “to see itself again as a missionary movement rather than an institution.”\(^{20}\) The book has served as a prophetic call for the church to adjust to new paradigms of ministry that reflect modern cultural realities. Foundational to becoming a missional movement is the understanding that God is a missional God. “God is a sending god, with a desire to see humankind and creation reconciled, redeemed, and healed.”\(^{21}\) The people of God are invited to join God in His mission. During the apostolic and post-apostolic mode (32 to 313 AD) of the church, the mission was accomplished through incarnational ministry with believers often meeting in homes and public spaces. As


\(^{21}\) Ibid., 34.
christendom (313 to current) advanced, the ministry shifted to gathering people in buildings as the central expression of worship. The authors now call the church beyond post-christendom and into the emerging and missional mode of the church. The call forward is actually a call to return to the methods of the apostolic mode of the church. They detail three essential attributes of the missional church.

The first is incarnational ecclesiology. The nature and structure of the church must move into the fabric of everyday life. Establishing a sacred and sanctified space as the primary method of ministry is supplanted by the distribution of the church through incarnational ministry. The people must orient themselves toward the mission of God. As Hirsch describes it, “Don’t think church, think mission.”

The second attribute of the missional church is messianic spirituality. This approach intends to bridge the sacred/secular divide with a Christian spirituality broad enough to encompass engagement and action. In this mode the individual becomes the fragrance of Christ in the world and invokes curiosity and wonder as they share their personal experience with their savior. The theological foundation is the priesthood of all believers where every follower of Jesus becomes “salt and light” (Mt 5:13-16). The third approach is an Apostolic Leadership model built upon the APEST model from Ephesians chapter four. Frost and Hirsch argue that it abandons the hierarchies of the traditional church and embraces a leadership matrix that provides a level playing field for apostleship, prophecy, and evangelism, as well as the more common leadership expressions, shepherding and teaching.

22 Ibid., 106.
The three-part framework (Incarnational Ecclesiology, Messianic Spirituality, Apostolic Leadership) provides a helpful focus for the alignment of the church around the mission of God. Each attribute within the framework has significance for the future of the church. Most pertinent to this project is the section on center set theology as this captures both the active presence of God and the posture of his people who join Him in His work in this world. The break from bound-set theology represents a turn from an in vs. out approach to ministry. With center-set theology the mission of the church is to walk with people as they journey toward holiness of heart and life. “Churches that see themselves as a centered set recognize that the gospel is so precious, so refreshing that, like a well in the Australian Outback, lovers of Christ will not stray too far from it.” 23 This nourishment of Christ captures their heart and draws people to Himself. “Rather than seeing people as Christian or non-Christian, as in or out, we would see people by their degree of distance from the center, Christ. In this way, the missional-incarnational church sees people as Christian and not-yet-Christian.” 24 The faith to see every person who is far from God as ‘not-yet-Christian’ demonstrates a confidence in the supernatural working of the grace of God that is drawing all people unto Himself.

In our denomination we acknowledge that center set theology overlays with the theology of the prevenient grace of God. This positions the church with a contagious optimism that God is certainly at work at all times and in all places. It invites the church to join others as they draw near to Jesus. This drawing nearer to Christ begins far before a

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23 Hirsch., 68.

24 Ibid., 68.
personal relationship with Jesus is established. Its genesis is in the grace of God at work in all the circumstances of an individual’s life. The mission of the church is to discern how God is at work and join Him there. In this way, every person is invited to be part of the church as we all are moving closer to fullness in Christ. Some are nearer, others are farther away. With center-set theology all are welcome to participate in the community of the church. The contrast is that “In bound-set churches all sorts of criteria are determined for the acceptance or rejection of the prospective members.”25 This limits the ministry of the church to the select group of people who have met the criteria established by the bound-set. This difference of approach impacts every aspect of ministry strategy and implementation. Most notably, Hirsch points out, it impacts the methods of evangelism. For bound-set churches the evangelist is the expert and the lost person needs to be persuaded to sign on and profess belief to become part of the team. In the center-set approach each person has God-given ability to seek for the truth. The goal is to guide a person on a process of discovering more and more of Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit’s prevenient grace.26 This foundational difference in philosophy is foundational to the effectiveness of the missional church. Recognizing the individual and life-long journey of drawing closer and closer to Christ frees the church to minister to every person whether or not they gather in the sacred space on a Sunday morning.

25 Ibid., 70.

26 Ibid., 71.
Underground Church by Brian Sanders

Brian Sanders is a disrupter with a prophetic voice backed by action. Underground Church is an account of a missional work that has harnessed the empowerment of the people of God for the mission of God. The book begins with Sanders’s journey of establishing the Underground. He and his team boldly asked difficult questions about the strategy and structure of the typical Western church. They desired to identify steps of faith that would extend beyond attending services, passing out bulletins, or pointing cars to a parking space. They had a hunger for more. This hunger took them to the Philippines where they lived with indigenous pastors and learned from their example. “In the end, we did not choose to leave behind traditional forms of church simply because we were frustrated (although at times we were). We left because we were alive with the hope of the kingdom of God at work in and through the people of God. We were not seeing this hope in the churches we attended, even though we played by the rules.”

The question of ecclesial minimum emerged. What constitutes a church? The Underground answers that question with three words: worship, community, and mission. “What makes a group of people a church is that they worship together, are committed to each other, and undertake mission together.” This minimal definition frees the Underground to mobilize hundreds of individuals to start churches of all shapes, sizes, and varieties. This is significant because they changed the common measurables for a successful church from counting attendance to mobilizing missionaries. Most churches

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27 Brian Sanders, *Underground Church: A Living Example of the Church in its Most Potent Form* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 33, Kindle.

28 Ibid., 34.
agree with the principle of the priesthood of all believers, but at Tampa Underground the mobilization of said priesthood is their core strategy. Tampa Underground functions primarily as a ministry mobilization center.

The first distinctive of the Tampa Underground is their commitment to a simple structure coupled with a focused mission. Their ecclesial minimum grants permission for new works to form with great efficiency. A second distinctive is their commitment to minister to the poor. Sanders refers to Jesus reading from Isaiah 61 at the start of his ministry. The target of Jesus’s proclamation of the gospel is the poor. “For us, that primarily means the materially poor, but whatever you make of the meaning of the phrase ‘good news to the poor,’ its prominence in the life and ministry of Jesus is clear.”

Prioritizing the poor is essential to the good news. Those who recognize their material needs are often quicker to acknowledge their spiritual need. There is a true hunger for the provision of God. In this way the ministry to the poor brings intimacy with Jesus and vibrancy to the worship gatherings. A third distinctive is related to the first, but focused on the people who would call the Underground their church home. “We dreamed of a church where everyone was engaged—not just a select few. We dreamed of a church of missionaries—not isolated or formalized, but deeply in love with Jesus and equally as connected to each other.”

With a clear foundation for a different approach to church, the Underground detailed their framework for ministry in their Manifesto. The Manifesto is a summary of their values and articulates their desire for the church. The corporate worship

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29 Ibid., 45.

30 Ibid., 46-47.
services are designed with missionaries in mind. They purposefully chose to describe the people as missionaries because it is the Latin translation of the phrase ‘sent ones,’ which is also translated in Greek as apostles.\(^{31}\) Every member of the church is a missionary and is expected to participate in the work of God in the world as His ‘sent ones.’

This radical shift in the structure and framework of the church prompted an expanding movement of people actively engaged in significant ministry. The movement is accelerated by the expectation that the role of the staff is to equip and release missionaries. This represents a major shift, according to Sanders, where the staff are not expected to serve the needs of uncommitted Christians, but instead to release missionaries to serve the unbelieving world.\(^{32}\) The Tampa Underground disrupts the common strategies found in most churches today. Although most churches will not shift their structure to match the rhythm of the Underground, they would do well to rethink some of their practices to follow the example of this church as they lead the way in activating the sent nature and sending people into the harvest field.

**Summary**

These resources capture a thorough understanding of the essential components of activating missional discipleship in the context of the local church. The overarching theme of the literature is that the foundation of missional activity is a central characteristic of God. From that foundation the response from the individual combined

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 56.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 67.
with the ecclesiology of the local church plays a significant role in activating missional movement. The dynamics between God, the disciple, and the practice of the local church are linked together through the literature. These themes will be further developed in the subsequent chapters and curriculum implementation portion of the project.
CHAPTER 3:

A THEOLOGY FOR ACTIVATING THE SENT NATURE OF DISCIPLES

Chapter three presents a biblical and theological foundation for activating the sent nature of disciples following the example of Jesus and in participation with the three-fold grace of God. The biblical backdrop for this chapter is found in the words of Jesus on the evening of the resurrection where Jesus met with his disciples, saying, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20:21). Jesus clearly stated that he was sent to the earth by the Father. His disciples are to look to the sent nature of Jesus as a way of understanding how they are sent in ministry. This chapter answers the questions, “How was Jesus sent?” and subsequently, “How are his disciples sent?”

This chapter first looks to the example of the earthly ministry of Jesus followed by his ongoing and continual ministry as evidenced in the three-fold grace of God. The chapter concludes with specific application, from the example of Jesus, for the life and ministry of his disciples. The example of the Father sending his son is the standard for disciples today. A disciple is a person who has placed their trust in Jesus and strives to obey everything he has commanded (Mt 28:20).

The context of joining God on his mission is best understood through the Wesleyan theology of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. The disciple must be
trained to engage with the *missio Dei* in the world. The biblical foundation and theological framework explored in this section set the stage for the praxis in the curriculum that has been developed in this project.

**The Example of Jesus as the One Who Was Sent**

The Gospel of John records the tense scene on the evening of the day of Jesus’s resurrection (Jn 20:19-23). The disciples were together behind locked doors. The biblical narrative does not provide an account of the emotions of the disciples, but they may have been confused by the recent events. They were together, trying to make sense of the death, resurrection, and subsequent appearances of Jesus. They feared the religious rulers and they did not know what to do next. John 20:21 finds them huddled together, waiting. While the disciples were together, Jesus appeared. It is not clear how; the doors were locked. The Scripture simply says that he came and stood among them. Unexpectedly, he was standing there. He was in the flesh, not a vision or an aberration, but physically present with them. The next ten words that Jesus shared gave both clarity and a calling.

The event of the resurrection changed the course of history, but what Jesus said to the disciples on the evening after the resurrection established the baseline of activity for the twelve disciples and the future church. Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20:21b). This statement raises the question, “How did the Father send Jesus?” The answer to that question provides the direction for the disciples of Jesus as they are sent in the same way that Jesus was sent.

The ministry of Jesus was so extensive that the author of John’s Gospel concluded, “If every one of them [the things Jesus did] were written down, I suppose that
even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (Jn 21:25). With that being the case, how can the sending of Jesus be captured and categorized in a succinct and practical way? While there are many ways to understand the ministry of Jesus, this project focuses on the aspects of his ministry related to ministry activation, gospel-sharing, disciple-making, and church formation.

Sent Among the People (Jn 1:14)

The first category that captures how the Father sent Jesus is that Jesus was sent among the people. The heart of God is expressed with His willingness to send His son into this world: “For God so loved the world that He sent His son” (Jn 3:16). The heart of Jesus is displayed in his willingness to submit to the sending by the Father: “He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself” (Phil 2:7-8a). Jesus chose to dwell on this earth as a human. The theological term for Jesus’s appearance as a man, in the flesh, is incarnation. The incarnation is the profound example of humility and sacrificial love. Alan Hirsch writes, “When we speak of Jesus as the incarnation, we are agreeing with John’s statement that Jesus was the Word of God made into flesh (John 1:14).”¹ One of the names of Jesus illustrates his nearness to the people: “they will call him Immanuel—which means ‘God with us’” (Mt 1:23). The nearness of God can be described in terms of proximity. He literally lived near the people. He grew up in a family, engaged in commerce, walked on the streets, and spent time in the town square.

Eugene Peterson translates John 1:14 (The Message) as “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.” Jesus became our neighbor. The incarnation is his example of being near to people. He could have remained in heaven, but he chose to be with us. He chose to spend time with people who were far from God. He spent time with prostitutes, tax collectors, the sick and marginalized. He walked the dusty streets and took notice when someone touched his cloak. He brought children to his side. He graced weddings and funerals. His ministry was among the people.

Beyond mere proximity, Jesus was also present—he modeled care, concern, and compassion. He was physically close, but he was also emotionally close. This is evidenced through his weeping upon hearing of Lazarus’s death (Jn 11:35) combined with many tender moments where he stopped to meet the needs of the people. One example is when a socially outcast leper approached Jesus for healing. Jesus granted the healing, but only after kneeling down, reaching out his hand, and touching the man (Mt 8:3). The leper desired healing, but Jesus knew that he also needed the touch from him. Jesus’s example of presence is important because it illustrates his deep love for all people. Jesus was sent among the people. His presence among the people illustrates his love for all people. He chose to be present. Eric Jacobson writes about his work with Young Life and their strategic priority of the ministry of presence. He writes, “Young Life workers do a lot of ‘contact work,’ which means that they are at the high schools, at the sporting events, and at the malls, getting to know young people and building
relationships with them.”

The Young Life worker’s presence makes a profound statement. Their action says that they care enough to get out of their office and meet the student on the student’s turf. The incarnation made the same profound statement. “God was not content to remain far off and beckon us to come to him; he entered into our world and became one of us as a way to communicate his love. He not only came to us, but he dwelt among us. He lived his life in our midst and shared everyday activities with ordinary people.” Presence has a two-fold impact. First, he was physically with them, which communicates that they are a priority. Second, his presence illustrates that he is not just with them, but for them. Hirsch is an advocate for the power of presence, saying that “presence provokes interest in God, spirituality, and the gospel.”

When Jesus stepped out of heaven and appeared as a human, his proximity made a bold statement, but his presence resulted in broad impact. Hirsch writes, “Jesus lived among us. He ate, drank, dressed, worked, sweat, took vacations…he did it all. He wove his own life into the fabric of the community and engaged its humanness at the most basic levels. And he did it for thirty years before he ever even ‘went public’ with his ministry.” In this way the incarnation is deeply personal. Jesus closes the gap between heaven and earth by walking among the people, both in proximity and through a ministry of presence. How did the

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3 Ibid, 82.


5 Hirsch, Right Here, Right Now, 223, Kindle.
Father send Jesus? He sent Him among the people.

Sent with the Gospel (Lk 4:43)

The proximity and presence of Jesus is a sacred gift. It is more than humanity deserves. Afterall, his presence alone will overwhelm our hearts for all eternity in heaven. Yet Jesus came to earth with a greater purpose. The author of Luke records the poignant moment when Jesus first declares his purpose. The moment occurred in the synagogue where Jesus walks to the front of the room, unrolls the sacred scroll, and reads the messianic prophecy from Isaiah 61 (Lk 4:16-21). Following the reading of the Scripture, Luke reports that Jesus “rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him” (Lk 4:20). He then makes this bold declaration: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21)

The word that Jesus claims to have fulfilled was a well-known and treasured passage by the Jews. The original context was to promise the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon. However, many understood that the prophecy spoke also of the coming messiah who would usher in the favor of God for His people. The passage is structured under the Hebrew verb shalach which is translated, “He has sent me.” Isaiah 61 contains no less than five redemptive acts of the messiah.

He has sent me,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion –
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. (Is 61:1b-3b)

The redemptive acts of the sent one rest just under the anointing of the one who will “preach good news to the poor” (Is 61:1a). It was in this very public setting Jesus
makes it clear he was sent with the gospel. Later Jesus affirms his purpose by saying, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Lk 4:43).

Jesus not only proclaimed the gospel; he is the embodiment of the gospel. The gospel culminates in atonement for sin through Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross. Jesus came with the gospel and he is the gospel. How did the Father send Jesus? He sent Him among the people and with the gospel.

**Sent to Make Disciples (Mt 4:19)**

The third category from the example of Jesus is a reflection of the primary actions during his earthly ministry. Our Lord made disciples. The most common understanding of the disciples of Jesus are the twelve listed in Luke 6:12, but other passages describe additional disciples of Jesus. Luke 6:12 notes that there was a large crowd of Jesus’s disciples, and in Luke 10:10 Jesus appoints and sends seventy-two disciples into the harvest field. For this paper, I will refer to the twelve when I describe the disciples, but the principles apply to a broader definition of disciple as well. The twelve were unlikely candidates for formal ministry. He chose unschooled, ordinary men to follow him into the harvest field (Mt 4:19; Acts 4:13). He called his disciples with a clear invitation and high calling. Jesus clearly called Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him. Immediately they left their nets, boat, and father behind (Mt 4:19, 22). Matthew responded by leaving his tax collecting business. The most poignant description of the high calling from Jesus is found in Luke 9:23: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”
Jesus also had an expectation of application from his disciples. His disciples were to be more than learners. Although learner is one definition of a disciple, Jesus modeled that true learning includes application of what is taught. The method that Jesus used to bring his disciples to a place of application began with him modeling ministry. During this stage of learning, the disciples largely observed Jesus as he modeled the ministry of preaching the gospel, healing the sick, and proclaiming freedom. In time, Jesus invited the disciples to assist him in ministry. In this stage, they were participating in the moment, while still serving in a supporting role to Jesus’s leadership. In Luke 10, the disciples were sent out two by two to engage in active ministry. In this stage they are applying what was taught in a leadership role. Upon their return, Jesus gathered them together, listened to their experience, and provided coaching (Lk 10:17-23).

The four Gospel accounts of Jesus all include the making of disciples by Jesus. It is impossible to read the narrative of the New Testament apart from Jesus’s specific example of disciple making. Jesus made disciples with a clear invitation and high calling to follow him. He guided them with an expectation of applying what they learned. How did the Father send Jesus? He sent Him among the people, with the gospel, and to make disciples.

Sent to Build His Church (Mt 16:18)

The fourth observation from the example of Jesus is that he came to build his church. In Matthew 16, Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ and in response Jesus promised to build his church. The work of Jesus is realized in his building of the church. Jesus is the head of the church. The definition of Jesus as the head can be read, rightly so,
as a position of authority. Jesus is the head as he sits at the top. The church submits to his authority and flourishes under his authority. A complimentary definition of the word head is that Jesus is also the source. An example of this is the head of a river. The technical term is the headwater source as it describes the originating and primary source of the water flowing into the river. In the same way, Jesus is the head of the church, the originating and primary source of the living water that supplies the church. The church is built as it gathers under the authority of Jesus. The church is nourished as it receives from its source. Jesus is the head of the church.

The apostle Peter describes the church, saying believers, “like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood” (1 Pt 2:5). The ministry of Jesus extends through the building of his church. Ed Stetzer notes, “Jesus doesn’t build His church despite His disciples, but through His disciples as they are led by His commands and empowered by His Spirit.”6 Jesus builds his church as his disciples gather as the church. The work of Jesus is to build. The building of the church began during Jesus’s earthly ministry but culminated at Pentecost in response to the coming of the Holy Spirit and the response to the proclamation of the gospel: “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41). The responsibility of disciples of Jesus is to gather as the church. Jesus promises that he is present when two or three believers are gathered together (Mt 18:20). Acts 2:42-48 describes the attributes of the gathered church in its earliest form. The building of the church was accelerated on that day and the building continues today. How did the

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Father send Jesus? He sent Him among the people, with the gospel, to make disciples, and to build his church.

Section Summary

John’s account of the first post-resurrection appearance of Jesus among the group of disciples records Jesus as saying, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20:21). This section organized the sending of Jesus into four major categories. Jesus was sent among the people, with the gospel, to make disciples, and to build his church. These four categories are strengthened by the example of Jesus who also modeled great dependence upon the Father. He said, “the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing” (Jn 5:19b). Jesus modeled a strong and vibrant relationship with God the Father. In his deity he was one with the Father, yet in his humanity he was entirely dependent to draw strength from the Father. The praxis section of this project rests upon dependence on God as the primary application of Jesus’s example.

The ministry of Jesus as organized around these four categories is being used widely around the world in disciple-making movements. They are often described as the four fields of ministry. The first published account of the four fields (although not specifically mentioned as such) is Ying Kai’s church planting model in the book *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution.* Following that work, a training manual was compiled by

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Nathan and Kari Shank titled “Four Fields of Kingdom Growth: Starting and Releasing Healthy Churches.”\(^8\) The manual is produced as an open-source resource that has been broadly distributed. The language in the manual is focused on training church planters to develop reproducible strategies (1. Entry Strategy 2. Gospel Presentation 3. Discipleship and 4. Church Formation). There are intentional parallels with this section and the four fields material; however, the four fields materials prescribe ministry strategies and do not address the example of Jesus from John 20:21.

**Free Methodist Theology of God’s Active Grace in this World**

The four categories of Jesus’s earthly ministry provide a robust example for ministry today. God continues His work through His grace as it is extended to all people. Grace is the unmerited favor of God. There are many aspects of God’s grace. This section highlights three functions of God’s grace as they relate to an individual’s relationship with God and ongoing spiritual formation. The Free Methodist Church defines this three-fold function of God’s grace with the terms prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace.

God’s prevenient grace draws people who do not know Him to Himself. Justifying grace provides for salvation. And sanctifying grace enables ongoing spiritual formation of the believer. The understanding of the life-long application of the three-fold grace of God sets the foundation for our belief that God is at work, in one way or another,

in the life of every person on earth. This section examines the theological implications of God’s prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace.

The Prevenient Grace Of God Drawing People to Himself.

Prevenient grace is the grace of God that is applied to every person prior to salvation. It extends far and wide. According to John Wesley it includes, “all the ‘drawings’ of ‘the Father,’ the desires after God…that ‘light’ wherewith the Son of God ‘enlighteneth’ everyone that cometh into the world; all the convictions which his Spirit from time to time works in every child of man.”

The Free Methodist Book of Discipline explains, “Through prevenient grace God seeks to bring every individual to himself.”

The prevenient grace of God is drawing all people to Himself. It is the initiative of God to pursue a relationship with His creation. We need God to take the initiative because in our fallen state we are unable to turn to God in our own strength. We have the freedom to respond to God’s invitation with acceptance or denial of His love. Prevenient grace is evident throughout Scripture, including John 3:16 that declares Jesus was sent to save the whole world, and John 6:44 where Jesus says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them.”

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The Justifying Grace of God at the Moment of Salvation

Prevenient grace prepares us for justifying grace. “Justification,” said Wesley, “is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins, and ... our acceptance with God.” Justifying grace is the assurance of forgiveness that comes from repentance, from turning toward God's gracious gift of new life. It is being reconciled and realigned with God and the acceptance of God's atoning act in Jesus Christ.\footnote{Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” para. 3.} The word justification is commonly used in word processing programs. To justify the text literally means that it puts all words in a line. Click “left-justified” and the words line up on the left margin, click “center-justified” and they are centered on the page. Justifying grace is similar as it puts us in line with God. The penalty of our sin is satisfied through faith in Jesus Christ. The old is gone, the new has come (2 Cor 5:17).

Justification is experienced through faith. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Paul writes to the church in Galatia and teaches them that justification is not a result of adherence to the law, but is by the grace of God (Gal 3:11). Every person is in need of God’s grace, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:25-26).
Once justified, the believer engages in a lifelong journey of becoming set apart for the Lord. Sanctifying grace is God's freely given presence and power for complete restoration. We are, in an instant, transformed and, day by day, being transformed into his likeness. Wesley preached about sanctification in terms of Christian perfection by which he means entire "holiness of heart and life." This transformation is described as, "expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money, together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into ‘the mind which was in Christ Jesus.’”

Sanctifying grace is a gradual work that extends over all of one’s days on earth. Wesley preached, “From the time of our being born again, the gradual work of sanctification takes place.” By the hand of God, the Holy Spirit continues to direct our lives to become more like him. Paul urges the believers in Philippi to, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil 2:12-13). Paul further encourages them to follow his example: “press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Phil 3:12). God’s sanctifying grace is at work in the life of every believer as they move toward holiness of heart and life.

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13 Ibid., para. 8.
Sanctification has two applications in the life of the believer. To be sanctified means to be set apart. A primary application is the journey to holiness. This is where one engages in the process of conforming to the likeness of Christ. Hebrews 12:1-2 commends us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” The apostle Peter writes, “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 Pt 1:15-16). The life-long journey of aligning our life in submission to Jesus is an important aspect of spiritual formation. However, there is a second application of the grace of sanctification in regard to God’s work in this world. To sanctify means to set apart for holy work. God’s sanctifying grace sets his disciples apart for participation in His mission in this world. The application of God’s grace has significant implications for God’s work in this world. “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10). God’s work in this world is commonly described with the Latin term missio Dei which is translated the *mission of God*. In response to the primary question of this chapter, “How did the Father send Jesus?” He sent Jesus as the missio Dei. As individuals encounter the prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace of God, they are set apart for participation in the missio Dei.

**Participation with the Missio Dei**

God, by His grace, is at work in every person in the world. He is drawing all people to Himself. Understanding that there is not a single person who is outside of
God’s grace forms a context for being sent. In this section, the doctrine of *missio Dei* is explored to provide theological footing for participation in the mission and movement of God in the world.

Here the study of John 20:21 moves to the next phrase, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” Jesus was sent by the Father among the people, with the gospel, to make disciples and build his church. The ministry of Jesus continued after the Ascension through the three-fold grace of God by which God is drawing all people to Himself. The continual ministry of God in the world is understood as the *missio Dei*. When Jesus declared that his disciples are sent in the same way that the Father sent him, Jesus prescribed participation in the *missio Dei*.

The *Missio Dei* in the World

The *missio Dei* is closely tied to the work of the church with the church’s mission as a visible part of the broader mission of God in the world. The term *missio Dei* has a long history and can be traced at least as far back as Augustine.14 Aquinas also used the term to describe the activity of the triune God: the Father sending the Son and the Son sending the Spirit as an explanation of the movement of God in the world.15 Alan Hirsch explains, “The root word for ‘mission’ in Latin (*missio*) is the same root from which we get the word ‘missile.’ It is something that is sent. The heartbeat of the missional life is in

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its nature as one that is sent through incarnation.”¹⁶ The Father sends the Son and the Son
send the Spirit, followed by the triune God sending His disciples. It is an invitation from
God for His disciples to join His mission in the world. “Another way of saying this is that
God is the Sending God and the Son is the Sent One. The Father and Son in turn ‘send’
the Spirit into the world (so it turns out that the Spirit is a missionary too). And what is
more, Jesus says that as the Father sent him, so he sends and commissions each of us as
fully empowered missional agents of the King (Mt 28:19; Jn 17:18; 20:21).”¹⁷

The missio Dei was witnessed through the incarnation of Jesus. God became flesh
and made his dwelling among the people. Michael Frost adds further clarification: “The
term incarnational refers to another dimension of mission. It describes not simply going
out but also the difficult work of going deep with others. Just as God took on flesh and
dwelt among us in Jesus, so his followers are called to dwell among those to whom
they’re sent.”¹⁸ In this way the missio Dei is deeply personal and relational. God is
thoughtful, personal, and compassionate toward others. As Jesus said in John 13:35, “By
this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” God
continues His work in this world by grace and through the sending of His disciples in
participation with the missio Dei.

¹⁶ Hirsch, Right Here, Right Now, 222-223.
¹⁷ Ibid., pp 35-36.
¹⁸ Michael Frost, Surprise the World: The Five Habits of Highly Missional People (Colorado
Springs, CO: NavPress, 2016), 74-75, Kindle.
Jesus Sent His Disciples as He Was Sent (Jn 20:21)

While there are many ways to categorize the sending from Jesus, this project focuses on these primary categories. Disciples of Jesus are sent 1) among the people 2) with the gospel 3) to make disciples and 4) to gather his church. The Sent Lab curriculum teaches the example of Jesus in the four fields of harvest followed by instruction on how the student can be sent in the same way Jesus was sent. Special attention is given to providing practical tools for application.

**Among the People**

The Sent Lab curriculum teaches that the first movement in the harvest field is to identify people who are far from God and choose to minister among them. In the Lab, students are equipped with two tools for application. The first tool is to practice a posture of presence and the second tool is the practice of presenting an early offer of prayer. Both tools are explained in detail in chapter four.

**With the Gospel**

The Sent Lab curriculum teaches that the second movement in the harvest field is to proclaim the gospel. The gospel is intended to be shared. Allen Hirsch and Tim Catchim note that incarnational relationships without the presentation of the gospel results in unfruitful soil. “Soil that was cultivated, tilled, and weeded through presence evangelism is left fallow, with no seed to bring forth fruit.”\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\) Hirsch and Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution*, Loc. 1826, Kindle.
In the Lab, students are equipped with two tools for application. The first tool is to share their personal testimony using a simple and memorable structure. The second tool is to explain the gospel using a clear and conversational method. Both tools are explained in detail in chapter four.

**Make Disciples**

The Sent Lab curriculum teaches that the third movement in the harvest field is to make disciples. In the Lab, students are equipped with two tools for application. The first tool is the S.O.S. method of Bible study. The S.O.S. (Say? Obey? Share?) method is a method of reading and studying the Bible with an emphasis on application. The method asks three questions: 1) What does the passage say? 2) What is there to obey? And 3) Who can I share this with? The second tool is divided into two parts: short-term discipleship and long-term discipleship. The short-term discipleship is a study of the seven commands of Christ. Long-term discipleship moves disciples to further scriptural study utilizing the S.O.S. method and emphasizes obedience to the word of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Both tools are explained in detail in chapter four.

**Gather the Church**

The Sent Lab curriculum teaches that the fourth movement in the harvest field is to gather the church. It is taught that Jesus is the one who builds the church, and their responsibility is to prioritize that gathering as the church. The gathering of the church is the practice that God uses to build His spiritual house and the priesthood of all believers (1 Pt 2:5). One of the purposes of the gathering is “to equip his people for works of
service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:12). In doing so, the church guides believers to be sent into the harvest field. In the Lab, students are taught that as new disciples are made, there are two options for the gathering of the church. First, new disciples can gather in an existing church. The second option is to gather new disciples as a new church. The students examine Acts 2:42-48 as a descriptive example of the practices found in a local church.

**Dependence on God**

The Sent Lab curriculum also places a major emphasis on the example of Jesus’s dependence on the Father. Significant attention is given to the need for a vibrant relationship with Jesus at the center of all of the movements in the harvest field. The students study Jesus’s words in John 15 that make clear that spiritual fruit is only produced when the branches remain connected to the vine.

**Ask God to Send Workers into the Harvest Field**

How did the Father send Jesus? Jesus was sent among the people, with the gospel, to make disciples and gather his church. He did all of this with a deep dependence on the Father. Finally, Jesus was sent to send his disciples. Disciples of Jesus are to do likewise. Matthew 9-10 describes the time Jesus teaches his disciples how God sends workers into his harvest field. Up to this moment the disciples largely observed and assisted Jesus. Matthew 9:35 reads, “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.” In fact, he had traveled quite extensively, ministering to the people he encountered. In his humanity, it was clear that one person would not be able to meet the
needs of all the people.

In light of the overwhelming need and filled with compassion, he turned to his disciples, saying, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Mt 9:37b-38). Note that Jesus did not ask the disciples to go into the harvest field. Instead, he asked them to ask God to send workers. This bold and broad prayer would cause the disciples to think bigger than themselves. No doubt that if Jesus instructed them to go, they would. But Jesus did not ask them to go into the harvest field. He asked them to ask God. God’s sending was never intended to start and stop with them. This prayer was the beginning of the multiplication movement. Asking God to send workers makes it clear that God is the owner of the mission. The world is God’s harvest field. He sends workers into His harvest field for the purpose of participation in His mission. This concept is captured by a variation of a quote made popular by Darrell Guder: “It’s not that the church has a mission, it’s that God’s mission has a church.” The disciples are asked to petition God to activate the sent nature of His workers.

All movements of God are preceded by prayer. Prayer is essential for participation in the missio Dei. Prayer connects believers to the owner of the mission. Prayer deepens one’s reliance on God to activate the ministry. It positions the one who prays in a posture of submission and reliance on God’s provision. Before sending his

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disciples out in ministry, Jesus taught them that they must pray.

Prayer personalizes the mission. Peter Drucker, as quoted earlier, reminds us that, “A mission cannot be impersonal; it has to have deep meaning, be something you believe in—something you know is right.” Although participating in the work of God has significant differences from business leadership, the principle still applies. Starting by petitioning God to send workers into the harvest field brings the petitioner to rely on the leading of God. It is the call of God that sets the work in motion. Throughout Scripture God met with, in deeply personal ways, the people that He would send. Noah “walked with God” (Gn 6:9). Moses removed his sandals at the burning bush and returned to Egypt to set his people free (Ex 3:5; 4:18). The presence of God was so overwhelming that Isaiah’s only response was to fall to the ground in worship, saying, “Here am I. Send me!” (Is 6:8b). Paul’s personal encounter with God turned him from persecuting believers to proclaiming the gospel (Acts 9:1-30). Jesus identified the need for workers to be sent into his harvest field. The method for sending workers is prayer. They are sent by God. One way that God sends workers into the harvest field is in response to the prayers of his people.

Matthew 10 describes the instructions the disciples were given as Jesus sent them into his harvest field. This instruction illustrates that the genesis of activating one’s sent nature always begins with the one who sends. God sends workers into his harvest field. When God sends workers, their motive is in response to God’s call, not the urging from a fellow human being. Responding to God’s call positions the worker to have a deep

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reliance on him. The call becomes personal. It is a declaration that the worker is participating in God’s mission, in God’s mission field.

Activating the sent nature of believers always begins by asking God to send workers into His harvest field. This puts the focus squarely on God and His authority over His work in this world. Often the person who asks God to send workers becomes the one who is sent. How was Jesus sent? He was sent by the Father. All workers who participate in the missio Dei are sent in the same way.

**Obedience-Based Discipleship**

After the resurrection, Jesus met the disciples and commissioned them to be sent as the Father had sent him (Jn 20:21). Forty days later, Jesus appeared again with the same commission. The Great Commission provides specific instruction on the making of disciples (Mt 28:18-20). Jesus begins by declaring his authority to commission the disciples: “All authority in heave and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18b). True disciple making will only happen under the authority of Jesus. Then, he sends the disciples, saying, “Therefore go and make disciples” (Mt 28:19a). There is a clear calling to engage in life-on-life ministry by entering the harvest field and making and baptizing new disciples. The next phrase of the Great Commission is extremely important. Jesus gives specific direction to teach them to obey everything he has commanded (Mt 28:20a). The key words in this phrase are “to obey.” There is a tendency to skip these simple words. There is a big difference between “Teach them everything I have commanded” and “Teach them to obey everything I have commanded.” Biblical discipleship is rooted in obedience to the teaching of Jesus, not just knowledge of the teaching of Jesus. He
commissioned his disciples to teach their disciples to obey everything he has commanded. The clear commission of Jesus was for his disciples to obey his commands.

A second question that surfaces from the Great Commission is, “What are we to obey?” Disciples are to obey everything Jesus has commanded. So, what did he command? There are many lists of the commands of Christ. George Patterson, an early missionary among the indigenous people of Honduras, is credited for refining the commands of Christ to a list of seven commands. In no way is this a comprehensive list of Jesus’ commands, but it does serve as a strong foundation and starting point for every believer. Patterson worked with mostly illiterate tribal people who were trained in the basics of Christian faith. The seven commands were able to be easily understood, memorized, and shared as a primary means of discipleship and a catalyst for church planting. Patterson’s list has become widely used as a tool for obedience-based discipleship. I believe that the seven commands of Christ are the best place to start. It is not an exhaustive list of all that Jesus commanded, but disciples of Jesus would do well to begin by obeying Jesus in this way. Obedience to the commands of Christ is not something that can be accomplished with human will power. It is only possible through the administration of the sanctifying grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in the disciple’s life.

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23 The seven commands of Christ found in the New Testament are these: 1) Repent and believe the Good News, Mk 1:15; 2) Be baptized, Mt 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; 3) Love, Mt. 22:37-40; Jn 13:34; 4) Celebrate the Lord’s supper (i.e., take communion), Lk 22:17-20; 5) Pray, Mt 6:5-15; Jn 16:34; 6) Give, Mt 16:19-21; Lk 6:38; 7) Witness (i.e., make disciples), Mt 28:18-20; Ibid.
Sent with Authority for Ministry

This chapter examined the words of Jesus in John 20:21. Careful attention was paid to the example of Jesus as sent by the Father, followed by a study of the three-fold grace of God and its relation to participation in the *missio Dei*. The study would not be complete if the two verses following John 20:21 were not addressed. They provide the means by which the disciples are sent: “And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven’” (Jn 20:22-23). Two things happen in that moment. First, Jesus breathes on them and gives them the Holy Spirit. Larry Walkemeyer writes that the Holy Spirit gives us power and authority to share God’s heart. Walkemeyer points out that “This is a reshaping of the disciple’s heart so that the brand of compassion and urgency that marked Jesus’ ministry is duplicated in us.”24 The commissioning of the disciples to be sent as the Father sent Jesus is enabled by their reception of the Holy Spirit. They could not be sent as Jesus was sent without the Holy Spirit. The same is true for disciples today. The second statement that Jesus makes is that he gives them authority to forgive sins. This is a bold declaration, one that had earlier caused the religious leaders to consider him a blasphemer, saying, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mk 2:7). For Jesus to extend this authority to the disciples is a bold declaration of the authority that they have through the reception of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is saying that his ministry will continue through them.

It is through the power of the Holy Spirit they are granted not only the ability to do the earthly things that Jesus did but also the spiritual authority to continue Jesus’s ministry.

The commission of Jesus from John 20 provides the framework for activation of the sent nature of believers as taught in the Sent Lab curriculum. Through the example of Jesus, students are taught the four fields of ministry, the three-fold grace of God, participation in the *missio Dei*, and the authority received through the Spirit of God. The next section details the curriculum structure designed to bring these principles to fruition in the students’ life.
PART THREE

MINISTRY PRACTICE
CHAPTER FOUR:
CREATING AN EXPERIENTIAL PROCESS TO ACTIVATE MISSIONAL ACTIVITY

The example of Jesus as sent by the Father combined with God’s grace sets the framework for the learning experience titled, “The Sent Lab.” In the creation of The Sent Lab I incorporated specific icons and images to aid in the understanding and retention of the material. The images and icons are intentionally simple so that they can be drawn by students during the class sessions as part of the learning experience.

The example of Jesus is illustrated with a large square containing four smaller squares each with a corresponding icon. The center icon captures the multiplication through guiding others in missional activity. The four squares plus the center icon represent the five movements of missional activity. The three-fold grace of God is illustrated by lines and arrows indicating a lifelong journey of experiencing God’s grace (figure 1). In this section I will detail the significance of the icons and illustrations used in the class material.
Icon-Based Model Indicating Five Primary Categories of the Sent Nature of Jesus

The frame of the icon-based model is a single square separated into four smaller squares. The large square represents the harvest field (figure 2). Each square represents
one of the movements in the harvest field with the center icon representing the fifth movement.

![Figure 3: Among the People](image)

The upper-left quadrant is occupied with the icon representing the first movement, “Go among the people.” This movement is a decision to join God in His mission in His harvest field. The square and arrows capture the decision to engage in missional activity (figure 3). The square represents the individual’s current boundaries and comfort zone. The arrows, moving both in and out, represent the commitment to look for opportunity to engage in missional activity in every opportunity. This icon is situated just outside of the first quadrant illustrating the starting point of engagement with God’s mission in this world.

![Figure 4: With the Gospel](image)

The second icon, located in the second quadrant, is a compass (figure 4). The compass is a device that points to true north. Once a student has made the decision to enter the harvest field, the next question is to understand what to do. While there are many good things that believers can do in partnership with God’s grace in this world, the clear mandate from Jesus is to share the gospel. The compass icon reminds the student that the gospel is the “true north” of missional activity.
The third icon, located in the third quadrant, is a gear (figure 5). A gear has no impact in isolation, it must interlock with other gears as part of the machine’s overall mechanical design. In the same way, discipleship never happens in isolation. It always involves one person making an intentional effort to invest in another. The gear represents the importance of the personal interaction required for modeling and guiding others in discipleship.

The fourth icon, located in the fourth quadrant, is a bundle of wheat (figure 6). The use of the image of wheat ties this discipleship process directly to the harvest field language. The use of multiple stalks of wheat captures the idea of believers gathering together as the church.

The fifth icon, located in the center of the square, illustrates the centrality of reproduction (figure 7). The gathered church (quadrant four) prioritizes the mobilization of disciples into the harvest field (quadrant one). The arrows demonstrate the cyclical process of the movements in the harvest field. The location of this icon in the center also illustrates the need for abiding in Christ as at the heart of all missional activity.
Utilizing the illustration of the harvest field combined with the five icons representing the movements in the harvest field provides a simple and memorable method of describing the activity of Jesus. It is easy to sketch and contains a memorable cadence and rhyme upon repetition. This is an intentional and strategic approach to anchor the learning in the student’s mind, providing handles for understanding and a reproducible tool for sharing with others.

**An Icon-Based Model Indicating Three Primary Expressions of God’s Grace at Work in the World**

![Figure 8: Three-fold Grace of God](image)

The second set of icons illustrates the life-long journey of interacting with God’s three-fold grace. The use of a line demonstrates an individual’s life with a single starting point (birth) and the days that follow. The far-right side of the line indicates the continuation of life with an arrow. The three segments represent God’s prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace respectively.

![Figure 9: Prevenient Grace](image)

The first segment represents God’s prevenient grace in a person’s life (figure 9). During this season of life, the individual does not have a personal relationship with Jesus. Although they are not a Christian during this season of life, God is at work in their life drawing them to himself.

![Figure 10: Justifying Grace](image)
The middle segment represents God’s justifying grace (figure 10). The diamond in the center indicates the point of salvation. The diamond is bookended with lines and brackets to indicate the season of life when they were awakened to the presence of God within them. For many people, identifying the exact moment of salvation is challenging. Expanding the “moment of salvation” to a “season of awakening” helps the student articulate the moments that brought them to the place where they were able to testify that they are a Christian. For some, this can be a very short season of life. Perhaps they experienced a crisis and began to trust in God as He carried them through their specific difficulty. For others, it could be their entire childhood. Many people who grew up in Christian households can testify that their upbringing established a firm foundation of faith in their life. As a result, they cannot recall a moment when they began to trust in Jesus. Faith in Jesus was always present in their life as modeled by their parents and community of faith. For those who experienced this blessing, they can be helped by identifying the time in their life where they took hold of their relationship with Jesus in a personal way. Because every person has a unique spiritual journey, illustrating God’s justifying grace in terms of a season of awakening is helpful for the student’s articulation of their conversion experience.

Figure 11: Sanctifying Grace

The third segment represents the individual’s life in Christ. Once justified, God continues His work in their life through His sanctifying grace (figure 11). The emphasis is on the present transformation through the presence of the Holy Spirit as the believer grows to reflect more and more of the image of Christ in and through their life.
The three segments joined together form a single line and provide a tool for students to articulate their faith journey in the context of God’s three-fold grace. This unique approach elevates the testimony to focus on God’s grace. Common in sharing a testimony is the description of one’s life before Christ, at the cross, followed by the changes that Jesus has made after salvation. While the method of sharing one’s story of “Before, at, and after” is used in this project, the icons of God’s prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace are highlighted as a supporting way to understand salvation. The student is asked to describe their faith journey through the lens of God’s three-fold grace. This provides opportunity to reflect on the various ways that God has revealed himself and drawn the student into a personal relationship with him.

A Learning Experience that Connects Missional Education with Application and Coaching

The Sent Lab is divided into eight chapters. The first three chapters set the theological foundation for the course. Chapters four through seven provide strategies for engagement with the five movements in the harvest field. In chapters four through seven, each lesson is supported by two specific tools that correspond with the movement in the harvest field. The final session anchors the student in the abiding presence of God, culminating with a time of commissioning the students to join God in His harvest field.

Each week during the Sent Lab students share how they have applied the material. Attention is given to two specific areas of application. First, the student is challenged to go through the week with a sensitivity toward the working of God in this world. The question is asked, “Did you see God working in the world this week?” In this way the
student is praying, “Lord, give me eyes to see and ears to hear how You are at work.”
This makes a direct connection to the teaching of God’s three-fold grace, but specifically
God’s prevenient grace that is active in the lives of those who do not yet know Jesus
personally. Challenging the student to embark on their week with a posture of discerning
the presence of God is the foremost application of the material. Each week, students share
how they witnessed God at work around them.

The subsequent question is, “If you saw God at work, did you join Him?” In other
words, did you choose to participate in the missio Dei? These questions further anchor
the objective of the material in the student’s day to day life. The reflection and
conversation are supported through the use of the icons and tools from each lesson.
During the class, students are given opportunity to recite and illustrate the icons and tools
with the other students. This provides for increased retention of the material as each class
session is built upon the previous. The eight sessions guide the student toward practical
application and a reproducible model that can be shared with others. The eight class
sessions are as follows.

**Design a Teaching Framework that Utilizes the Above Models in Ways that Require
Response and Action from Learners**

Class Sessions 1, 2, and 3: Foundation

**Class Session 1: As the Father Has Sent Me**

The purpose of this session is to provide an overview of the entire course and
introduce the movements in the harvest field. The student will study the primary ways
that Jesus was sent into the world and explore its implications for our missional activity today (Jn 20:21).

**Focus:** As the Father sent me, so I send you.

**Bible Study:** John 20:1-30

**Praxis:** Group processing of the four movements in the harvest field.

**Assignment:** Read the book of John and note the usage of the word ‘sent.’

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**Class Session 2: Missionary God**

This session is a study of the attributes of God as a missionary. Specific attention is paid to the three-fold grace of God and its direct connection with His redemptive work in this world. The student will also discover the necessity of drawing near to Christ as the source of missional activity.

**Focus:** Join God is at work in this world.

**Bible Study:** John 1:1-18

**Praxis:** Outline your personal story of salvation.

**Assignment:** Look for ways that you see God at work in the world.

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**Class Session 3: Remember Who**

Class session 3 builds upon the theological foundation of sessions 1 and 2. This session personalizes God’s three-fold grace by requiring students to reflect on how their life was impacted by other people in partnership with God’s grace. The student creates a map of people that God used to draw them to Himself. The student will unpack how God
used others in His redeeming work in their life. They look back in order to look forward. Their personal journey is then used as a template for their missional activity today.

Focus: Follow the example of those God has already sent.

Bible Study: Isaiah 6; 61; Luke 4 (Here am I, send me)

Praxis: Create a map of the people who participated in God’s redeeming work in your life.

Assignment: Write a personal note of thanks to someone that God used in your faith journey. Look for ways that you see God at work in the world. Join Him.

Class Sessions 4, 5, 6, and 7: Movements in the Harvest Field

Class Session 4: Among the People

This chapter introduces the biblical concept of the oikos and invites the student to identify the people who make up their oikos today. This session will challenge the student to identify the names of the specific people that they will invest in. For example, they may recognize that God is at work in their neighborhood. This is an important realization and a good starting point. The material will challenge the student to get more specific, e.g., “God is at work in my neighborhood and I am joining Him by investing in my neighbor, Keith.” The culmination of this session is to create a specific list of family, friends, and neighbors for prayer and strategic personal investment.
Focus: God is at work in the life of people that I know.

Bible Study: Luke 10

Praxis: Identify the people in my oikos, practice intentional presence and present an early offer of prayer. Two tools are introduced in this session. Tool 1: Partner with patience persistence. Tool 2: Present an early offer of prayer.

Assignment: Look for ways that you see God at work in the world. Join Him.

Class Session 5: With the Gospel

The Bible calls believers to bear witness to and proclaim the gospel. This chapter teaches the importance of the sharing of the gospel as a primary expression of God’s redeeming work. The student will learn to and practice sharing their testimony and illustrating the gospel using the three-circles method.

Focus: The gospel must be shared.

Bible Study: John 4:4-30.

Praxis: The two tools introduced in this session are Tool 1: 15-second testimony and Tool 2: Three-circles method of gospel presentation.

Assignment: Share your 15-second testimony and the three circles with three people this week.

Class Session 6: Make Disciples

This chapter teaches the four responses to the gospel (no, maybe, yes, or “already a Christian”) and teaches obedience-based discipleship starting with the commands of Christ.
Focus: Discipleship is learning to live in obedience to Jesus.

Bible Study: Matthew 28; Colossians 1:28

Praxis: Understand the four responses to the gospel and begin discipling those who accept the gospel. The two tools in this session are Tool 1: Perspective and Tool 2: Obedience-based discipleship.

Assignment: Pray. Present an early offer of prayer. Share testimony and the three circles. Start obeying the commands of Christ.

Class Session 7: Gather and Guide

This chapter explores the importance, purpose, and function of gathering as the church. The two options presented are to gather with an existing church or to gather as the nucleus of a new church. One of the purposes in gathering is to guide new disciples toward entry into the harvest field. The student will also explore the functions of the church as described in the book of Acts.

Focus: Gather and guide others in the movements of the harvest field.

Bible Study: Acts 1:8; 2:36-47

Praxis: Gather as the church and guide disciples in the movements of the harvest.

Class Session 8: Commission

Chapter 8: Abide

This chapter teaches the necessity of activating one’s sent nature under the power and authority of Jesus. Sustained power and authority are found through a vibrant relationship with Jesus. At the conclusion of this session, each student is prayed for and commissioned into ministry.

Focus: You are authorized to join God in His work in the world.

Bible Study: John 15:1-17

Praxis: A time of prayer and anointing for ministry.


Biblical and Theological Study is the Foundation for Each Lesson

Each session of the Sent Lab contains five sections designed to engage the student with different forms of learning. The method of instruction includes a diverse catalogue of teaching techniques. Variety keeps the student’s attention and accelerates learning. The students capture different aspects of the learning through various large group and small group arrangements as well as through integration with material through personal sharing with the entire class. The Sent Lab guides the student in a rhythm of large group, small group, practical experience, reflection, storytelling, and coaching. Specifically, it incorporates creative ways to interlace what they are learning with their life’s story and
the broader story of God. This aids the student to view the material from a number of different angles with the goal of long-term retention. To accomplish these goals, each class session is divided into five sections: Encouragement, Focus, Bible Study, Praxis, and Assignment. Each section serves a specific purpose within the context of the entirety of the Sent Lab. The total class time is scheduled for 90 minutes. It is recommended that a two-hour block is scheduled to allow for flexibility during the learning experience.

Section 1: Encouragement (20 minutes)

The class will open with five questions that challenge the student to reflect on the application of the principles of the course. The facilitator and students will hold one another accountable to put into practice what is being taught each week. The five questions are:

1. See: Where did you see God at work this week?
2. Shift: In what ways did you shift your daily activity to join God in His work?
3. Start: Do you feel a prompting to start something new?
4. Stop: What changes need to be made in your life?
5. Share: Did you share the gospel?

Section 2: Focus (5 Minutes)

The focus section provides the overview for the lesson. It includes a concise and memorable summary statement, the key verse for the lesson, and the objective of the learning.
Section 3: Bible Study (20 Minutes)

Each session is centered around the study of a single passage within its historical context and with emphasis toward contemporary application. Key insights are drawn from the passage. Supporting Scripture is included to expand understanding of the primary themes, but the main points emerge from the primary text. The method of Bible study used is the S.O.S. model. The S.O.S. model was chosen because it is a simple and memorable method of Bible study. S.O.S. stands for “say, share, and obey.”

1. Say: What does the passage say?
2. Obey: What is there to obey?
3. Who will I share this with?

Using the S.O.S. method of Bible study serves three purposes. One, the first ‘S’ focuses on expository study during the class session. Students are challenged to actively search the text, explore the context, and understand the meaning. The ‘O’ reinforces the priority of obedience-based discipleship that is taught in session six. The second ‘S’ (share) reinforces the outward focus of the class in which students are challenged to share what they learned with someone outside of the class. The use of the S.O.S. model trains students how to study any passage of Scripture. This can be used in future discipleship relationships. Teaching this method equips the students with a tool that they can use to disciple others.

Section 4: Praxis (40 Minutes)

The praxis section provides interactive learning around the specific weekly topic. It is a combination of personal and group activities to further understand the concepts.
from the lesson. The praxis section provides simple tools to translate the concepts into actionable steps for daily engagement.

Section 5: Assignment (5 Minutes)

The assignment section summarizes the lesson and provides a specific assignment for missional engagement during the week. The assignment is reported on during the encouragement section at the start of each week.

Summary

Individual Reflection to Personalize the Education from Each Lesson

The five sections within each class session accomplish the goal of creating an interactive learning environment where the student is challenged to engage with the material through lecture, Bible study, group interaction, personal sharing, and real-world application.

Application and Coaching to Activate Missional Activity

The Sent Lab is designed to be an experiential class with emphasis on application of the material. The students are encouraged to put what they are learning into practice. They are held accountable by the open sharing during the ‘Encourage’ section at the start of each session. Having the students illustrate three-fold grace and the movements in the harvest field anchors the understanding of the Bible study and lesson through memorable repetition. Both the personal sharing and the recitation of the material provide opportunity for coaching by the instructor toward missional activity.
Following the eight weeks of class sessions, the student is invited to receive continued coaching through a weekly online conference call and through interaction in a Facebook group of Sent Lab alumni. Members encourage one-another to continue to practice the movements of the harvest field.

Target Population and Leadership: A Small Group of Members of Storehouse Church

The Sent Lab was taught at Storehouse Church beginning on Thursday, October 3, 2019. The participants for the lab were regular attenders of the church who self-enrolled in the experience. During the enrollment process and at the first session, the students were informed that this lab was to be included in this doctoral project. All students agreed to participate. The roster for the class contained twelve students. The author of this project was the principle presenter and facilitator of The Sent Lab.
CHAPTER 5:
IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

This chapter explains the implementation and assessment of the Sent Lab. The Sent Lab was taught at Storehouse Church from October 3, 2019 through December 12, 2019. The class met weekly with the exception of holidays. The complete learning experience consisted of eight small group sessions, followed by four online group coaching sessions. The participants were members of Storehouse Church. The objective of the class was to engage with the material in the class with an emphasis on applying what was learned through missional activity outside of the classroom. The room was set up to create a peer to peer learning environment with a rectangle of tables and students seated around the perimeter. The pre-class assessment revealed that the participants had a span of knowledge of the subject material. This provided for diversity of learning with participants sharing questions and insights with one another.

Class Summary

The eight-week small group sessions are divided into three sections. The first three sessions provide theological foundation (section 1), the next four sessions focus on
tools and application (section 2), and the final week culminates with a commissioning service (section 3). Each section plays an important role in the teaching methodology.

Session One: October 3, 2019

The first class began with the reading of John 20:21 followed by the opening question, “How do you think the Father sent Jesus?” This set the tone for the classroom dynamics as a robust conversation ensued and a white board was filled with notes. The students quickly realized that the Sent Lab was not going to be eight weeks of lecture; instead it was an interactive learning experience with an expectation of personal engagement with the material. There was also specific attention given to creating a sense of urgency with the application of the material. This was accomplished by returning to the question, “What is at stake if we do not do this?” This underscored the importance of application, further reminding the students that knowledge alone is not enough. The expectation is for them not only to learn the material, but to practice it.

Session Two: October 10, 2019

During the second session, the focus was on the example of God as evidenced through His three-fold grace. This session provided a biblical study of the missio Dei. One of the main take-a-ways for this session is that the mission of God is almost always accomplished through the people of God.
Session Three: October 17, 2019

Session one and two prepare the student for session three. During session three the participant reflected on their life’s journey through the theological perspective of the previous lessons, specifically that God revealed Himself in part through other people. The students shared their faith journeys with the emphasis on describing the people who impacted their life. This personalized the material. First, there was a deep sense of gratitude for those who shared the gospel and discipled them. One of the participants, Karen S., noted, “[After session three,] I reached out to people that have mentored me in my Christian walk and let them know how I value how they helped me and I appreciate them and what they did for me.”

Second, there was a realization that being sent is something that they can do, because they have already been affected by others who were sent. They only need to model some of the same attitudes, postures, and behaviors that others have shown to them. This session further illustrates that God is active in this world as their life story gives testimony to that reality.

Sessions Four Through Seven: October 24 – November 21, 2019

Section two of the Sent Lab is comprised of sessions four through seven. Two memorable tools are presented during each of these sessions. Each week the tools are practiced and reviewed. The atmosphere in the room is a fun and interactive environment where students take turns presenting the various tools.

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1 Student quotes were submitted in the post-lab assessment. They are written as quoted and not edited for grammar. Words in brackets were added for clarity and context.
By this time in the coursework, two other components of learning are beginning to take root: the opening encouragement and the S.O.S. Bible study method. These two components are part of each session, but by the fourth week and beyond, there is a cumulative impact from them. Each class opens with a conversation and encouragement around the application of the material. The main goal is to have the participants share how they are perceiving God working around them followed by asking if they joined God in His work. The personal stories brought a clarity as individuals brought personal case studies to the group. Here are a few examples.

Carolyn C. shared, “A few months ago I crossed paths with someone I had known for over twenty years in a working relationship and never really had a conversation with. She was drawn to tell me her story and struggles with breast cancer, an emotionally and verbally abusive husband, being stalked, financial ruin, etc. Very personal information—and she shared it with me out of the blue! I believe God put us in the same place at the same time so that I could witness to her and spread His word!”

Jim M. shared, “I’ve used my 15-second testimony on several occasions while speaking to people trying to overcome addiction. One of the biggest stumbling blocks people come across is an empty feeling inside. They used to compensate for this by using mind altering substances to either feel good or just forget. I have shared that, while I used to feel empty inside I’ve used my faith to fill that void. I’ve stopped asking God to fix me and instead ask him for purpose and direction.”

Brandi C. shared, “I stepped WAY out of my comfort zone and spoke to a brand new co-worker about starting a prayer group in our new assisted living senior community. I didn’t know Krystal’s faith or religious affiliation (she’s Catholic) but I asked her what she thought about starting a group where we would pray for each other, the building and our residents. She was all for it!”

The second component of this section is the S.O.S. Bible study method. The purpose of utilizing this method throughout the material was to model a simple way to study the Bible. This method asks three questions, “What does the passage say? What will I obey? And who will I share this with?” The three keywords, “Say, Obey, Share,”
dovetail with overall themes of the class. This not only provides a robust method for personal Bible study, but also teaches the participants how to lead a Bible study with others. There is a true synergy of learning taking place through the utilization of both the S.O.S. Bible study method and the opening encouragement time.

Session Eight: December 5, 2019

The final session of the Sent Lab serves as the capstone of the classroom portion of the curriculum. During this session the class participates in a service of commissioning for ministry. Each person receives the laying on of hands and a prayer of commissioning. Prayer with the laying on of hands is a way of acknowledging and affirming ministry. An example is when Paul reminds Timothy, “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Tim 1:6).

A second reason for incorporating this moment is the example from the Old Testament monuments erected as enduring reminders. One example is the monument erected under Joshua’s direction after the miraculous deliverance of the Lord (Jos 4:8). While a time of prayer does not make a physical monument, it does create an emotional and spiritual one in the heart and mind of the participant. In this way, the prayer time is a significant and strategic moment for the course.

A source that was insightful in the creation of the Sent Lab is The Power of Moments by Chip Heath. This book asks the reader to think in terms of moments that mark a person’s life. He calls them flagship moments. According to Heath, these moments contain four essential ingredients: elevation, insight, pride, and connection. Heath writes, “What’s indisputable is that when we assess our experiences, we don’t
average our minute-by-minute sensations. Rather, we tend to remember flagship moments: the peaks, the pits, and the transitions. This is critical.”² By creating memorable moments, the participant is more likely to retain and return to what they have learned and experienced. The Sent Lab is organized according to this outline. Section one creates a sense of urgency (elevation). Section two provides specific skill training (insight). Section three grants the participant authority for ministry (pride). The final component from *The Power of Moments* is connection. The students experience this throughout the course, but specifically with the four-week virtual group coaching following the classroom sessions.

Group Coaching: December 12, 2019 – January 16, 2020

Following the course, students participated in personalized group coaching based around their application of missional activity. This was accomplished through a video conference call tool (meet.google.com). The use of this technology was convenient but also a challenge for some with connection issues causing a distraction from the conversation. Half of the twelve students who participated in the course continued with the virtual group coaching sessions. The virtual group coaching did provide a point of accountability and connection but did not achieve all of the results I desired. I expected more participation. Only half of the students continued with the virtual coaching. The technology also proved to limit participation, both through technical issues and also through a lack of personal connection. In the future, I will introduce the use of

technology earlier in the process and provide more teaching on the importance of prioritizing the group coaching sessions in their personal schedule. Beyond the challenges with the group coaching element, the overwhelming response from those who did participate was that it was useful and beneficial.

Assessment

In the first session, the students were given a pre-lab assessment to gauge their knowledge and engagement with the topic of the course. The pre-lab assessment probed the students’ understanding and experience with missional activity.

Two of the twelve students indicated that they were very familiar with the topic. Two other students reported that they had no understanding or previous interaction with this topic. The remaining eight students responded with an average of six (on a scale of one to ten with ten being very familiar with the material). The pre-assessment revealed that the majority had minimal or no engagement with this material, in both knowledge and practice. At the conclusion of the course, students were given a post-lab assessment. The results from the concluding assessment showed an increase in understanding with the average score increasing from six to nine. Examples of missional activity also increased from 6 to 8.5 out of 10. In addition to the statistical data, students submitted personal stories that illustrated their engagement with the material.
I further evaluated the learning experience by utilizing an adapted form of Kirkpatrick’s Model of Learning Evaluation.\(^3\) This model asks four questions.

Reaction—Did they enjoy the training? The overwhelming response was, “Yes.” The students reported that the class was informative and engaging.

Learning—Did they understand the material? The survey resulted in all but one student indicating that they now have a firm grasp on the concepts of the course. The exception was one student who submitted that they were one notch below the top choice.

Behavior—Did they engage in missional activity? This question was divided into two parts. First, a simple yes or no. One hundred percent of students responded yes. The second part was an open space to share a story. Everyone had a story to share. Some of the stories were reported in chapter four.

Results—What outcomes were produced? One person read the Bible and prayed with her ten-year-old son for the first time. One person asked a co-worker if she could pray for her which opened the door for a late-night conversation and prayer time during a business trip. One person had a spiritual conversation at work which prompted their colleague to return to his church, something that had not occurred in over a decade. One person started a prayer group at work. One couple started a house church in their home. Four of the students have agreed to serve as table leaders in the next session of the Sent Lab. A goal that was not met was that a student would lead someone to place their trust in

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Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Seeds were planted, but there was no indication of any first-time commitments to Christ.

In response to teaching the class and the feedback, I was surprised at how unfamiliar the participants were with the material. Even those who, through the pre-lab assessment, indicated that they were very familiar with the material only had cursory knowledge of the topic. I had spent so much time studying the content that I assumed the entry level material was common knowledge. This was not the case, and the realization served as a reminder to slow down and allow time for the students to process what they were learning. A second realization was how helpful the simple tools were for both retention and application. During each class session the students showed increasing enthusiasm toward the use of the assigned tools. They provided a specific point of action for them to employ between sessions. This helped move the material from theory to application.

Another portion of the class that was particularly helpful in prioritizing application was the opening encouragement time. It was during this time that the students were able to share their experiences during the week. A meaningful outcome from that portion of the class was the display of emotion shared by the students. It was clear that they were not only applying the material but doing so among people whom they cared about deeply. This presented several opportunities for times of specific prayer and pastoral care. I was amazed at how teaching people to have “eyes to see and ears to hear” increased their awareness of God’s active presence in the world. Being able to witness a people who were practicing the presence of God was one of the most significant and meaningful outcomes of the class for me.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The goal of this doctoral project was to address the problem in my local church of measuring the success of our church through the narrow lens of church attendance and shift the measure of success to missional activity. The over-emphasis on church attendance as the indicator of success contributes to a consumer culture in the church and limits the potential of the congregation. Attendance is an important by-product, but it must not be the goal. At the start of this project, Storehouse Church was searching for ways to shift the emphasis from prioritizing and celebrating church attendance to prioritizing and celebrating the activating and equipping of the members for missional ministry.

Clarity

The Sent Lab is a microcosm of the larger transition in the life and leadership of the church. Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones describe the first practice of effective ministry as clarifying the win.\(^1\) They illustrated this with a scoreboard at a baseball game. In a baseball game, everyone knows which team is winning. The scoreboard displays it clearly, inning by inning. Not only is it clear who is winning, everyone knows how to win. A team wins by scoring more runs than the other team. The church needs a similar degree of clarity around its mission. For Storehouse Church, one of the wins we sought after was church attendance. While there is nothing wrong with counting attendance, every person in the room is someone who is loved by God and their

presence is an opportunity for ministry impact; the problem is that attendance alone must not become the sole goal. Attendance is one vehicle toward the mission, but merely being counted is not the goal in and of itself. We needed to clearly define what “winning” looked like at Storehouse Church.

As a result of this project, I led our leadership team through a process of clarifying the win. We utilized the Vision Frame model from Will Mancini’s *Church Unique* as our guide.\(^2\) The vision frame is a process of bringing clarity through identifying the church’s mission, values, strategy, and measurables. Those four components each make up one side of the frame. Much like a picture on a wall, the purpose of the frame is to give prominence to that which is in the center of the frame. In the case of the Vision Frame, the center is the vision of the church.

As a result of this process, the vision of Storehouse Church is now captured in three words, “A Sent People.” For us, our ultimate objective is to guide our congregation to discover their unique contribution in the kingdom of God and empower them to join Jesus in his mission in the world. Clarifying this as our “win” was a major step forward for the leadership of the church. In response to that crystal-clear vision, we engineered a discipleship pathway for the people of Storehouse Church. The discipleship pathway has three primary classes, each one representing a category of spiritual formation. The discipleship pathway culminates in The Sent Lab. With a clear pathway identified, we now have a different set of criteria to count. Instead of merely counting attendance, we

are able to measure how people are moving along our pathway of spiritual formation. Attendance still matters, but it is no longer the only measurement of success. This project was a catalyst to shift the mission, vision, values, strategy, and measurables of our church.

**Prevenient Grace**

The Wesleyan theology of prevenient grace played an important role in this project. Understanding and applying the articulation of God’s active presence in the world changes how people navigate through their days. With the theology of prevenient grace front of mind, every person that one encounters is not only someone that God loves but is someone in whom God is actively at work. The belief that God is drawing all people to Himself expands the opportunities for ministry engagement to include every person everywhere. The question is not, “Is God at work in their life?” Instead, “How is God at work in their life?” This results in asking God for the wisdom, courage, words, and deeds to join Him in His work in their life.

The Sent Lab is grounded in the understanding of the prevenient grace of God. This shapes the nature and purpose of the people as active participants in Jesus’s mission. They are sent in the same way that Jesus was sent which also requires deep dependence on God and reliance on the leading of the Holy Spirit. The center of the movements in the harvest field indicates the need for constant abiding in Christ (Jn 15). The vine is the source of spiritual nourishment and the catalyst for spiritual fruit. Abiding in Christ is the conduit for spiritual awareness of God’s active presence in the world and essential for the application of the training found in The Sent Lab.
Systems

The third solution to address the problem was to align the systems of the church with the new vision of the ministry. A church system is defined as the agreed upon actions that are required to accomplish a goal. Many of the systems of Storehouse Church were focused on producing a Sunday church experience. This contributed to the problem of an over-emphasis on church attendance. The challenge was to identify or create new systems that furthered the vision of activating people in ministry. During the research and discovery portion of this project, I was able to discover systems that focused on our new vision. An example is the four fields model.

The four fields model divides the ministry of the church into four quadrants, each with specific systems for activation. The power of the four fields is found in the reproducibility. It is clear what needs to be done in each of the four fields. For field one, the system is to enter the harvest field. For field two, the system is to share the gospel. Field three’s system is obedience-based discipleship. And field four’s system is gathering as the church. Of course, there are additional subsystems under the primary, but each system is clear, simple, and reproducible. Multiplication movements always have reproducible systems. The reproducible nature of a system is a key for multiplication. In the broader Christian community, there is a great deal of conversation around the topic of multiplication of ministry instead of simple addition. This is an important conversation and needed for the church. However, it is impossible to multiply without addition. Multiplication in its simplest form is just repeated addition. In order for a movement to multiply, more and more people must engage in a shared and repeated behavior. Viewed as a whole these behaviors are described as multiplication but on an individual level the
movement is the addition of a repeated behavior. Repeated addition of the same behaviors is what results in a multiplication movement. In the business world, reproducible systems relate to scalability. In multiplication movements, reproducible systems scale through repeated or synchronized behavior. Everybody is doing the same thing because everybody knows exactly what to do. As more and more people engage in synchronized behaviors, the multiplication of the fruit of that system occurs.

During the creation of The Sent Lab, I set out to identify reproducible systems that were clearly focused on the objective of our mission and vision. The systems needed to be simple, memorable, and reproducible. Utilizing the four fields model and the corresponding tools re-aligned our organizational systems to reach our vision.

**People**

The church is people. Systems have a place and must also be kept in their proper place. Systems serve the mission, not the other way around. A danger that our church faced was elevating working on the systems of the church above the mobilization of the people. During this project I was reminded how important it is to prioritize the spiritual formation of the individual.

Creating a new curriculum alone would not solve the problem. The class was the tool for the actual solution, namely guiding people to engage in missional activity. This simple realization played an important role in the creation of The Sent Lab. The first section of The Sent Lab culminates in the individual’s faith journey. As the student looks back at the relationships and moments in their journey, they are then able to look forward and see a roadmap with an example to follow. Further, there is an expectation throughout
the course for the participants to put what they are learning into practice. In this way the facilitator is truly equipping the people for works of service (Eph. 4:12). This moves the emphasis of ministry away from the professional pastors as the ones who do the ministry and emphasizes the people as the priesthood of believers.

This doctoral project provided an opportunity for the activation of the priesthood of believers in new ways within our local church. We had always affirmed the idea of the priesthood of believers, but now there is specific opportunity for people to engage in missional activity.

The above conclusions have shaped our local church and have sparked a renewed sense of excitement and urgency for activating the sent nature of believers. With a clear discipleship pathway established at Storehouse, we are witnessing people take strategic next steps in their faith journey. With each step there is a well of information that can guide them in that area of spiritual formation. The culminating step in the discipleship pathway is The Sent Lab. This course activates the priesthood of believers toward missional activity. It serves as much more than a single course. The language from the material has been distilled into many of the axioms of our church. The axioms help cast the vision and shape the culture. The content of the course has been included in sermons, leadership lessons, and staff development. With a clear vision ahead, The Sent Lab has positioned our church for significant growth. This growth will not be measured by increased Sunday attendance but through the obedience of individual church members who are empowered to join Jesus in His mission in this world.
## APPENDIX

Excerpts from The Sent Lab workbook
Complete Workbook Length: 136 pages

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## THE SENT LAB

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The graphic layout and corresponding icons for the movements in the harvest field and the three-fold expression of God’s grace.
Each session begins with “Encouragement.” Encouragement is a time of group discussion, answering five questions. What did you: See? Shift? Start? Stop? Share? The opening encouragement time is followed by “Focus.” Focus is a summary of the main thesis of the session.
Each week the S.O.S. method is used for the Bible study portion of the class. This teaches the student how to open any biblical text and lead an engaging and thoughtful Bible study.
The three-fold expression of God’s grace is illustrated using icons, lines and arrows signifying the timeline of a person’s life-long journey with God’s grace.
God's Grace In My Life

Prevenient Grace

Prevenient grace is the grace of God that is applied to every person prior to salvation. It extends far and wide. According to John Wesley, it includes “… all the ‘drawings’ of ‘the Father,’ the desires after God, … that ‘light’ wherewith the Son of God enlighteneth everyone that cometh into the world; all the convictions which his Spirit from time to time works in every child of man.”

Through prevenient grace God seeks to bring every individual to himself but grants to each the responsibility of accepting or rejecting that salvation. FMC Book of Discipline 2015, p 3.

The participants reflect on their personal experience as recipients of the grace of God. This page format is repeated for prevenient grace (above), justifying grace, and sanctifying grace.
The four lessons in the Movements in the Harvest Field section each contain two simple and memorable tools. This tool, titled, “Partner with Patient Persistence,” is unique because it represents an attitude or posture toward the people they are trying to reach.
This tool teaches the student how to share their testimony in a conversational and simple way. The 15-second testimony tool concludes with the question, “Do you have a story like that?” This provides opportunity for deeper spiritual conversations.
In session six, students are taught the four responses to the gospel and ways to continue spiritual conversations depending on the individual response.

TOOL #1

PERSPECTIVE

Making disciples begins ___________ you are a disciple.

Think about it. You make a pumpkin pie by starting with something that is different than a pumpkin pie. The same is true for people.

Every disciple was first a non-disciple. One of the broadest distinctions in the Wesleyan tradition is the belief that it is God’s desire for every person to respond to His invitation of faith.

John 3:16, “For God loved the whole world...”.

It is God’s desire for everyone to be presented as fully mature.

Everyone. Everywhere.

FOUR RESPONSES TO THE GOSPEL

RESPONSE #1: NO (Red Light)

RESPONSE #2: MAYBE (Yellow Light)

RESPONSE #3: YES (Green Light)

RESPONSE #4: I’m a Christian
Session seven focuses on the importance of gathering as the church.

Every time new believers are added through missional activity a corresponding next step must be made. Two options exist:

- Gather in an _______ church.
- Gather as a ______ church.

Gather in an existing church

**Hebrews 10:24-25**

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
Session eight includes a time of personal reflection as the students list the practices that contribute to their relationship with Jesus.
Throughout the course, students are introduced to a tool called “The 4:1:1,” which stands for four questions in one sitting on one sheet of paper. The four questions are, “Why? Who? What? and When?” The 4:1:1 summarizes the core content of The Sent Lab in a way that can be easily reproduced and shared with others.

The final classroom session concludes with a service of commissioning. Each student receives the laying on of hands, prayer, and a declaration of authority for ministry.

Commissioning

Matthew 4:19

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

Where am I sent?

Everywhere you are. And specifically where God leads you.

Why am I sent?

Because disciples are sent, just as He was sent.

Prayer

Jesus, I commit to joining you in your work in this world. Give me ‘eyes to see and ears to hear’ where you are leading me. I receive your authority and I will abide in You. Grant me the faith and courage to follow you wherever you lead, whatever the cost.

Commissioning

In Isaiah 6, the prophet heard the voice of the Lord saying,

“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

My (brother/sister/brothers and sisters), from the time of the apostles, persons with suitable gifts and graces have been set apart by the laying on of hands and prayer for ministry in the church of Jesus Christ our Lord. We trust that the Spirit of God has called you to join Jesus in His harvest field. As earnest prayer is made for the fulfillment of the Spirit’s gift in you, receive the laying on of hands as the seal of your vocation by the Spirit.

__________, Take authority, to join Jesus, as one sent into His harvest field, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
This graphical illustration is repeated throughout the course to provide handles for retention. Students take turns drawing the illustration on the whiteboard and reciting the movements in the harvest field.
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