

## ABSTRACT

### WESLEYAN DISCIPLESHIP GROUP:

#### WESLEYAN DISCIPLESHIP AS A CATALYST FOR EQUIPPING SERVANTS

by

Steven Kayne Pulliam

This project led a group of twenty-three persons through a twelve-week study in Wesleyan discipleship and spiritual disciplines called the Wesleyan Discipleship Group at Central United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, from January to March 2011. The study explored and showed a strong relationship between knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices and church members' readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership. The participants of the study were chosen by purposive sampling on the condition that they had completed at least two years of the *Disciple Bible Study* courses. The study was qualitative, utilizing researcher-designed pre- and post-intervention questionnaires to ascertain participants' knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and spiritual disciplines and participants' involvement in servant ministry and servant leadership. An additional instrument for exploring the relationship among knowledge and practice of Wesleyan spiritual disciplines, servant ministry, and servant leadership was a researcher-designed guided response journal. The response journal guided participants to relate their experience of implementing Wesleyan spiritual disciplines to their understanding of and readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership.

The results of the study showed an increased understanding of Wesleyan spiritual disciplines and devotional practices regardless of the gender and age of participants. The

participants grew in their relationship with God through practicing Wesleyan spiritual disciplines, or the means of grace. Small group accountability proved vital toward implementing the means of grace and growth toward Christlikeness. In addition, the study revealed a strong correlation between practicing the means of grace and the participants' readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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My hope and prayer is that this project may bring honor to Jesus and strengthen his Church. To God be the glory!

## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM

#### Introduction

In his book *Shaped by the Word*, M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. observes that spiritual formation is something that is happening, and has happened, to every human being. Spiritual formation is unavoidable because all of life is spiritual formation. Mulholland contends, “Spiritual formation is the primal reality of human existence” (25). The implication is that if the church is not intentional about discipling, or forming the souls of its members into Christlikeness, their souls will be shaped by something or someone other than Christ.

Dallas Willard asserts that the Christian church has made discipleship optional for its members (*Great Omission* 11). He observes that non-discipleship is a tragic failure of the church today. He refers to the lack of intentional discipleship as the *elephant* walking around in the church that everyone tries to ignore but of which everyone is aware (*Divine Conspiracy* 301). George Barna comments, “Almost every church in our country has some type of discipleship program, or set of activities, but stunningly few have churches of disciples” (*Growing True Disciples* 20). The failure to make disciples ultimately leads to an absence of servant leaders within the local church to carry out the mission of the church.

Central United Methodist Church (CUMC) in Fayetteville, Arkansas, is a large membership church with over four thousand members and an average worship attendance of over 1,400 per Sunday. The mission statement of CUMC is “Making Christ central to life to the people of northwest Arkansas and around the world” (Central United

Methodist Church). The mission is based on the command of Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 to go and make disciples. CUMC also has a visual for discipleship that comes from *Simple Church* by Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger. The discipleship process consists of four main words: *connect*, *grow*, *serve*, and *reach*. The desire is that people will *connect with Christ* through worship weekly, *grow in Christ* through attending one small group or class opportunity weekly, *serve with Christ* in an ongoing area of ministry, and *reach others for Christ* through intentional witness by words and actions. CUMC's adult discipleship ministries fall into the *grow* area of this process.

The hope of CUMC's discipleship ministries is that members will grow in Christlikeness, serve in meaningful ministry, and be equipped for servant leadership within the life of the church. However, the number of people involved in intentional discipleship groups that holds them accountable dwindles. In addition, a large percentage of persons who attend CUMC identify a lack of disciplined spiritual practices and accountability as two of the major reasons why they find themselves spiritually stalled (Willow Creek 37). Nonetheless, the people who attend CUMC express the desire to grow and to have a clear pathway for growth (11). Furthermore, while over 85 percent of the members of CUMC attend church three or four times a month, only a little over half participate in ministries of the church one to two times per month, and less than a quarter serve those in need through the CUMC ministries one to two times a month (22). The vast majority of the members are what Calvin Miller terms, "take-it-easy followers" (158).

The adult discipleship ministries of CUMC consist of a variety of Sunday school classes, a number of *Disciple Bible Study I-IV* classes (Wilke and Wilke), several small

groups, and some special interest groups for men, women, singles, and divorced persons. Each of these ministries has its own goals, but these goals do not necessarily relate to the mission statement of the church or to the vision for discipleship. The *Disciple Bible Study* classes and some of the small groups call for a higher level of commitment in terms of class preparation than do the Sunday school classes and the majority of the special interest classes. *Disciple Bible Study* has traditionally been one of the stronger ministries of CUMC. However, enrollment in *Disciple Bible Study* at CUMC has declined over the last three years. *Disciple Bible Study* involves a commitment of nine months for in-depth Bible study, which includes daily preparation on the part of participants and a weekly group meeting for study, sharing, and prayer. However, many who take *Disciple Bible Study* choose not to serve because they believe their commitment to *Disciple* is the only commitment necessary. In addition, many who have taken all four years of *Disciple* move on to other churches because they have *consumed* all the Bible studies that CUMC offers. While benefits exist with *Disciple* in allowing people to get to know the Scriptures on a deeper level than most of the Sunday school offerings, it has created a dependency upon a program and not necessarily enabled participants to grow into a deeper intimacy with God and increased desire to serve and love their neighbor.

Sunday school is also a large ministry with over twenty classes ranging from five persons in the smallest class to over one hundred in the largest class. The studies in Sunday school vary from current events to topical studies to Bible teaching. Each of these ministries, or programs, coexists alongside one another without the church asking if it is intentional about equipping people for service.



Isolde Driessen, Chris Hermans, and Aad de Jong write that the methods for Christian education are dependent upon the intended goals (201). In the Methodist tradition, the goal of the Christian's life is "to be inwardly and outwardly devoted to God; all in heart and life" (Wesley, *Plain Account* 30). In addition, John Wesley emphasizes that progress toward the goal of Christian life, or Christian perfection, would occur if people participated in the *means of grace* of prayer, Scripture, fasting, the Lord's Supper, Christian conferencing, and works of charity (Henderson 134). Works of charity are the outflow of the devotional practices of a disciple and demonstrate themselves in service. While Wesley was clear in his goal for discipleship for the Methodists, CUMC is unclear. Unclear goals for discipleship send the message that discipleship is not a goal for church members, which leads to an absence of disciples equipped for servant ministry. Therefore, the problem at CUMC consists of a lack of an intentional discipleship plan that leads to a deep, growing relationship with God that equips individuals for a life of service in the kingdom.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a pilot group from the CUMC church, called the Wesley Discipleship Group, in a twelve-week study of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices from which a core group emerged to develop a discipleship plan.

### **Research Questions**

In fulfilling the purpose of this dissertation, three questions guided this research.

**Research Question #1**

What were the participants' practice and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices prior to their participation in the Wesley Discipleship Group?

**Research Question #2**

What changes occurred in the participants' practice and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices as a result of participating in the twelve-week intervention?

**Research Question #3**

What was the overall effectiveness of the Wesley Discipleship Group process in helping participants to incorporate Wesleyan devotional practices into their lives and to prepare them for servant ministry in the kingdom?

**Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are provided in order to clarify their use in the study.

*Disciples* are learners and followers of Jesus Christ who imitate Christ in their lives. Willard describes disciples as “practitioners” who “apply their growing understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven to every aspect of their life on earth” (*Great Omission* xi). Formation into Christlikeness, as well as having the mind of Christ, is the goal of discipleship (Phil. 2:5; Manskar 18). The lives of disciples express themselves by an increasing love of God and neighbor as God transforms disciples by the work of the Holy Spirit (Matthaei 52). Disciples respond to Christ's commission to “go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19) through discipling others (Matthaei 37).

The natural flow of growing disciples' lives leads them to employ the gifts, graces, and training they have received for the sake of serving others. According to

Robert K. Greenleaf, *servant leaders* are persons who desire to serve first and then aspire to lead (27). C. Gene Wilkes defines servant leaders as those who “serve the mission” of the church or organization and “leads by serving others on mission with [them]” (18). Servant leaders reflect the character of Christ in their lives and empower those they serve (Ogden and Meyer 15). Disciples who live in obedience to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment to love God and neighbor are by nature servant leaders because they serve the mission to make disciples and empower those they serve to become followers of Christ.

*Pilot group*, in this study, refers to an initial group of persons led through the twelve-week ministry intervention in Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices. Participants in the pilot group were selected based on their completing at least two years of *Disciple Bible Study*.

### **Ministry Intervention**

The ministry intervention involved a pilot group of twenty-three persons for a twelve-week study called the Wesley Discipleship Group at Central United Methodist Church. The participants were members of CUMC who had previously completed at least two years of *Disciple Bible Study*. The intervention occurred at CUMC during the months of January, February, and March 2011. The group met weekly on Wednesday evenings for two hours to study Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices, for prayer, and accountability. The group meeting began with all twenty-three persons gathering for an opening prayer followed by teaching on Wesleyan discipleship and practice. The class then split into three different groups for prayer and accountability in implementing the discipleship and devotional practices they had studied.

Throughout the study, participants were given time during the class to respond to a guided response journal to record their experience of implementing the Wesleyan devotional practice studied the previous week. In particular, the response journal directed participants to relate their experience of implementation of the devotional practice to their understanding and readiness for servant ministry in the kingdom. In addition, group members were assigned daily Scripture readings from Reuben P. Job's *A Wesleyan Spiritual Reader* for the daily practice of reading Scripture, praying, and preparing for the group meeting, teaching, and discussion.

### **Context**

The wider context in which the ministry intervention occurred is the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church, is a global mainline denomination. The founding of the denomination dates back to Wesley in the eighteenth century. The past fifty years the United Methodist Church in the United States has been declining in church membership ("Data Resources").

CUMC is in the Arkansas Conference, which is a part of the Southwest Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, and is comprised of eight states: Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. CUMC is part of the Northwest District of the Arkansas Conference. Madison, Carroll, Benton, and Washington Counties make up the Northwest District.

The local church context in which the ministry intervention occurred is Central United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Fayetteville is the largest city in the Northwest Arkansas Metropolitan area and serves as the setting for the University of Arkansas. In addition, Northwest Arkansas is home to three major corporations:

WalMart, J. B. Hunt, and Tyson foods. CUMC has been a part of Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas since 1832. The membership of CUMC consists almost exclusively of Caucasian families with the majority of the people affiliated with the university, corporations, vendors to these corporations, and other local businesses. The church has a conservative, evangelical theology with a priority placed on the role of Scripture. CUMC has not followed the trend of the United Methodist Church with regard to members. The membership of CUMC is over four thousand, and it continues to grow each year. The weekly worship offerings consist of two contemporary and two traditional worship services with an average attendance of 1,400 persons per Sunday.

The largest percentage of persons who make up CUMC's membership are from age forty to forty-nine years old (774 persons); the second largest are from fifty to fifty-nine years of age (629 persons); and, the third largest are from thirty to thirty-nine years of age (626 persons). The twenty to twenty-nine-year-olds also make up a large number of the membership population (502 persons). Other age ranges are represented in the membership of CUMC as well but are significantly lower in numbers. The majority of the family units that make up CUMC are families with children and/or youth in the home. CUMC's membership consists of very few minorities.

The population sample for which this ministry intervention occurred was a group of twenty-three people from the membership of CUMC. The members of the group participated in a twelve-week Wesley Discipleship Group that met weekly at the church for two hours. The participants of the Wesley Discipleship Group were selected on the basis that they had completed at least two years of the *Disciple Bible Study*. The participants were representative of the demographics of CUMC.

## **Methodology**

The intervention that occurred was the implementation of a pilot group called the Wesley Discipleship Group. The pilot group consisted of twenty-three adult members of CUMC who had completed at least *Disciple Bible Study II*. Group members met two hours each week for twelve weeks to study Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices, to pray for one another, to encourage one another, and to maintain accountability. Participants made weekly journal entries throughout the duration of the twelve-week study.

The research model used for this study was an exploratory qualitative study. The study utilized both a pre-intervention and post-intervention interview. The weekly guided response journals provided the participants the opportunity to assess the changes that occurred in their understanding and behavior in relation to Wesleyan spiritual formation and their readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership. The participants were given ten minutes at the beginning of each class to record how they implemented the devotional practices as a result of what was taught during class the preceding week. These journals were collected during the class after the participants completed them.

### **Participants**

Purposive sampling served as the method for selecting participants. The basis for participating in the study consisted of having had completed at least two years of *Disciple Bible Study*. Ten males and thirteen females ages 41 to 80 participated in the study. The participants were Caucasian and represented the overall adult membership of CUMC.

**Instrumentation**

This was an exploratory qualitative study. Data collection took place in three ways. First, the Wesleyan discipleship pre-intervention interview gauged participants' knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices prior to the intervention. Second, the Wesleyan discipleship post-intervention interviews provided me with the ability to explore the relationship between the growth of the participants' understanding of the relationship between the practice of Wesleyan spiritual disciplines and readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership. The pre- and post-intervention interviews were semi-structured. Third, data collection happened through the Wesley discipleship response journals given to and collected from the participants each week during the twelve weeks of the Wesley Discipleship Group meetings.

**Variables**

The independent variables of this study were the Wesley Discipleship Group and the weekly group meetings. One dependent variable in this study was the participants' growth in knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices. Another dependent variable was their readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership in the kingdom, as measured by the pre- and post-intervention interviews and the guided response journals. The intervening variables involved the group dynamics, the demographics of the group, and the lack of consistent journal entries from all participants.

**Data Collection**

The data collection took place in two ways. First, data collection occurred through the Wesley Discipleship Group pre- and post-intervention interviews. These semi-

structured interviews aimed at exploring participants' knowledge and understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices. Second, data was collected weekly through the Wesley Discipleship Group response journals.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected through the Wesley Discipleship Group pre-intervention interviews, the Wesley Discipleship Group post-intervention interviews, and the Wesley Discipleship Group response journals were coded by patterns, relationships, and themes. Careful consideration was given to the relationship between the twelve-week study and the knowledge and practice of Wesleyan devotional practices and ministry involvement. In addition, the data analysis considered the relationship between the twelve-week ministry intervention and the participants' readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership.

### **Delimitations and Generalizability**

The study was limited to one particular United Methodist church implementing a pilot group known as the Wesleyan Discipleship Group. A second limiting factor was that it only studied a small percentage of CUMC's total population. However, based on the results of the study, other United Methodist churches can use this information in the future in developing a plan focusing on Wesleyan discipleship that cultivates servant ministry and servant leadership among members.

### **Theological Foundation**

The foundation for this study centers upon the faithfulness of the church to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20). This faithfulness is seen in intentionally making disciples who live out the Great Commandment to love God and love neighbor (Mark



12:29-31; Matt. 22:37-40; Luke 10:27). Jesus instructs his disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have command you” (Matt. 28:19-20, NRSV). The fulfillment of the Great Commission does not exist with the proclamation of the gospel alone nor with the mere transmittal of information about the gospel. Jesus’ instructions for disciple making must include teaching these new disciples “to obey everything” that Jesus has commanded (Willard, *Spirit* 15). Willard contends that discipleship involves character formation “into the character of Christ himself” as disciples are taught to obey the commands of Jesus (15). He observes that the practice of the church has been to “make converts” and “baptize them into church membership” at the expense of making disciples of Jesus (260).

The theological understanding of discipleship consists of the high commitment of entering into a master-disciple relationship and renouncing the former way of life prior to entering this relationship. For the disciple of Jesus, a high commitment means entering into a master-disciple relationship with him (Wilkins 41). Entering into this master-disciple relationship includes the denying of the self as lord and submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* 28), “abiding in him” (John 15:4), and having “the mind that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

Important to the master-disciple relationship is embodying the life of the master. Jesus calls the disciples to deny themselves and to take the nature of a servant. Jesus’ call to self-denial and taking on a servant’s nature is the call to embody his life. The use of the early Christological hymn quoted by Paul in Philippians 2:5-11 shows the corollary between the life of Jesus and those who follow him:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:5-11)

The theological understanding of *kenosis* plays a key role in discipleship. *Kenosis*, or the “self-emptying” of Christ (2:7), reveals the nature of God as a humble servant (Sims). In *emptying* himself, Christ abandoned any claims to his rights and privileges to which he could hold for his own advantage (Craddock 41; O’Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 206). When one becomes a follower of Christ, the same holds true. The disciple releases any claims to rights and privileges in this life in order to follow Jesus faithfully and become like Jesus. Adrian van Kaam and Susan Muto describe life for those undergoing Christian formation “as a series of acts of self-emptying” (179). The life of a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ embodies the servant nature of Christ.

In this study, the Wesleyan tradition serves as the framework for fulfilling the Great Commission in making disciples who love God and love neighbor. The aim of Christian discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition is holiness of heart and life. Wesley proclaims that salvation is the work of God’s grace “*for us* in Jesus Christ and *in us* through the work of the Holy Spirit” (original emphasis; Mattheai 52). However, disciples play a role in their faith formation by responding to God’s grace in the continued work of the Holy Spirit. In the Wesleyan tradition, “loving God and loving neighbor is our call to Christian discipleship” (52). As disciples respond to God’s grace at work within them, their love for God and for neighbor increases.

Wesley believed that the disciple's life followed the pattern of the life of Jesus, which serves as the ultimate example of holiness of heart and life. In *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley describes the characteristics of a life patterned after Christ:

[Christian perfection] is to have “the mind which was in Christ,” and to “walk as He walked”; to have all the mind that was in Him, and always walk as He walked: in other words, to be inwardly and outwardly devoted to God; all devoted in heart and life. (30)

A disciple whose life imitates the life of Jesus lives to love God and love neighbor. In addition, a disciple who loves God and loves neighbor will embody Christ's call to self-denial. Wesley cautions, as did Jesus, that people cannot claim to be disciples of Jesus without denying themselves. Instead of learning from Jesus, these persons learn from “other masters” and “grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (*Bicentennial Edition 2*: 238, 247). Discipleship is an invitation to die to self and become alive to God (Collins, *Soul Care* 148).

Spiritual formation is the process of conforming to Christlikeness in a master-disciple relationship and necessitates participating in “grace-sustained disciplines” to allow disciples to be formed by the Holy Spirit (Willard, *Great Omission* 53, 65, 75). Participation in spiritual disciplines brings intentionality on the part of the disciple to obey Christ (65). Wesley calls these grace-sustained disciplines the “means of grace,” which he defined in the following terms: “By ‘means of grace,’ I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby He might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace” (*Bicentennial Edition 2*: 381). Wesley cautions that separated from the Spirit of God and growing in the love of God, the means of grace do not profit at all (382). In attending to the means of grace, disciples “look singly to the *power* of His Spirit, and the *merits* of

His Son” (original emphasis; 383). Viewed and used correctly, God’s grace works through these ordinary channels for renewal of the “soul in righteousness and true holiness” (396-97). The means of grace consist of *works of piety* and *works of mercy*, which create avenues for the follower of Christ to grow into deeper love of God and neighbor through the Spirit. Wesley warns that “performing our duty to God” through works of piety “will not excuse us from duty to our neighbor” (1: 493). Chapter 2 more fully describes spiritual formation as a key to understanding discipleship and incorporating the spiritual disciplines for intentionally making disciples who live in fidelity to Christ and the Great Commandment.

Leadership in the church flows from discipleship. Discipleship is primary in making leaders (Hirsch 119). The spiritual formation of an individual toward Christlikeness or away from Christlikeness is witnessed in the character of a leader and the actions and attitudes that character exhibits. Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini list *character* as the first of their four leadership competencies, ahead of knowledge, skills, and emotions (147). Likewise, J. Robert Clinton gives first priority to spiritual formation, or intentional discipleship, in developing leaders. Clinton views and defines spiritual formation as follows:

Of particular interest to Christian leadership is character formation. The term *spiritual formation* is used in the leadership concentration at the School of World Mission to designate the transformation process whereby a leader’s inner character is developed. It is defined as the development of the inner life of a person of God so that the person experiences more of God, reflects more God-like characteristics in personality and in everyday relationships, and increasingly knows the power and presence of God in ministry. This should be the bottom line of any development or training. (214-15)

Through intentional discipleship that focuses on fulfilling the Great Commission and living out the Great Commandment, servants and leaders who love God and neighbor emerge.

### **Overview**

Chapter 2 of this dissertation contains a review of selected literature pertinent to discipleship, spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines, Wesleyan spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines, and servant leadership. Chapter 3 presents the methodology. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study. Chapter 5 provides analysis of the results and a discussion of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

If growth in membership measured the health of a church, CUMC would be considered a very healthy church. Four worship venues accommodate the number of persons in attendance each Sunday for worship. However, CUMC struggles to move people to discipleship that leads to a deep, loving relationship with God, equipped for service in the kingdom.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an intentional discipleship ministry through a pilot group known as the Wesleyan Discipleship Group. The Wesleyan Discipleship Group consisted of a twelve-week study to guide the participants in the biblical understanding of the meaning of Christian discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition. Participants in the group were not only instructed in the foundational understandings and practices of Wesleyan discipleship and the means of grace but also were encouraged to implement these practices in their daily lives. Through this intentional process of discipleship, a core group emerged to develop a discipleship plan.

#### **Biblical and Theological Foundations**

The last words Matthew records in his gospel are the words of Jesus commissioning his disciples. The resurrected Jesus met with his eleven disciples in Galilee and gave them instructions for continuing his work on earth:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:18-20)

The commissioned disciples were to draw upon the authority and power of the Messiah to make disciples of all nations (Willard, *Great Omission* 5). Making disciples consists of “baptizing them,” which means “initiating people to the faith” (Keener 130) and teaching them to obey the commands of Jesus (Keener; Green, McKnight, and Marshall 539). Obedience to the commands of Jesus is evident in a life of “righteousness to God” and “love toward others” (Green, McKnight, and Marshall 539-40). The new disciples, baptized and taught, would live out the teachings of Jesus. These disciples demonstrate righteousness to God in the world by living out the commands of Jesus and making his love known in the world (540). Making disciples is the charge and goal of every church (Hagner 886).

The definition of a disciple is someone who is a follower or adherent to a teacher, leader, or master (Green, McKnight, and Marshall 176). The process of discipling involves a master-disciple relationship between the one who disciplines and the one being disciplined (Wilkins 41). The concept and practice of discipleship did not originate with Jesus; in fact, the practice had a long history prior to Jesus (Wilkins). The master-disciple relationship existed within Old Testament times and was a part of Judaism during the time of Jesus.

### **Discipleship in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament Hebrew translates the term disciple *talmid* and *limmûd* (Green, McKnight, and Marshall 176). These terms for disciple are rarely used in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, the relationship of a follower to a master is evident in the Old Testament. Michael J. Wilkins states that the call to discipleship—the master-disciple relationship—finds its beginning in God’s call to Abram in Genesis 12:1 when

God says to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1). According to Wilkins, the summons by God for Abram to forsake everything is the same challenge Jesus puts to those who would be disciples (Wilkins 52-53). Jesus tells to those who seek to follow him to forsake their lives:

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (Mark 8:34-35).

The master-disciple relationship existed between God and Abram, just as it existed between Jesus and his followers.

While God called Abraham and established a covenant with Abraham, and later reaffirmed his covenant with Isaac and Jacob, God directed the call to Abraham’s offspring in later generations. God said to Abraham, “The land that I will give you I will give to you and your offspring forever” (Gen. 13:15). The exodus from Egypt reaffirmed the call of God. God miraculously delivered his people and provided protection and guidance as he went ahead of the Israelites throughout their time in the wilderness (Exod. 13:21-22; Wilkins 57). Wilkins contends Deuteronomy 6:4-9, known as the *Shema*, which contains the *fundamental truth* and the *fundamental duty* of the Jewish faith, speaks of discipleship (58). The fundamental truth is that God is One. The fundamental duty of God’s people is to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength. Living in fidelity to the *Shema* finds concrete expression by *following* God (58).

Other places in the Old Testament bear witness to the master-disciple relationship. Moses and Joshua’s relationship gave witness of a *discipleship* relationship (Wilkins 61). The book of Isaiah bears witness to the master-disciple relationship, proclaiming, “Bind



up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples” (Isa. 8:16). Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall point to the prophets Samuel, Elisha, and Jeremiah as having master-disciple models in their relationships with other prophets. First Samuel 19:20 speaks of Samuel standing in charge of the company or prophets in Ramah. The company of prophets sat before Elisha at Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38; Green, McKnight, and Marshall 176). Elisha, himself, was in a master-disciple relationship with Elijah (Wilkins 61). The relationship between Jeremiah and Baruch illustrates another master-disciple relationship (Jer. 36:32). The training as a scribe “skilled in the law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6) and a “scholar of the text of the Commandments of the Lord” (Ezra 7:11) points to a master-disciple relationship in which Ezra took part (Green, McKnight, and Marshall 176).

### **Discipleship in the New Testament**

The English translation of the word *disciple* derives from the Greek term *mathētēs* in the New Testament. The writings of Herodotus, the father of history, first employed the term in the fifth century BCE. Frequent use of the term in Greek literature after Herodotus illustrates that discipleship was commonly understood by the Greek culture at that time (Wilkins 72). The term describes various relationships between a disciple and a master, such as *learner/apprentice*, *pupil/academician*, and *disciple/adherent* (Wilkins 73-75; Green, McKnight, and Marshall 176). However, when Herodotus used the term *mathētēs*, he did so to identify persons who made a life commitment to a master (Wilkins 74).

During the time of the New Testament, discipleship shifted from the disciple primarily gaining knowledge by following of a great thinker or religious leader to

imitating a religious leader's life and conduct (Keener 824; Wilkins 76-77). Considering the context of Jesus' earthly ministry and the writings of the New Testament, the development of discipleship proves evident (78).

Just as the master-disciple relationship varied in the wider Greek culture, it varied within Judaism at the time of Jesus. Green, McKnight, and Marshall describe several different groups of individuals as disciples within Judaism during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry (176). The Gospels speak of various groups of disciples. The Gospel of Mark tells of the disciples of the Pharisees and the disciples of John who fast (2:15). In addition, the Pharisees sent their disciples to Jesus to entrap him by his teaching (Matt. 22:15-16). John's Gospel gives account of those of a certain synagogue, claiming to be "disciples of Moses" in charging the man born blind who was healed by Jesus with his association with Jesus (9:28-29; Green, McKnight, and Marshall 176). As with all disciple-master relationships of that time, these disciples made lifelong commitments to a master and their master's way of life (Wilkins 39).

In the New Testament, the term *disciple* appears 269 times. The term *Christian*, by contrast, is found only three times. In fact, Willard writes, "The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ" (*Great Omission* 5). The Gospels present Jesus as expecting a lifelong commitment to his way of life in a master-disciple relationship (Brower 180; Wilkins 39). Discipleship, at the center of Jesus' ministry, called for a high commitment for those who would follow him. "Come, follow me" (Mark 1:17) is the call put forth to Andrew and Peter while they cast their nets into the sea. Answering this call meant commitment to leave behind their trade as fisherman, their homes, and families (Herman 37). The term *disciple* of Jesus carries with

it the themes obedience, commitment, and sacrifice. Dietrich Bonhoeffer contends, “When men followed him, they died to their previous life. That is why he expected them to leave behind all they had” (235). Furthermore, they needed to rearrange life in order to be with Jesus. Jesus now stood as master of every aspect of their lives (Willard, *Great Omission* 20).

This level of devotion is evident in the themes of obedience and sacrifice, which are essential to the life of the disciple and found throughout the four Gospels. The family of Jesus consists of those who are obedient to will of his Father in heaven (Matt. 29:49-50). Obedience plays a crucial role in the disciples’ imitation of Jesus, their master (Green, McKnight, and Marshall 188; Wilkins 190). Jesus instructed the disciples to make new disciples and to “teach them to *obey* [original emphasis] all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). Such an all-encompassing instruction worked only because the disciples had learned obedience that they could pass on to others. Essential to the Christian community, then and now, is obedience to Christ’s words (Willard, *Great Omission* 44-45).

Obedience to Christ’s words leads to a life of sacrifice and service. Jesus identifies himself as a servant (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27) and teaches his disciples that they are to follow his example of servanthood (Mark 10:42-43; John 13:15-17). Jesus lived the humble servant life he called his disciples to follow (Wilkes 38). When a dispute arose among the disciples over which one was greatest, Jesus reminded them that they must be like him, one who serves (Luke 22:27). The life of a disciple cannot be defined by worldly, status-seeking standards. The disciples’ worth in the eyes of Jesus can be found in their willingness to take up their crosses (Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34;

Luke 9:23; 14:27). Jesus' disciples follow his example of undivided loyalty to serve God and serve one another in obedience (Green, McKnight, and Marshall 747).

### **Discipleship in the Wesleyan Tradition**

The aim of discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition is holiness of heart and life. Holiness of heart focuses on the commandment to love God, while holiness of life focuses on the command to love neighbor (Matthaei 25-26; Yrigoyen 36-37). Wesley also stressed sanctification, a term he used to refer to holiness of heart and life in the Wesleyan tradition (Yrigoyen 36). The love for God and love for neighbor does not originate in the disciple but originates from God and the work of the Holy Spirit (Matthaei 37). Holiness is an attribute of God that is communicated to human beings by God's grace through the Holy Spirit (Collins, *Theology* 21-22).

According to Kenneth J. Collins, the divine attributes of God's holiness and his love stand in relationship to one another (*Theology* 8, 21). Viewing God's love without regard for God's holiness can lead to a love defined in human terms, which can further lead to a self-indulgent love based on people's own preferences (7, 20-21). God's holiness absent from his love equals a distant God who does not seek fellowship with humans (21). Wesley held the holiness of God and the love of God not only in relation with one another but also in tension with one another. God is both set apart in holiness and reaching out to embrace in love. The Christian imitates God's holiness and love:

[H]oliness creates distance; love seeks communion. These same two predicates of the divine being, that is, holiness and love, describe—indeed epitomize—what is the will of the Most High for the church, for those who are not only “called out” and “set apart” from the world in holiness, but also invited to enter that same world in love and mission. (Collins 21)

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the holy love of God becomes a reality in the lives of the community of faith (9).

In describing the character of a Methodist, Wesley states that Methodists are identified based on the love, which the Methodists have in their hearts given by the Holy Spirit. Methodists can also be identified by their desire to keep the commandment to love God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength. Furthermore, written on the heart of the Methodist is the commandment to love one's neighbor as his or her own soul ("Character of a Methodist").

### **Wesley's Preferred Use of *Christian***

While Wesley used the terms Christian and Methodist in his sermons and writings, Randy L. Maddox points out that Wesley shied away from using the term *disciple* and the phrase *making disciples* ("Wesley's Prescription," United Methodist 3). According to Maddox, Wesley avoided these terms for several reasons. One reason is that the term *disciple* can also refer to being a disciple of a mere human leader and accepting that person's teachings without question. A second negative connotation of the term *disciple* for Wesley, according to Maddox, comes from the word's association with the term *adherent*. The Methodists of Wesley's day encouraged people to be "transformed into persons who truly love God and neighbor" rather than mere "adherents to a Christian community" (3). Christians who love God and neighbor, Wesley terms *real* Christians, as opposed to *nominal* Christians. Wesley desires that nominal Christians become real Christians. Maddox argues that one further reason for Wesley not embracing the term *disciple* is its association with the term *pupil*. Maddox contends the term *pupil* is closely associated with the early stage of a butterfly, *pupa*. The butterfly leaves this transitional

stage behind. In Wesley's view, Christians constantly undergo transformation to become *real* Christians (3-4).

Wesley contrasts the *almost Christian*, or *nominal Christian*, with the *altogether Christian*, or *real Christian*, in his sermon "The Almost Christian." Wesley drew from his own experience of being an *almost* Christian in his sermon. His own attempts to please God, resist evil, partake of the means of grace, and do good to others left him an almost Christian (*Bicentennial Edition* 1: 136-37). Wesley states that *altogether* Christians first keep the First Commandment to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. This love fills hearts and souls of Christians, and, subsequently, Christians find their only delight in the Lord. Secondly, *altogether* Christians love their neighbor (137). Keeping these commands to love God and love neighbor derives from loving hearts that confidently trust in salvation, which comes through Christ who provides forgiveness and reconciliation to God (138).

### **The Church Not Producing *Real* Christians**

Wesley believes the reason the Church did not influence the world in greater measure was that the Church produced so few real Christians (Maddox, "Wesley's Prescription," *Quarterly Review* 15; Wesley, *Bicentennial Edition* 4: 87-88). Wesley identified three reasons Christian communities produced nominal Christians instead of real Christians: (1) They lack understanding of Christian doctrine (Maddox 15; Wesley 4: 89); (2) nominal Christians lack the discipline needed to accompany doctrine; and, (3) nominal Christians do not practice self-denial (Maddox 15; Wesley 4: 93). Maddox contends that Wesley's observations of the church's ineffectiveness in producing real Christians can be broadly applied to the United Methodist Church today (16).

**The importance of doctrine for understanding God's grace.** The importance of church doctrine rests upon the understanding that it provides the worldview of people, which, in turn, shapes their decisions and responses to life, then shapes the formation of their life and character. In this search for meaning in life, people seek a worldview that provides them with meaning in life and the ability to make sense of the events taking place in the world. According to the Apostle Paul, having the "mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5) enables Christians to have a correct worldview (Maddox, "Wesley's Prescription," *Quarterly Review* 16). Wesley relates the "mind of Christ" to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ in producing the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 (Collins, *Theology* 128; Maddox 16; Wesley, *Bicentennial Edition* 1: 160).

The key doctrines of Wesleyan discipleship are steeped in the understanding and experience of God's grace. The starting point for understanding God's grace comes from understanding the human condition of sin and the need for God's prevenient grace. Prevenient grace is defined as grace that comes before one becomes aware of God's grace at work in his or her life (Harper, *Way to Heaven* 34; Yrigoyen 30). Prevenient grace leads people to repentance and gives humans the capacity to respond to the awareness of God and the conviction of the need for salvation from sins (Harper 36-37; Yrigoyen 30).

In addition, God's grace experienced through justification, new birth, and sanctification plays a key role in the understanding Methodist doctrine. In "The New Birth," Wesley states that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity consist of the doctrines of justification and new birth (*Bicentennial Edition* 2: 187). The doctrine of justification relates to what God has done for humankind in forgiving their sins. The doctrine of new birth relates to what God has done "*in us* [original emphasis], in

renewing our fallen nature” (187). Wesley points out that God created human beings in God’s own image, free from the powers of sin, holy in God’s image, and full of love. Adam and Eve’s willful disobedience originated from their disbelief in God’s command and belief in the words of the Devil instead. Collins notes that this lack of faith breeds pride and self-will, which, in turn, leads to evil dispositions (*Theology* 58). Indeed, humanity receives the sinful legacy of Adam and Eve (Harper, *Way to Heaven* 26; Collins 66; Yrigoyen 29). The errant use of Adam’s free will to disobey God caused all who come after him to bear the “image of the devil, in pride and self-will” (Wesley 2: 189-90). Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. notes that sin manifests itself through violating the commands to love God and love neighbor (29). Because everyone after Adam is born into sin, everyone needs to experience the new birth through the Holy Spirit to be born again (Wesley 2: 190).

The new birth is not something that someone can produce on his or her own but must be received as a free gift from God. However, when a person receives this gift, God works in that person through the Holy Spirit. This work empowers the Christian to cooperate with the grace of God at work in his or her life (Collins, *Theology* 203). However, in Wesley’s day, salvation was viewed too often as forgiveness of sins alone. Wesley challenges this understanding by proclaiming a doctrine that includes not only the pardoning grace of God but a doctrine that also proclaims the empowering and healing work of the Spirit to bring about holy dispositions in the lives of Christians (Maddox, “Wesley’s Prescription,” *Quarterly Review* 17-19).

The lives of *real* Christians consist of lifelong journeys of transformation into the image of Christ (Maddox, “Wesley’s Prescription,” *Quarterly Review* 19). Wesley’s



sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," points out that salvation does not consist of a once-for-all event in the lives of Christians, beginning and ending with the pardoning of sin through God's justifying grace (*Bicentennial Edition 2*: 157). Justification begins the process of sanctification in the lives of Christians as the new birth takes place (Manskar 73; Wesley 160). The new birth frees Christians to live in obedience to God, no longer subject to lives of willful sin, producing unholy dispositions. The new birth initiates freedom to keep the commands of loving God and loving neighbor (Collins, *Theology* 226). The Holy Spirit works in the lives of the Christians to save them to the uttermost (Matthaei 51). Just as Christians are justified by grace through faith, God begins the process of sanctification by grace received through faith. God's work of sanctification in the lives of believers requires cooperation on the part of Christians (Harper, *Way to Heaven* 59; Collins, *John Wesley* 264; Wesley 163).

Wesley maintains that repentance is a necessity for Christians. While faith remains the only condition necessary for salvation, responding to God's grace with repentance is the appropriate response to justification. This repentance changes the orientation of the Christian away from self-centeredness and toward a love of God and neighbor (Manskar 72). Wesley believed in the necessity of Christians to repent, thus allowing God's grace to continue to be operative. Justification and the beginnings of the process of sanctification do not free Christians from the power of sin and the temptation to sin (Manskar 72; Wesley, *Bicentennial Edition 2*: 164). Because sin remains in the heart of the believer and in the actions and words of the Christian (Wesley 165), Wesley saw the need for works of repentance, or good works, as necessary for sanctification (Matthaei 81; Wesley 166).

**The means of grace.** Wesley insists on the Christian's ability to respond to the grace of God (Maddox, "Wesley Prescription," *Quarterly Review* 21). According to Wesley, God does not impose obedience upon the Christian; rather, the Christian can respond to God's grace. Without the response of the Christian to God's grace, God does not continue to act in the life of the believer. Engaging in formative practices provides the avenue for greater freedom and holy actions (22) and also the repentance necessary for sanctification. In the "Scripture Way of Salvation," Wesley points to "works of piety" and "works of mercy" as formative practices necessary for sanctification. Wesley spells out the works of piety as follows: "Public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet, receiving the Supper of the Lord; searching the Scriptures by hearing, reading, meditating; and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as our bodily health will allow" (*Bicentennial Edition 2*: 166). The works of piety are also known as the instituted means of grace because they were instituted by Jesus and practiced by the early Church. These works of piety focus on inward holiness, providing the Christian the opportunity to live out his or her love for God (Manskar 75; Warner 168).

The Christian partakes in the works of mercy "because they are a reflection of the life and character of God in Jesus Christ" (Manskar 75). Focusing on the commandment to love neighbor, such works involve showing love to the neighbor's body and soul (Wesley, *Bicentennial Edition 2*: 166). Wesley states that these works, both works of piety and works of mercy are the "fruits meet for repentance ... necessary for full sanctification" (166). God designed these formative practices to empower Christians and to cultivate the mind of Christ and holy tempers within them (Maddox, "Wesley's Prescription," *Quarterly Review* 24). Wesley's sermon "On Zeal" reminds Christians that

all of these formative practices must find their roots in the Christians' zeal for love (3: 315). Wesley states that this zeal for love of God and love of neighbor sits on the throne of the soul of the Christian. Surrounding the throne of love in the human soul "are all *holy tempers*: long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, fidelity, temperance—and any other is comprised 'in the mind which was in Christ Jesus'" (original emphasis; 313). Works of mercy followed by works of piety surround the holy tempers. The church surrounds the works of piety. According to Wesley, the Christian should be zealous for all of these but first for love of God and love of people (Maddox 24; Wallace 135; Wesley 2: 320). Wesley observes that doctrinal understanding when he says formative practices do not guarantee transformation. The absence of practicing self-denial disables people from fully developing into mature disciples of Jesus Christ (Maddox 25).

**The necessity of self-denial.** Wesley proclaims that when Christians fail to adhere to the words of Christ, to deny themselves, to take up their cross, and to follow him (Luke 9:23; Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34), they inhibit their transformation. The lack of self-denial, which inhibits transformation, is true among Christians in general, and Methodists in particular. Correct Christian doctrine coupled with Christian discipline cannot overcome the absence of the practice of self-denial in making one fully a disciple (Wesley, *Bicentennial Edition* 4: 93). Wesley stresses these concepts in his sermon "Self Denial" (2: 45).

Wesley defines self-denial in terms of the denial of one's will in order to embrace God's will (*Bicentennial Edition* 2: 242). Wesley understands self-denial to mean conforming one's will to the will of God. Self-denial does not include seeking out suffering or avoiding anything that brings pleasure. On the contrary, self-denial leads to

happiness because it requires turning away from anything that would cause damage to one's relationship with God in Christ Jesus and the fulfillment of that relationship (Lancaster 123). The obedience of the disciple originates in the experience of God's love (Wesley 1: 427; "Character of a Methodist"). Wesley states that the fruit of God's love in the lives of the Christian expresses itself in love for neighbor and obedience to God in inward and outward holiness (*Bicentennial Edition* 1: 426). Obedience, self-denial, and participation in the means of grace allow the Christian to grow in God's grace and love and be renewed in God's image (*Plain Account* 53).

### **Discipleship in Western Culture**

The concept of discipleship continues to be a vital consideration in the development of Christians. In fact, in Western culture, Christian discipleship often gets confused with cultural patterns and preferences. Willard astutely observes that people cannot help but be disciples. Without exception, people are disciples because they must learn how to live from others. At first, this learning may have come through parents or other close family members. Teachers, playmates, and peers become a part of the disciplining network in a person's life. Often, teachers include not only instructors and professors but also glamorous and powerful public figures who orient a person's life toward God, others, and self. In other words, people take their cues about the meaning of life from these persons (*Divine Conspiracy* 272). In addition to influential people making disciples, the total cultural components combine to make disciples (Hirsch 111).

### **The Effects of Culture on Discipleship**

Alan Hirsch claims that a culture of consumerism threatens the Christian faith (106). The influence of the marketplace within the culture creates a scenario in which the

church must compete with all the marketplace religions where everything is viewed as a commodity—as a good or service (109). In a culture of consumerism, the church is seen as a place where persons can come and consume the religious goods and services that are offered (Drane 3; Hirsch 110; Guder 84). Hirsch laments the church's adoption of the characteristics of the consumer culture:

I have come to the dreaded conclusion that we simply cannot consume our way into discipleship. Consumerism as it is experienced in the everyday and discipleship as it is intended in the scriptures are simply at odds with each other. And both aim at being the master over our lives, only in marketing it is called brand loyalty or brand community. (110)

A failure to disciple intentionally creates religious consumers of a product and not disciples of the person Jesus.

George Barna recognizes the effects of culture on Christianity in his book *The Seven Faith Tribes*. The group Barna identifies as the largest faith *tribe* in America is the *Casual Christian*. His research shows that two out of every three adults in America, or roughly 150 million adults, fit into this category (29). A major life objective for the Casuals, as Barna terms them, is to experience personal comfort (31). Casuals understand that God's desire for them is to achieve happiness more than it is to become holy (36). Barna also notes that Casuals experience a lack of intimacy with God and do not place a high priority on faith practices (38, 40). Perhaps this lack of intimacy led Greg Ogden to note that the world experiences difficulty in distinguishing Christians from the rest of the world (*Transforming Discipleship* 38).

In contrast, disciples of Jesus Christ rearrange their lives to become like Jesus. Nothing else takes on the level of importance of being his disciple (Willard, *Great Omission* 7). When a rich man came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal

life, Jesus told the man that despite keeping all the commandment, he still lacked one thing. He had to sell all that he owned, give it to the poor, and then come and follow Jesus. The man went away with great grief because he had many possessions (Mark 10:22-23). Jesus exposed the one thing the rich man lacked: self-sacrificing devotion of a true disciple that would enable the young man to follow him (Lane 367). This man could not see the necessity of rearranging his affairs to that end. For a disciple, everything else that life could offer pales in comparison to being a follower of Jesus. The desire of the disciple is to become like the Master, to have Christ's faith that brought forth Christ's actions (Willard, *Great Omission* 24).

Wesley laments that the trappings of the world grabbed hold of the Methodist people. His ministry to the poor led many of the converts to become prosperous; however, prosperity led them to selfishness and a lack of self-denial (Willard, *Spirit* 196). Wesley's counsel to the Methodists in his sermon "The Inefficacy of Christianity" parallels Jesus' instruction to the rich man. Wesley says, "Give all you can" (original emphasis; *Bicentennial Edition* 4: 96).

Another faith tribe Barna identifies is that of the *Captive Christians* (*Seven Faith Tribes* 41). The Captives represent 36 million adults, or 16 percent of America's adult population compared to the 150 million Casuals who represent 66.7 percent. Barna explains the meaning of the term captive:

The name *Captive Christians* stems from the fact that they are, as the apostle Paul described himself, voluntary slaves to Jesus Christ. Their hearts have been so arrested by the love and grace of Jesus Christ that they are wholly captive to the mind and heart of God. (41-42)

Furthermore, Barna defines the Captives as true followers of Christ. The Captives have experienced the transformation of Christ in their lives through belief based on Scripture

and spiritual practices. Barna notes that Captives “have successfully (although not perfectly) blended biblical beliefs, spiritual behavior, and their lifestyles into an integrated way of being” (42). Barna’s research found that this group of people guards against the influence of culture through the media and is generous with their money (46-47).

Perhaps the most telling feature about this faith tribe is their understanding of keeping the command to love God. Barna reports that their relationship with God is the most important relationship for Captives. Furthermore, 96 percent of Captives believe that loving God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength exists as the greatest command (*Seven Faith Tribes* 51). This group also emerges as the tribe most likely to serve others (53). This group most represents Wesley’s *altogether* Christian in expressing love of God and love of neighbor.

### **Misconceptions of Discipleship**

The contemporary church has been ineffective in communicating the nature of discipleship, leading to a misconception of discipleship. Ogden comments that this ineffective communication has led to a *discipleship malaise*. This malaise hampers the church’s ability to affect the world through making disciples (*Transforming Discipleship* 39-40).

**Church membership over discipleship.** Willard agrees that “most of the problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have never decided to follow Jesus” (*Great Omission* 4). The reason for this lack of decision is the result of the contemporary church’s failure to make discipleship an option. Furthermore, Willard ties this failure to two specific omissions the contemporary church

leaves out of the discussions about the Great Commission. First, the church fails to make disciples who are students, or learners, of Christ. The second omission involves the failure to train disciples to become like Christ and live out his commands. Instead of making disciples, the church has drifted into making people church members (4-6; *Spirit* 260).

Similarly, Ogden outlines how the church's failure to make disciples relates to the miscommunication that discipleship is only for certain *super-Christians*, not for everyone else. Therefore, a two-tiered understanding of Christianity exists, the first tier of Christians who are disciples, and the second tier of Christians who are not disciples (*Transforming Discipleship* 48). Willard and Dieter Zander agree, stating that apprenticeship to Jesus should be communicated as normative, not communicated as something in which only super-Christians take part (24).

In an interview with Mark Galli of *Christianity Today* magazine, Eugene Peterson observes that sometimes the word *spirituality* carries the connotation of an *elitist* Christian. He contends that people recognized as *saints* are actually ordinary people, not elitist. According to Peterson, the Christian life consists of following Jesus as opposed to an emotional intimacy, which many people associate with spirituality. Peterson notes that in human relationships such as marriage and friendship persons do not always feel emotionally intimate. Instead, intimacy involves authenticity of openness and honesty (1-2).

**Church programs versus discipleship.** Greg L. Hawkins, Cally Parkinson, and Eric Arnson conducted a study at Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois, to measure the spiritual growth of church members. They also studied six other



churches. Their findings indicate that involvement in church activities does not increase a person's spiritual growth to carrying out the great commandment to love God and love neighbor (35). Ogden concurs that churches too often rely on programming to produce disciples. Receiving information and gaining knowledge tend to be the focus of programs, which promotes the idea that information causes transformation (*Transforming Discipleship* 35). However, such a focus is opposed to the biblical model, which says discipleship comes through relationship in community (42).

**Discipleship versus managing sins.** In addition, Ogden notes that the church has reduced the message of “the Christian life to the eternal benefits received from Jesus, rather than living as students of Jesus” (*Transforming Discipleship* 46). Willard agrees, adding that the church has taught the *gospel of sins management* to the exclusion of how to live the kingdom life now. Willard further describes the problem of reducing the Christian life. While Ogden only mentions reducing the Christian life to eternal benefits, Willard adds that the other side of the gospel of sins management includes those who seek to manage sins through the elimination of social evils (*Divine Conspiracy* 41). This narrow view of the gospel negates the proclamation of *transformation of life* (Foster, “Spiritual Formation Agenda” 29; Willard, *Divine Conspiracy* 41; Willard and Zanter 22). Furthermore, this narrow view of the gospel leads to a lack of belief that transformation remains a possibility in peoples' lives (Willard and Zanter 22).

Richard Foster observes that many people do not see any need for growth into Christlikeness because the liturgies of their churches tell them that they continue in daily sin through their words, thoughts, and deeds. These persons live with the assumption that until they die living lives of sinfulness will be their fate. Rather than viewing character

formation as a possibility of renewing their lives and breaking the patterns of sin, these laid-back Christians see death and going to heaven as the only option for freedom from sin and rebellion (“Spiritual Formation Agenda” 29).

**Discipleship without direction.** Another misconception leading to the failure of the church to make disciples results because the church fails to communicate to people a “clear, public pathway to maturity” (Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* 52). Churches need to develop a process for making disciples that does not confuse people and moves people into maturity (Rainer and Geiger 60). For churches to succeed in doing so, a clearly communicated discipleship process is crucial. Otherwise, confusion detracts people from entering into the process of maturity and increased levels of commitment (70-71).

**Discipleship without community.** Ogden adds that the church has failed to communicate the importance of the Christian community in making disciples. Christianity has become a privatized affair between one person and God to the exclusion of the faith community. Not only does God form individuals within the church community, but God also forms the community of faith into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* 31). Ogden observes that most Christians have never taken part in accountable, discipling relationships. According to Ogden, the best context for transformation to occur in the lives of Christians happens in the context of accountable relationships (55).

**Obedience to Christ optional.** Willard contends the lack of obedience to Christ within the Church weakens the witness of Church and the Church’s impact on the world today more than any other factor:

More than any single thing, in any case, *the practical irrelevance of the obedience to Christ* [original emphasis] accounts for the weakened effect of Christianity in the world today, with its increasing tendency to emphasize political and social action as the primary way to serve God. It also accounts for the practical irrelevance of Christian faith to individual character development and overall personal sanity and well-being. (*Divine Conspiracy* xv)

He continues to lament that few Christians in the contemporary Church see the necessity of conformity to Christ's teachings, nor do they see obedience to Christ's teachings as important or essential to life (xv). However, the Great Commission gives specific instruction about teaching new disciples to obey his commands. Instructing new disciples to be obedient to the commands of Jesus allows them to know what Jesus desires from the start. These commands of Jesus provide the foundation upon which new disciples build their walk with the Lord (Dale, Dale, and Barna 92-93). Thus, the starting point for life in Christ begins with the understanding that Jesus intends for his disciples to be obedient to him and his commands (Willard, *Great Omission* 45).

### **Discipleship as Formation into Christlikeness**

According to Willard, the term discipleship has lost its meaning within the church (*Great Omission* 53). On the evangelical spectrum of the church, this lost meaning leads to discipleship being viewed as *soul winning*, primarily done by parachurch organizations. On the more liberal end of the church, discipleship carries the connotation of participating in social activity and political protests. Engaging in the battle of political and social evils can be an effect of authentic Christian spirituality but not the aim of it (53; *Spirit* 67). Willard believes that these factors have led to the need, desire, and acceptance for a new term for growing into Christlikeness—*spiritual formation* within the church (*Great Omission* 53).

Spiritual formation is the process of shaping the character and actions of the believer into the character and actions of Christ (Demarest 23; Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 27; Willard, *Great Omission* 80). Willard also defines spiritual formation as “soul formation” in which the souls of people, which have been broken because of their alienation from God, are being reformed into the image God intends (156). Foster describes this type of formation as “heart work” (“Spiritual Formation Agenda” 30). Quoting seventeenth century English Puritan John Flavel, Foster writes, “The greatest difficulty in conversion, is to win the heart *to* God; and the greatest difficulty after conversion, is to keep the heart *with* God.... Heart work is hard work indeed,” [original emphasis] (30). According to Foster, the hard work involved in the *heart work* in spiritual formation calls for taking personal responsibility for spiritual growth. Drawing from 2 Peter 3:18 where Peter instructs the people of faith to “grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” Foster expresses the responsibility people have for their formation. This formation calls for people to take up their crosses and follow Christ. Furthermore, actions result from heart work (30).

The writer of the book of Proverbs stresses that actions flow from the condition of one’s heart: “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23). Jesus spoke of the heart as foundational to a person’s action (Luke 6:43-45; Matt. 12:34-36). He instructed his disciples through an illustration of comparing good and bad fruit coming from good or bad trees. The good tree produces only good fruit, and the bad tree produces bad fruit. Likewise, the heart of a good person produces good from the treasure of the heart. The heart of an evil person produces bad fruit from the evil treasure of the heart.

Spiritual formation occurs in everyone. Without exception, every person in life undergoes spiritual formation whether it is formation toward Christlikeness or otherwise (Willard, *Great Omission* 104; Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 25-26). All persons go through the process of having their characters and their wills shaped (Willard 104).

Mulholland defines the process of Christian spiritual formation as “the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others” (*Invitation* 15). According to Mulholland, the *process* of spiritual formation into Christlikeness takes place throughout one’s life. This process is somewhat foreign because of its countercultural nature. Cultural norms demand instantaneous results. However, the process of being conformed to Christ as *lifelong* implies gradual results (*Invitation* 15; *Shaped by the Word* 25). Being conformed into Christ’s image begins by discerning the negative and destructive impact of culture on one’s spiritual formation (*Invitation* 16; *Shaped by the Word* 26).

“Being conformed to Christ’s image” does not correlate with the ideologies of current culture, which views the world through the lenses of humanism and materialism (Mulholland, *Invitation* 16; *Shaped by the Word* 26). Mulholland defines Western culture as an “objectivizing, informational, functional culture,” in which persons perceive the world and its contents “as something to be grasped, controlled, and manipulated for our own purposes, or, even worse, the purposes of God” (*Shaped by the Word* 26). Persons under the influence of this worldview live as *graspers* who determine their meaning and self-worth based on what or whom they can manipulate and control for their own purposes. The desire for instant gratification comes from a grasping and manipulating worldview. According to Mulholland, those who live within this worldview resist and

reject yielding control to God in order to be grasped and shaped by God (26). Foster describes the worldview of those dominated by consumer culture in these terms: “I want what I want, when I want it, and to the measure I want it” (“Spiritual Formation Agenda” 31). The mentality of the consumer culture dominates not only the common culture but also the culture of the church (31).

This cultural expectation can negatively affect spiritual formation; however, this process can reverse when people are conformed to the likeness of Christ. Instead of seeking to grasp, control, and manipulate their environment for self-gratification, persons engaged in genuine Christian formation surrender control to God’s purposes. This change in cultural worldview results in a yielding to the Spirit of God who seeks to bring the person to wholeness (Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 26). Dying to the old self—the self who seeks elevate self above all others and things, and to create God in one’s own image—is essential for growth toward wholeness (*Invitation* 17).

The goal of genuine Christian spiritual formation is for people to be conformed into the image of Christ. Mulholland points to 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 as scriptural guidance for the transformation into the Christlikeness that God intends. The Apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth that the Spirit grants freedom for the Christian to experience transformation into the image of the Lord from one degree of glory to another by the work of the Spirit. The freedom received from the Spirit gives Christians liberty from all in life that obstructs their transformation into Christlikeness (*Shaped by the Word* 28). In addition, the Christian experiences transformation “from one degree of glory (our marred, misshapen image, our false self) to another (Christ’s perfect image)”

(28). God graciously works in areas of the lives of people who do not reflect conformity to Christ's image (28).

The last part of Mulholland's definition of Christian formation states that the Christian is transformed into the image of Christ for the sake of others. The relationship between a Christian and God incarnates in the Christian's relationship with others in the Church and in the world (*Invitation 17; Shaped by the Word 29*). The Great Commandment to love God coexists with the commandment to love neighbor and cannot be separated. According to Mulholland, the response of Jesus to the scribes' question about which is the greatest commandment in Mark 12:28-34 should be translated in such a way that the love of neighbor is equal with the love of God and not secondary to it. Mulholland points to the letter of 1 John as support for this type of interpretation, as well to Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:13, and James 2:8, all of which call the Christian to love his or her neighbor (*Shaped by the Word 29*). In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus proclaims that love extended to the "least of these" through acts of compassion, is love extended to him.

### **Spiritual Disciplines Needed for Conforming to Christ**

Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness creates the indispensable need for spiritual disciplines (Willard, *Great Omission 152*). The spiritual disciplines consist of practices aimed at directing disciples to obey everything that Jesus has commanded by transforming and renewing one's soul (151). Practicing spiritual disciplines involves more than transferring the right information because right information does not guarantee right action. Believing, however, does lead to right action (*Divine Conspiracy 317*). A disciple's participation in spiritual disciplines expresses loving obedience to God's commands (Johnson 31).

Participating in the spiritual disciplines requires effort on behalf of the disciple (Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey* Feb. 27; Willard, *Great Omission* 52, 74). Henri J. Nouwen defines spiritual disciplines as a “concerted effort to create the space and time where God can become our master and we can respond freely to God’s guidance” (Feb. 27). Disciplines empower disciples to receive more of Christ’s life and power. Therefore, undertaking the activities of the spiritual disciplines allows disciples to grow in grace (Willard, *Spirit* 156). Engaging in these activities does not mean disciples seek to earn grace but instead have placed themselves in a position to receive grace (76).

In Romans 3 Paul reminds readers of his letter that sin plagues the human race. In Romans 7, he speaks of sin becoming ingrained habits and finding expression through the human body. Humans respond to sin and disobedience by relying on their own willpower. This struggle to overcome sin by using willpower does not produce the desired results (Foster, *Celebration* 4-5; Willard, *Great Omission* 85). Spiritual disciplines provide the avenue to receive God’s grace and experience transformation from a life of ingrained sin (Foster, *Celebration* 7). In his seminal work *The Celebration of Discipline*, Foster describes the disciples of the spiritual life: “[I]t would be proper to speak of the ‘the path of disciplined grace.’ It is ‘grace’ because it is free; it is ‘disciplined’ because there is something for us to do” (7). Growing in the grace of God requires choosing the course of action that promotes this kind of growth (8).

Engaging in the spiritual disciplines compares to undertaking training (Ortberg 43; Willard, *Great Omission* 85-86). Giving their lives to Christ does not mean that people automatically shift their desires and the outflow of their desires through their bodies to the side of Christ. Participation in sinful practices has become ingrained in



“their habits, *then* [original emphasis] their choice, and finally their character” (83). The effect of participation in sinful practices conditions peoples’ habits, choices, and character toward wrong actions. In addition, the desire to do right appears unnatural and forced (83). Spiritual disciplines consist of activities, or exercises, that allow transformation from the inclination to sin to the inclination to do what Christ desires. According to Willard, these disciplines, coupled with faith and hope in Christ, retrain the body so that the actions of the Christian are in concert with Christ’s actions. In this way, Christians act in obedience to Christ’s command to take up their cross and follow him daily (84-86). As disciples undertake training in the ways of Jesus and thus participate in these activities, in order to undertake training in the ways of Jesus, they become able to live in Christlikeness. Living in Christlikeness was not a possibility through their own efforts prior to this training (86, 150).

In 1 Timothy 4:7-8, Paul admonishes his son in the faith, Timothy, to “train himself in godliness” because training in godliness is valuable in every way, both in life now and in the life to come. In 1 Corinthians 9:24, Paul uses the imagery of the athlete who trains in order to receive a perishable wreath. John Ortberg contends that spiritual transformation involves demanding training just as an athlete trains for competition (43). Spiritual transformation also calls for the reorganizing of one’s life around the spiritual disciplines to cultivate a life that bears the fruit of the Spirit (44). Spiritual disciplines, offered in loving obedience to God, exist for transformation into Christlikeness (Mulholland, *Invitation* 103).

Mulholland expands his discussion, pointing out that the classical disciplines—prayer, spiritual reading, and liturgy—serve as the foundational disciplines upon which to

exercise all other personal spiritual disciplines (*Invitation* 104). The inner dynamics of solitude, silence, and prayer are necessary for engaging in the spiritual disciplines; thus, they do not become works righteousness for the disciple (135-36). Genuine spiritual formation into Christlikeness demands both a corporate and social dimension for holistic spiritual growth (141). The corporate dimension of holistic Christian formation takes place within the context of the church, the body of Christ (143). The community of faith reinforces and supports the personal practice of the classical spiritual disciplines, which encourages the individuals to worship, pray, and read Scripture even when they struggle to do so (146). Mulholland observes the costly nature of corporate spirituality; it calls the members of the community of faith to invest their lives in one another although not participating in corporate spirituality proves less costly by allowing others “to do their own thing” (147). The social nature of spiritual formation calls for the members of the community of faith to encounter the world as agents of God’s grace, which heals and liberates. Because spirituality is social in nature, it calls the people of God to seek God’s best for their community and neighbors. Social spirituality drives followers of Christ to examine their lifestyle practices that lead to injustices in the world (160-61).

Noting such differences has led theologians to analyze the essence of spiritual disciplines. Foster in *Celebration of Discipline* divides the spiritual disciplines into three categories: the inward disciplines, the outward disciplines, and the corporate disciplines. The inward disciplines include meditation, prayer, fasting, and study. The outward disciplines involve the practices of silence, solitude, submission, and service. Lastly, the corporate disciplines consist of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration (v). In a more recent writing on the spiritual disciplines, Ruth Haley Barton includes solitude,

Scripture, prayer, honoring the body, self-examination, discernment, and the practice of keeping the Sabbath as essential spiritual disciplines (*Sacred Rhythms* 8).

Other writers look at the wide range of disciplines and divide them differently. For example, Willard, in his seminal work *Spirit of the Disciplines* divides spiritual disciplines into spiritual practices of “abstinence” and “engagement” (158). Both Willard and Ortberg use this division to connect the disciplined practices of abstinence and engagement with the sins of omission and the sins of commission. When sins of commission exist in the life of a disciple, the spiritual practices of abstinence allow the opportunity to abstain from engaging in those particular sins. The practices of engagement guard against sins of omission (Ortberg 57-58; Willard, *Spirit* 176).

Willard points to 1 Peter 2:11 as the scriptural mandate for disciplines of abstinence. In his letter, Peter writes to the church, “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against your soul.” The discipline of abstinence calls for abstaining to some degree from *normal* desires that bring satisfaction. These normal, legitimate desires and drives, such as sex, food, companionship, and curiosity, along with desires for reputation, material security, comfort, and convenience can grow into desires that harm one’s relationship with God. The disciplines of abstinence bring these desires into alignment with God’s kingdom purposes (*Spirit* 159-60). The disciplines of abstinence consist of solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice (158).

The disciplines of engagement replace un-Christlike habits and tendencies developed through committing sins of commission. According to Willard, engagement, rather than withdrawal, provides the proper context for growth and development.

Therefore, *action* plays a key role in spiritual formation (*Spirit* 176). ). The disciplines of engagement consist of study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission (158). Disciplines of abstinence and disciplines of engagement provide balance for each other. The disciplines of abstinence provide the pathway for the disciple to engage with God through the discipline of engagement. Taken together, the disciplines of abstinence and engagement compare to breathing in and out, both are necessary for proper growth into Christlikeness (175-76).

### **The Classical Spiritual Disciplines**

The classical spiritual disciplines consist of practices that bring Christians into the presence of God and provide the context for transformation into Christlikeness to occur (Mulholland, *Invitation* 105).

**Prayer.** Relationship serves as the primary focus of prayer (Mulholland, *Invitation* 106). Practicing the discipline of *prayer* brings the disciple into conversation with God. This communication takes place through words or in thought (Willard, *Spirit* 184). Barton confirms, “Prayer is *all the ways in which we communicate and commune with God* [original emphasis]” (*Sacred Rhythms* 63). Prayer functions as a potent force in the lives of Christians when they follow Paul’s directions to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17; Phil. 4:6; Willard, *Spirit* 185). As ongoing communication with God in the midst of daily activities, prayer cannot be limited to times of structured praying (Boa 83). Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection practiced communing with God throughout the day. His spiritual guidance in the practice of prayer includes conversations with God in the midst of work in order to commune with God (65). After receiving instruction on the Jesus prayer, the unnamed pilgrim in *The Way of the Pilgrim* rejoiced in the effects of

continually praying, “Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.” His heart awakened to those around him and received each person he met as if he or she were part of his own family. In addition, his time of worshiping at church was more meaningful (27).

Prayer includes both individual and corporate expressions (Mulholland, *Invitation* 110). Other disciplines, such as fasting, meditation, study, worship, and solitude, frequently accompany the discipline of prayer (Willard, *Spirit* 184). However, distinguishing prayer from the other disciplines often proves difficult (Barton, *Sacred Rhythms* 75).

**Spiritual reading.** Spiritual reading is for formation, as opposed to information (Mulholland, *Invitation* 111). Reading for formational purposes requires the posture of reading known as *lectio divina* (divine reading), which consists of *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplation* (112). *Silencio* and *incarnatio* serve as the bookends to *lectio divina* (Barton, *Sacred Rhythms* 59-61; Mulholland 112). *Silencio*, or silence, prepares the hearts of readers to hear from God (Barton 60; Mulholland 112). Mary Margaret Funk provides a functional definition of *lectio divina* as an encounter, which occurs when a person encounters God through Scripture (9).

*Lectio*, or reading, fosters hearing the word of God. This reading consists of pausing and reading slowly, silently or aloud, allowing the passage to settle in the heart of the reader (Barton, *Sacred Rhythms* 60; Mulholland, *Invitation* 112). Through *Meditatio*, or meditation, readers seek to understand and comprehend the passage in greater measure (Mulholland 114). Barton points out that the discipline of meditation involves reflection on the part of readers as they sense the connection made from the passage to the reader’s life (60). *Oratio* flows from *meditatio* as readers dialogue with

God about the feelings aroused by the text (Barton 60; Mulholland 114). Expressing feelings such as joy, love, repentance, conviction, anger, desire, and others allows for openness and honesty in this dialogue (Mulholland 114). During the *contemplatio* (contemplation) phase of *lectio divina*, the readers are in a spirit of anticipation as they wait to discover God's desire for them through encountering God in the text (*Shaped by the Word* 114-15). Both Mulholland and Barton add *incarnatio*, or incarnation, as a final step in *lectio divina* as readers seek to live out the will of God in daily life and in relationships with others as revealed through the sacred reading (Barton 61; Mulholland, *Invitation* 115).

According to Thomas à Kempis, the spirit in which one reads Scripture plays an important role for the Christian. He counsels that the Christian should read Scripture with "humility, simplicity and faithfulness" (19). In the reading of Scripture, the Christian does not seek to receive praise from men and women as someone who is more educated than others. Truth from God's word is what the Christian seeks after in reading the Scriptures (19-20).

**Liturgy.** The term *liturgy* means "the work of the people" (Mulholland, *Invitation* 115). Understood in this light, it is more than a time of formal worship in community. It includes the pathway to the experience of God. Liturgy involves all the activities in which Christians engage to deepen their relationship with God (115). Mulholland includes *worship, daily office, study, fasting, and retreat as disciplines* within the discipline of liturgy (117-19).

The spiritual discipline of *worship* is "to see God as *worthy*, to ascribe great worth to him" (Willard, *Spirit* 177). Worship centers upon Jesus, as the worshipper seeks God

through Jesus (178). This worship experience happens alone as well as with the worshipping community (Mulholland, *Invitation* 117; Willard 177). The discipline of worship calls the disciple to “an ordered way of acting and living” that allows the Holy Spirit to transform the worshipper (Foster, *Celebration* 166).

*Daily office* consists of regular practices that allow the disciple to see that each day of life comes as a gift from God and that the disciple belongs to God (Roxburgh 151). These behaviors create times for renewal of discipleship. Personal devotional times, Bible study, worship, Christian fellowship, and prayers before meals serve as practices for daily office (Mulholland, *Invitation* 118). Likewise, à Kempis’ encouragement for Christians to renew their purpose daily through prayer can be seen in as practicing the daily office. He instructs Christians to pray, “Help me O Lord God, in this my good purpose, and in Thy holy service; and grant that I may now this day begin perfectly, for that which I have done hitherto is as nothing” (39). In addition, à Kempis states that Christians should examine themselves each evening to review their actions, thoughts, and deeds (40).

*Study*, individually and corporately, informs disciples of growth areas in their lives. In addition, this component of liturgy connects disciples with the world’s needs and matures them to engage the world (Mulholland, *Invitation* 118). Willard writes that study involves engaging with God’s word, written and spoken. Beyond reading and hearing, the study of God’s word calls for meditation, as one prayerfully focuses on what God is saying through the Scriptures (*Spirit* 176-77).

Foster, however, differentiates the term *study* from *meditation*. He considers meditation to be devotional in nature, whereas study is analytical (*Celebration* 64). He

recommends four steps involved in study: *repetition*, *concentration*, *comprehension*, and *reflection*. *Repetition* forms the habits of thought. *Concentration*, counter to a culture filled with so many distractions, focuses energy on the subject matter. Concentration leads to *comprehension*, as one perceives the reality of the truth found in studying. *Reflection* allows one to see things through study from God's perspective and to come to a greater awareness of oneself (66-67). Silence plays a vital role in reflecting on Scripture (à Kempis 43). A key prerequisite to study involves the guidance of gifted teachers, as well as studying the lives of faithful disciples and Christian classics (Willard, *Spirit* 177; Foster 72).

*Fasting* requires abstaining from food and sometimes drink for a set period of time for spiritual purposes (Foster, *Celebration* 48-49; Willard, *Great Omission* 154; *Spirit* 166). Fasting reveals the human dependency upon the pleasures of food for peace and comfort (Willard, *Spirit* 166) and weans the disciple from God's gifts so that he or she becomes "dependent upon God alone" (Mulholland, *Invitation* 119). This discipline allows disciples to practice self-denial, as Christ commands (Matt. 16:24), and to confirm their dependency upon God. As it conditions the soul to endure suffering and teaches self-control (166-67), fasting teaches that God meets the needs of the disciple and sustains the disciple both physically and spiritually. The disciple learns to live off the "words of God" just as God's people learned in the wilderness (Deut. 8:3-5), as Jesus did during his forty days of fasting (Matt. 4:4), and as Jesus taught his disciples (John 4:32-34). The effects of fasting not only frees the disciple from the dominant desires of physical food but also from other dominant desires (Willard, *Great Omission* 155). The abstinence or separation from food allows disciples to offer themselves to God in greater



measure (Mulholland, *Invitation* 118). Willard recommends for people to accompany fasting with prayer or service so they do not find their attention totally consumed by the discipline of fasting, while practicing it (*Spirit* 168). John Cassian contends that not all people are able to fast in the same manner because not everyone's body has the ability or strength. However, he encouraged each person to fast as they are able, in order to combat the deadly sin of gluttony (119-20).

The discipline of *retreat*, corporately or individually, allows disciples to step aside from the normal activities of life to renew and evaluate their lives by giving God their full attention. This discipline includes "standing aside" from one's own discipleship to "allow God to show us what we are doing and what we ought to be doing" (Mulholland, *Invitation* 119). Mulholland contends that individuals need times of retreat in order to seek direction (119).

### **Inner Dynamics of the Disciplines**

One of the great dangers in practicing the spiritual disciplines results from the temptation to turn them into works righteousness (Mulholland, *Invitation* 135). To avoid this outcome, the inner posture of disciples is important for practicing spiritual disciplines. The inner dynamics of silence, solitude, and prayer allow the disciplines to be means of grace through which God transforms lives (136).

*Silence* accompanies the discipline of solitude (Foster, *Celebration* 98; Willard, *Spirit* 163). Practicing the discipline of silence affords the opportunity to cut off the noise, responsibilities, and demands of listening in daily life (Muto 53; Willard 163). The practice of silence does not exist for the sole purpose of escaping the noise of the world but for the purpose of meeting and hearing from God (Muto 53; Willard 164). Silence

consists of an interior posture of letting go of the need to be in control, the product of Western culture (Mulholland, *Invitation* 136). According to Willard, the practice of silence can be most frightening because it brings about the imagery of death when one will be cut off from the world and be alone before God. When human beings surround themselves with constant noise and activity, an emptiness in the soul exists (*Spirit* 163). Foster recommends designating or creating physical spaces for developing the discipline of silence and solitude. These spaces, either inside or outside the home, must signify a time of retreat (*Celebration* 106). Because most people do not live alone, where the practice of silence can be cultivated, Willard notes that many persons rise in the course of the night to cultivate the habit of silence. Cultivating this habit enriches their prayer life and study without imposing on those with whom they live. Prayerfully practicing the discipline of silence opens up the possibility of hearing from God (164).

Choosing the practice of *not speaking* is another way to exercise the discipline of silence (Foster, *Celebration* 107; Willard, *Spirit* 164). In doing so, persons let go of the need to justify their actions before others (Foster 107). In addition, through the practice of silence, the Christian becomes free of judging others (Gruen 56). The New Testament author James remarks that those with unrestrained speech have a worthless religion (Jas. 1:26). However, those who direct their speech correctly can also direct their bodies to live correctly (Jas. 3:2). The posture of silence cultivates a posture of listening to others and a life of quiet confidence in God (Willard 164).

*Solitude* exists as a foundational discipline for transformation (Barton, *Sacred Rhythms* 37; Willard, *Spirit* 160; Foster, “Life Formed” 5). The frantic pace of Western culture, specifically, often the religious culture, values productivity and activity. It does

not place value on the discipline of solitude (Barton 34). The intrusion caused by advances in technology and media creates weariness at the level of the soul. Solitude brings freedom from the actions and attitudes of the world that push against the purposes of God. Practicing the spiritual discipline of solitude draws the disciple away from interaction with others, interactions that cause the conflicts and forces in the soul to go unnoticed (Willard 160). The confrontations of the soul brought about through solitude leads disciples to cling to Christ for survival. Through meeting with Christ in solitude, disciples rejoin the world as free persons (160). The fruit of solitude, according to Foster, comes from the freedom to serve others (*Celebration* 108). In addition, disciples who practice solitude learn the patience of God and learn to disconnect from the drive to push, shove, and climb (“Life Formed” 5). Solitude brings followers of Christ to an encounter with their brokenness and their desires for manipulation and control. According to Mulholland, the practice of solitude requires people to do an honest appraisal of themselves before God (*Invitation* 138, 140).

For the monk, the *cell* serves as a place of solitude. Funk writes that the “cell is a designated ‘personal place’ for seeking God” (70). The designated place creates an environment for studying and memorizing Scripture, meditating, and rest (70). Any place that allows the Christian to be alone with God and not distracted by work and noise serves as a cell.

*Prayer*, an inner dynamic, originates from silence and solitude. The discipline of silence is the process of letting go of the need for control. Solitude brings the disciple to acknowledge the depths of his or her being. Prayer follows as people offer themselves to God, allowing God’s grace to be effective in their lives. Wrestling and yearning

characterize this type of prayer. Mulholland writes that people who enter this kind of prayer engage in a painful struggle that involves crucifying themselves in order to become what God desires them to be (*Invitation* 140).

### **Wesley's *Means of Grace***

The Wesleyan practices of spiritual disciplines are traced to the teachings and life of John Wesley (1703-91). Through parental influence, the witness of Scripture, Christian writings, and personal practice, Wesley believed God works through certain means to provide sustaining grace and to nurture holiness. He encouraged the Methodists to practice spiritual disciplines, which he referred to as *the means of grace* for continued spiritual growth and ministry (Yrigoyen 41). These means of grace direct the Christian away from a life of sinfulness and worldly attachment to a disciplined life that creates space for loving God and loving neighbor. God acts through the means of grace to strengthen peoples' faith. In addition, Wesley found that the means of grace were beneficial in teaching the faith to others (Matthaei 152).

The means of grace fall into two categories: the instituted means of grace and the prudential means of grace (Harper, *Devotional Life* 21; D. Watson 47). The instituted means of grace are those disciplines witnessed in the teachings and life of Jesus (Harper 44). The instituted means of grace consist of prayer, Scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian conferencing. The prudential means of grace consist of those guidelines and practices that help the Christian in "the art of holy living" (D. Watson 47). The prudential means of grace include accountability through the class or band meeting, self-denial, bearing one's cross, watchfulness against sin, and healthy dietary habits. David Lowes Watson states, "The more we use the prudential means, the more we will grow in

grace” (47-48). Wesley points to the means of grace as activities that empowered him to live out the great commandments to love God and love neighbor (Harper 22).

The means of grace are important practices in the development of a life of faith. According to D. Michael Henderson, Wesley believes spiritual growth would take place as people participated in the means of grace (134). The means of grace “put people in touch with the dynamic power of God’s grace” (135). Wesley understands God’s grace to be what changes the lives of people, not the activities of devotion themselves. However, these activities allow God’s grace to be operative in the lives of the people who practice them (135).

Wesley refers to the discipline of prayer as “the grand means for drawing near to God” (Harper, *Devotional Life* 45; Yrigoyen 44). Wesley believes that the Christian life consists of living in relationship with God through his son Jesus Christ; prayer constituted the main discipline for growing in this relationship (Harper 46). Furthermore, Wesley believes that the absence of prayer was the “single most serious cause of spiritual draught in the life of a Christian” (Yrigoyen 44). Wesley insisted that a life of prayer was a mark of a Methodist (Matthaei 153).

Wesley modeled a life of prayer to the Methodist people (Matthaei 153). Although he practiced both private and corporate prayer, his private prayer times stood at the center of his prayer life. *The Book of Common Prayer* served as the guide for his prayer, as well as prayers written by others that he collected (Harper, *Devotional Life* 47; Yrigoyen 44-45), and in 1733, Wesley published “A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day of the Week” (Harper 54-55). Wesley cautioned that he did not think anyone could have a vital prayer life by making up his or her own prayers (Yrigoyen 44-45).

These prayers, which Wesley had been collecting for almost eight years, allowed him to gain insights for spiritual growth from others. Some of the prayers were from well-known persons, some were anonymous, and some of these prayers were from his friends and colleagues (Harper 54-55).

Wesley's day began with private prayer because he believed that directing his first thoughts of the day to God resulted in an awareness of God's presence throughout the day (Harper, *Devotional Life* 46). He also finished his final waking moments in prayer to review the day, allowing for confession and resolutions for living in a more Christlike manner the following day (47-48). Illustrating that God can be known personally, Wesley's prayer life included praise and thanksgiving, intercession, petition, and confession and expressed the honesty of his emotions (52).

Wesley believes that prayer, as well the other means of grace, consists of a public as well as a private dimension (Harper, *Devotional Life* 46). He practiced prayer with other Christians whenever possible and encouraged all Christians to do the same (Harper 46; Matthei 153; Yrigoyen 44). The corporate prayer experience provided Wesley the opportunity to learn from others and receive blessings that his personal prayer times did not afford (Harper 46).

Scripture serves as a means of grace that provides the standard of practice for Christianity. Wesley calls himself *homo unis libri*, meaning a man of one book with regard to Holy Scripture (Harper, *Devotional Life* 29). He believes Scripture "to be the primary source of the Christian life" (Yrigoyen 25) and "as the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion" (Collins, *John Wesley* 45). According to Steve Harper, Wesley does not understand Scripture to be a cold, lifeless standard guide to life. Rather,

he holds a high view of Scripture, stemming from his belief that Scripture brings people into an encounter with God. Wesley's own life modeled that Christians read Scripture to meet and hear from God and then to respond to God (65).

Wesley desires for Methodists not merely to read Scripture on a recreational level but to "search the Scriptures" (Matthaei 154). Wesley's understanding of the importance of Scripture in the lives of Christians is found in his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* from 1765 where he gives practical guidelines for reading Scripture (Yrigoyen 41). First, Wesley says to set apart time for reading Scripture in both the morning and the evening (41). He encourages discipline in setting appointed times for the specific purpose of feeding daily on God's Word as a means of grace (Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 124).

Second, Wesley encourages Christians to read from both the Old and the New Testaments (Yrigoyen 41). Mulholland views that reading from both testaments is essential for spiritual formation with regard to Scripture. He writes that the tendency for Christians is to view the Old Testament as "second class" to the New Testament (Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 126). Therefore, the New Testament becomes the focus of Scripture for Christians. However, reading from the Old and New Testaments allows one to meet God in the whole Scripture, leading the reader away from the tendency to return to the same Scriptures "that have nurtured us in the past" (126).

The third guideline that Wesley offers for reading Scripture was to approach the passage "with a single eye, to know the will of God and a fixed resolution to do it" (Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 127). Wesley's guideline consisted of two

admonitions. The first involved the disposition of the heart to know the will of God and the second, a resolution to act upon the will of God revealed through Scripture (127-28).

A fourth guideline from Wesley was to relate what is being read in the passage of Scripture to the principles of the Christian faith. This guideline serves as a bridge between what was being read to the implications for living out the Christian faith. A fifth guideline for the Christian in reading Scripture was to “seek the guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit” (Yrigoyen 42). The final guideline relates to the third guideline. Wesley instructs, “Resolve to put into practice what God teaches you in your reading and study” (qtd. in Yrigoyen 42). While each of these instructions focuses on the private reading of Scripture as a means of grace, Wesley also believes that Scripture is an important component of family, worship, and society meetings (42).

Wesley believes in the indispensability of the Lord’s Supper as a means of grace for the Christian life (Harper, *Devotional Life* 81). Moreover, he believes in the transformational power of God’s grace through the receiving of the Lord’s Supper (Matthaei 155). This significance exists on several levels. First, Wesley believes the Lord’s Supper to be significant in that it is a “solemn memorial” of Christ’s death (Collins, *Theology* 260). When Christians eat and drink from the communion table, they transcend time and space, journeying back to their redemption at the cross (Harper, *Devotional Life* 81; Yrigoyen 48). Harper also notes that the memorial meal of the Lord’s Supper involves “recalling an event so thoroughly that it comes alive in the present” (82). Thus, the Lord’s Supper allows the Christian to receive grace in order to grow in holiness. Collins says that in the Lord’s Supper believers receive not only “‘infinite mercy,’ but also several blessings that ‘we may obtain holiness on earth’” (260). Through



the Holy Spirit, Christ is present to those receiving Holy Communion (Harper 84). In addition, the Lord's Supper points the Christian to future participation in the heavenly banquet at the consummation of the kingdom of God (Yrigoyen 49).

While communion represents an intaking of grace, another means of grace, fasting, represents self-denial. In fact, the practice of fasting is one of the most visible means of grace (Harper, *Devotional Life* 101). Wesley gives witness to the impact of the worldly materials enticing Christians' focus away from God (Matthaei 156). Therefore, he encourages the people called Methodist to practice the discipline of fasting. Grounding his belief in the practice of fasting in both the witness of the Old and New Testaments, Wesley acknowledges that this practice primarily calls for abstaining from food and drink for a certain duration (Yrigoyen 47). However, Wesley points out that fasting exists in different forms other than fasting from food and drink. He admonishes that Christians drink liquid during their fasts, especially if they are ill on the fast day. If health reasons do not allow Christians to follow the prescribed fasting of food for a day, Wesley encourages abstinence from "all foods except those necessary for the preservation of their health" as an appropriate substitute (Harper 106).

Wesley practiced fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays early in his ministry. Eventually, however, Friday was the day he practiced the spiritual discipline of fasting (Harper, *Devotional Life* 103-04; Yrigoyen 47). He began his time of fasting after the evening meal on Thursday and broke the fast on afternoon Friday at three o'clock. Harper writes, "[B]y ending his fast on Friday afternoon he was finishing his fast at the time when the Lord cried out, 'It is finished!' He was using fasting as means of participating in the grand story of redemption" (109). Fasting was a practice Wesley expected the

Methodists to follow in order to promote growth in holiness (Yrigoyen 47). According to Harper, Wesley did not desire for the Methodists to focus solely on the deprivation of fasting but also on the delight of fasting. As a means of grace, fasting opens the door to freedom rather than forcing rigid legalism (114).

Wesley deems fasting to be essential for several reasons. One reason is that it is an appropriate expression of one's brokenness over sin. Wesley also sees fasting as a sign of penitence for the overindulgence of food and drink (Yrigoyen 47). In addition, the discipline of fasting grants the opportunity for the Christian to reevaluate life's priorities in a consumer culture that encourages gaining and acquiring and stands in contradiction to the addictions of consumerism (Harper, *Devotional Life* 115). Another reason fasting is important to Wesley is that it allows more time to be set aside for prayer (114; Yrigoyen 47). Wesley also believes that the practice of fasting can be enhanced when coupled with "giving to the poor" (Yrigoyen 48). Through the practice of fasting, Wesley and the Methodists renew "their intention and energy for Christian life" (Matthaei 156).

Public worship is another means of grace that receives emphasis in the Wesleyan tradition (K. Watson 82; Yrigoyen 52). Wesley understands worship to provide the opportunity for Christians to praise God and receive sustaining grace (Yrigoyen 52). Modeling the practice of worship as a spiritual discipline in his life, he remained faithful to worshiping in the Church of England and expected the Methodist people to be active in worshiping in their own respective churches (Harper, *Devotional Life* 34). However, the Methodist societies became the primary setting for Methodist worship (K. Watson 83). The format of the society included prayer, singing, reading, and being taught the Scriptures, and, if an ordained pastor were present, receiving of the Lord's Supper. The

public worship in the Methodist society gave opportunity for new followers of Christ to be taught the other spiritual disciplines. In addition, many persons came to faith in the societies as they “were awakened to their need for salvation” (83-84). After being awakened, the society provided the context for lifelong discipleship (32).

Wesley used the term *Christian conference* to refer to the corporate life of the Christian, particularly the United Societies, which began in 1743 (Harper, *Devotional Life* 121, 125). The beginning of the United Societies can be traced to late 1739 when ten persons came one day to Wesley, and two or three persons the following day, desiring to meet with him in prayer and receive instruction on “how to flee from the wrath to come” (*Book of Discipline* 72). Wesley decided to appoint a day during the week when he could meet together with these persons and others who might join them to instruct them and to pray for them. The purpose and nature of the society is defined as “[a] company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation” (72). The society provided an opportunity for immediate nurture for those desiring to respond to Wesley’s preaching (125). The societies gave Wesley the opportunity to instruct people in the Christian lifestyle. He directed the members of the society to Jesus’ ethical teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and the life of the early Church in the book of Acts (Henderson 71). A large number of persons could be in one society; the societies of Bristol and London numbered over one hundred (124). Wesley divided the societies into classes of ten or more people. The classes focused on accountability, confession, prayer, and Christian conversation (Manskar 91).

The growth of the Methodist societies called for the building of new buildings to accommodate the people. In February 1742, Wesley called the leaders of the societies together to discuss a plan for retiring the debts that Wesley had been taking on himself (Manskar 91). The solution came from a sea captain, Captain Foy, who came to the Bristol society building, known as the New Room, to help resolve the debt of the building. He proposed every member of the society paying a penny a week until the debts in Bristol were retired. Because many of the persons in the society could not afford a penny a week, Foy suggested that eleven persons be assigned to him, and he would go and collect from them each week. If they did not have the means to pay, he would pay their penny for them. He challenged the other leaders to do the same. In calling on the persons assigned to them, the leaders inquired of the souls of the people and informed Wesley about the lives of the members of the society (Henderson 79-80, 94).

Thus, the Methodist class meeting grew out of the debt retirement plan. Because visiting eleven persons each week became time consuming for leaders and some of the leaders did not have time to visit each member in a week, Wesley decided to bring all the persons together at once. This meeting came to be known as the Methodist class meeting (Manskar 92).

The classes served as a means of accountability and nurture (Manskar 92). However, D. Watson contends that the key word in understanding the Methodist class meeting is *accountability* (62). In their infancy, the classes took on a formal nature. Over time, the class meeting took on a family atmosphere (Harper, *Devotional Life* 127). The class began with a prayer by the leader followed by singing a few verses of a hymn. The leader began discussion by stating the condition of his or her soul. The discussion

included sharing joys, concerns, struggles, and triumphs since their last meeting. Then the leader would ask all the members of the class the condition of their souls. The class ended with a time of prayer and singing of a hymn (Manskar 92-93).

Stephen W. Manskar notes that the class meeting allowed both the leaders and the class members to “unburden themselves” (93). In addition, class members recognized that they could identify with one another’s struggles and doubts. They developed strong relationships with one another as trust and love grew among the class members, as well as among the class members and the leaders:

The love and trust for one another and the discipline of weekly accountability provided an environment for growth in faith. The closer people draw to God, the closer they come to their neighbor. The class meeting provided an environment in which people could trust and be trusted, love and be loved, and be vulnerable in a way that is needed for true growth in grace and love of God, neighbor and self to occur. (93)

Wesley believed strongly in the class meeting. In fact, Harper notes that the class meeting was, in many ways, “the heart of Wesley’s structure for spiritual formation” (*Devotional Life* 127). Every Methodist of Wesley’s day was required to be a part of a class in order to retain membership within the society. Each member of the society received a ticket for attendance, and membership was renewed quarterly on the condition that one was participating regularly in the class meeting (Manskar 93).

The accountability within the class meeting revolved around spiritual growth as well as keeping the general rules (Manskar 96; D. Watson 44). The general rules “were standards of living that directed people in the way of Jesus” (Manskar 94), which served as criteria for accountability. Wesley’s rules had three sections. The first was to *do no harm* “by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced...” (qtd. in *Book of Discipline* 73). Harper calls this rule a “displacement ethic”

(*Devotional Life* 148). A disciple must cease from engaging in actions and attitudes that are counterproductive before truly engaging in life-giving actions and attitudes. Wesley details a list of actions, in which Christians should not that were relevant to his time (147).

The second section of the general rules that serve as criteria for accountability fall under the exhortation to *do good*, “by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity doing good of every possible sort and as far as is possible to all men” (*Book of Discipline* 73). Wesley divides the *doing good* section of the general rules into three categories. The Methodists are expected to do good to the bodies of others. Abiding by this rule includes providing food and clothing to those in need as well as visiting the imprisoned and the sick. Second, the Methodists were to do good to the souls of others through instruction, exhortation, reproof, and conversation. The third way to do good is to practice doing good to those who are of the household of faith (73).

The third section of the general rules instructs the Methodists to *attend to the ordinances of God* (*Book of Discipline* 74). In this section, Wesley essentially states the instituted means of grace. In attending to the ordinances of worship, prayer, searching the Scriptures, the Lord’s Supper, and fasting, one can trust the leading of the Spirit to give instructions on what to do and what not to do. Attending the ordinances of God cultivates an inward holiness, which promotes outward holiness (Harper, *Devotional Life* 151-52). The general rules provided the Methodist classes a practical framework for living in congruence with the Ten Commandment and the great commandment to love God and love neighbor (Manskar 95).

The bands provided a setting for even greater accountability. Unlike the requirement of the class meeting, people did not have to be in a band. Only 20 percent of the Methodists chose to take part in the bands (Harper, *Devotional Life* 131). The bands consisted of five to eight persons of the same gender, proximity in age, and marital status (Henderson 112). They also differed from the society and class meeting in that members of the band had to be professing Christians (Harper 131; Henderson 112). Harper relates the band meetings to sanctifying grace, where as the society is linked to prevenient grace and the class is linked to converting grace (131).

Henderson describes the band as focusing on affective redirection, while the society focused on cognitive, biblical instruction in the faith and the class meetings focused on behavioral change in the lives of group members (112). The band meeting provided the context for focusing on one's motives and heartfelt impression stemming from one's intentions, feelings, attitudes, emotions, and affections (112-13). Metaphorically speaking, "the society aimed for the head, the class meeting for the hands, and the band for the heart" (112). Therefore, the early Methodist discipleship process focused on the whole person.

Two other groups that made up the Methodist movement were the select societies and penitent bands (Harper, *Devotional Life* 133). Wesley picked the Methodists in the select societies based on their leadership within the society, class meetings, and bands (Henderson 123). The members of the select societies evidenced "special progress in inward and outward holiness" (Harper 133). The penitent bands allowed those who had fallen away to be restored into Methodist fellowship (133; Henderson 125). The penitent bands met on Saturday evenings, when those who struggled with alcoholism would be

most tempted (Henderson 126). The members of the penitent bands desired freedom from their personal problems, and the goal was to restore them into the regular system of the class meeting (125).

Henderson states that only God's grace empowers one to "holiness" or "Christian perfection" (129). Wesley believes God can work in people's hearts so they can take on the character of Christ, and through discipline and care, the Methodists can aim at attaining holiness (130-31). The Methodists learned Christlikeness through experience in seeking to be obedient to the word of God. In addition, the Methodist groups promoted perfection (132).

### **Leadership Emerged through Discipleship**

Leaders emerged from within the Methodist system of accountability. Many of these leaders came from the working-class poor of England (Henderson 145). The common laborers took on leadership positions just as much as those professionally trained (147). Leadership among the Methodist people grew out of discipleship that nurtured their relationship with God and one another. Discipleship remains the vital breeding ground for servant leaders. Hirsch asserts, "The quality of the church's leadership is directly proportional to the quality of discipleship" (119). Authentic Christian leadership holds to Christ as the example to follow. Therefore, discipleship to Christ precedes leadership, and servant leadership flows from discipleship (119).

The Apostle Paul illustrates the servant nature of Christ that his disciples are called to follow by quoting an early Christological hymn. Paul views the life of the Christian as bearing the testimony of Jesus' humility and obedience (Wilkins 306). Paul



utilizes an early Christological hymn to illustrate the Christlike life, which he urges the church in Philippi to imitate.

In Philippians 2:3, Paul encourages the Christians to “do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.” Paul follows this encouragement with the instructions for believers not to look to their own interests but to others’ interests and to have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:4-5). Then Paul quotes an early Christian hymn that captures the essence of Paul’s teaching on Christ and the meaning of not looking to one’s own interests but to others’ interests (Allen 73; Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid 712). Paul’s use of the hymn calls Christians to imitate Christ as presented in the hymn (Bekker 7).

Another critical concept in Philippians is Christ’s refusal to exploit his equality with God (Phil. 2:6). The Revised Standard Version translates Philippians 2:6 in this way: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God as something to be grasped.” James D. G. Dunn contrasts the servant nature of Christ with the sinful grasping nature of Adam in the garden. Dunn compares Philippians 2:6a, which states that Christ “was in the form of God,” with Genesis 1:27, which says that God created humankind “in his own image.” Furthermore, Dunn makes the comparison of Christ who “did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped” (Phil. 2:6bc) with the man and woman who were told by the serpent in the Garden, “you will be like God” (Gen. 3:5; *Theology* 284). Dunn contrasts the death Adam experienced in taking the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17) with the death that Christ Jesus experienced through his obedience to death (Phil. 2:8; *Theology* 285-86). According to Dunn’s interpretation, Paul was not only calling the Philippians to have

“this mind in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5) that leads to self-emptying and obedience. He was calling them not to have the mind of Adam that leads to “grasping to be God” and disobedience. Likewise, Gordon D. Fee states that very nature of Christ is evidenced by the fact that he does not seek equality with God. His nature is not that of “grasping” but of “giving away” (272). In light of this Christological hymn, believers are called to “live humbly, generously, unself-consciously, while being thoughtfully concerned for the welfare of others” (Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid 712). Paul’s use of this Christological hymn gives insight into the nature of Christ as well as calling Christ’s followers to live lives devoted to God.

According to Gerald F. Hawthorne, the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 parallels Jesus’ actions as recorded in John 13:3-17 where Jesus modeled servanthood in the washing of his disciples’ feet (78). Jesus called his followers to that same servant disposition. Jesus said, “For I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are their messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:15-17). Jesus called those who follow him not to be concerned about achieving and gaining position. Augustine of Hippo states that by Christ’s humble example, his followers are to “learn that same humility” (241). Thus discipleship leads people on a transformational journey away from the *grasping* of Adam and to a life of servanthood that reflects the *self-emptying* of Christ.

This countercultural aspect of the hymn challenged the theology of the Roman Empire, which held that Caesar “had the ‘form of god’ and was equal with the gods” (Toews 10). Jesus, in contrast to Caesar, did not grasp for divine status but humbled

himself, taking the form of a slave; therefore, he was exalted and given the name above all other names. Every knee bends to the name of Jesus and every tongue confesses his Lordship. Jesus is honored and not Caesar (10-11). While Dunn and Toews differ on whether the Christological hymn puts Jesus in contrast with Adam or the Emperor, both interpretations conclude that grasping for divine status was not the example of Jesus. Jesus lived in humble service and obedience to the will of the Father (Wilkes 39).

Understanding the nature of Christ as one who does not attempt to seize power provides the context for understanding the use of the term *kenosis* in verse 7 of the hymn. The use of the term *kenosis* translates *to make empty, to make no effect, or make self nothing* (O'Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 217; Bekker 8; Sims). *Relinquishment* or *self-limitation* are also terms used to translate the *kenosis* (Pelly 9).

Thus, *kenosis*, Christ's self-emptying, did not involve giving up the form of God but taking the form of a slave (Augustine, 242; O'Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 218, 223-24). The backdrop of slavery points to being deprived of one's rights. Christ chose the deprivation of his rights as God and embraced the vocation as a lowly slave, illustrating his humility and obedience (Dunn, *Cambridge Companion* 113; O'Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 224; Peterlin 67). The vocation chosen did not entail gaining but giving for the sake of others (Fee 206; O'Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 206; Peterlin 67). Christ abandoned any claims to his rights and privileges onto which he could hold on to for his own advantage (Craddock 41; O'Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 206). Further, his obedience led to a shameful death on the cross. Following Christ's denial of his rights, obedience, and sacrifice, God exalts him, yet, as Dunn notes, even his death brings "glory to God the Father" (113).

The hymn not only provides a description of the preexistent Son of God who chose to give up rights and privileges in obedience to the Father, the hymn describes the nature of God. God's nature cannot be characterized by grasping or seizing but by pouring himself out for others. Taking the role of a servant, Christ revealed the nature of God in self-emptying love (Delicata 9; Hawthorne 87; Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid 712; O'Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 224; Ortberg 115).

Quoting the Christological hymn, Paul calls the Philippians to obedience. Paul's words following the hymn illustrate his intention in using it (Dunn, *Cambridge Companion* 113). Paul writes, "Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear" (Phil. 3:12, NLT). Paul characterizes his own as one that imitates the self-denial and obedience of Jesus. Paul did not cling to any status or privilege that he could claim within the Jewish community. In the model of Christ, Paul let go of these things in order to be "found 'in Christ' and share in Christ's sufferings" (Phil. 3:4-11; Dunn 113). The Philippians could imitate the obedience and self-denial of Jesus by imitating Paul (Phil. 3:17; Dunn 113; O'Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 444-45; Sims). Imitating Christ stands in contrast to the "enemies of the cross," who live selfishly and do not embrace Christ's sufferings (Dunn 113; O'Brien, Marshall, and Gasque 454).

The Christ-hymn of Philippians challenges attitudes and actions that are products of selfish ambition and conceit (Phil. 2:3), which results in violating the command to love neighbor. In obedience to the Father and taking the humble position of a slave, Jesus served others and served God at the same time (Hawthorne 95). According to Hawthorne, Jesus' life and teaching, as witnessed in the Gospels, provides the source for the hymn

(95). Following the pattern of Jesus in the Christ hymn acknowledges that “ [we] are bound to a God for whom our neighbor comes first” (Brueggemann 85). Therefore, the second commandment flows out of the first Great Commandment (86).

### **Servant Leadership**

Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges define leadership as influence (*Lead Like Jesus* 4-5). They contend, “Any time you seek to influence the thinking, behavior, or development of people in their personal or professional lives, you are taking on the role of a leader” (*Lead Like Jesus* 4-5). The use of a leader’s influence in relationships, families, and organizations affects others, either positively or negatively (6-7).

Jesus serves as the model for Christian servant leadership (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 12; Wilkes 109). Therefore, embracing Jesus as one’s final authority is the prerequisite for becoming a servant leader (Wilkes 109-10). Servant leadership serves as a witness for Christ and his love for the world (Blanchard and Hodges 12). According to Wilkes, without a relationship with Christ, living out his teaching remains impossible (110).

### **Character of Leadership**

Character formation plays a crucial role in servant leadership. While the skills of leaders play an important role, “character—or lack of it—is still the nemesis of most leaders today” (Blanchard and Miller 27). Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller compare the character of a leader to the 80 percent of an iceberg that is below water level and the skills of a leader to the 20 percent of the iceberg that is visible. Therefore, character directs a person’s leadership (25).

Leaders face the temptation to become self-serving leaders and not servant leaders, a condition Blanchard and Hodges refer to as *edging God out* and is the “biggest heart issue in becoming servant leaders” (*Servant Leader* 29; *Lead Like Jesus* 48-49). *Edging God out* includes replacing God as the object of worship with other matters such as money, power, or appreciation. It might also involve placing trust in something else other than God and his unconditional love, as well as allowing others to determine one’s self-worth so that others become the leader’s major audience in place of God. This lack of intimacy with God leads to a lack of intimacy with others (*Servant Leader* 29). Barton states that living in a culture that expects high performance and expediency plays a role in tempting the Christian leader to forsake Christian values (*Strengthening the Soul* 27).

Pride and fear become the dominate problems for the self-serving leader who has moved God to the edge of life (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 51). Pride seeks self-promotion and fear focuses on self-protection (49). A leader operating out of a prideful, self-serving heart manifests behavior that seeks too much attention, demands credit, treats others poorly, values winning over character and personal image over substance and truth (Blackaby and Blackaby 231; Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 52-53). Pride not only demands credit from others, but spiritual pride seeks to take credit from God (Blackaby and Blackaby 231).

Fear can be healthy when applied appropriately, such as fear of God (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 54). Toxic fear, in contrast to healthy fear, stems from the self-serving leader’s reliance upon temporal sources for self-worth, instead of God (55; Blanchard and Hodges, *Servant Leader* 34). These temporary sources include people, material assets, past successes, and fallible organizations. However, these temporal

sources provide no guarantee of future benefits for leaders, which, in turn, causes fear for leaders. These sources “are temporary and always at risk” (*Servant Leader* 34-35).

Pride and fear result in separation, comparison, and distortion. Pride breeds an arrogant spirit that separates the self-serving leader from God, from others, and from oneself. Fear leads to timidity that leads one away from God, others, and oneself (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 58-59). False pride and fears of inadequacy and insecurity also lead to unhealthy comparisons with other persons (60). Pride and toxic fear breed distortions of truthful reality. Distortion resulting from edging God out results in self-serving leaders acting on the assumption that they control the events around them and success depends on them. Self-serving leaders’ failure to admit factors exist outside their control impacts the organization’s success or failure (62-63).

Greenleaf, in his seminal work on servant leadership, states that a servant leader desires to serve *first* and then aspires to lead. A person whose desire to lead precedes the desire to serve may do so based on a hunger for power or material possession. According to Greenleaf, servant-first leaders concern themselves with others and make others’ needs the highest priority (27). True servant leadership consists of a desire to serve that exceeds the desire to lead, thus transforming leadership into a form of service (Shawchuck and Heuser 35).

Servant leadership stems from the leader’s love for others (Blackaby and Blackaby 165). However, for Christlike servant leaders, serving God exists as the highest priority (Blackaby and Blackaby 167; Wilkes 22). Commenting on Jesus’ footwashing in John 13, Henry and Richard Blackaby observe that Jesus washed the disciples’ feet based

on his Father's desire, not on the desire of the disciples (167). A servant leader's life mission and purpose flow from his or her relationship with God (Wilkes 22).

This focus on the leader's relationship with God offers the servant leader an alternative of *exalting God only*, as opposed to *edging God out* (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 63). This proposed alternative provides a shift from focusing on the temporal sources to focusing on God. Servant leaders exalt God by allowing him to inform their self-worth and security. They desire to exalt God as the only object of worship. Blanchard and Hodges state, "All of life becomes a worship experience if you are always aware of God's presence and do everything to his glory" (63-65). Servant leaders exalt God by acknowledging him as their audience and judge (65).

Furthermore, a leader who lives a life that exalts God cultivates a spirit of humility and confidence (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 66; Wilkes 43). Following Jesus and serving others cultivates humility within the heart (Wilkes 47-48). As a key leadership trait, a spirit of humility allows the leader to accept limitations (Blanchard and Hodges 66). Humility grows out of a secure, obedient relationship with God patterned after Jesus' relationship with God the Father. Jesus' humility came from a keen awareness of "who He was, where He came from, where He was going, and whose He was" (67). Jesus knew the Father's unconditional love, which allowed him to live confidently and stay focused on his purpose in life (68).

The spiritual life consists of a journey (Shawchuck and Heuser 130). The journey from a self-serving to a serving heart is the life journey of a leader (Blanchard and Hodges, *Servant Leader* 22). The journey in the souls of leaders begins with where leaders are, not in where leaders think they are or would like to be (Barton, *Strengthening*



*the Soul* 76). This spiritual journey takes place in God's timing and not in the timing of the leader. God's concern focuses on the transformation of the soul of the leader to strengthen faith and prepare for responsibilities and challenges (94). The leader leads from his or her encounters with God and an abandonment to his purposes rather than his or her own determination and sufficiency (Barton, *Strengthening the Soul* 25; Blackaby and Blackaby 100). According to Blackaby and Blackaby, "Spiritual leadership flows out of a person's vibrant, intimate relationship with God. You cannot be a spiritual leader if you are not meeting God in profound, life-changing ways" (100). Therefore, the success of leaders derives from the capacity "to stay involved with [their] own soul" (Barton 25) in order to meet God, and God's Spirit works to draw leaders into a deeper relationship with him (25).

Jesus serves as the model for servant leaders in cultivating spiritual disciplines. The practices of solitude, prayer, study of Scripture, receiving God's love, and living within community allowed Jesus to stay focused on his life mission while dealing with temptation and the pressure of leadership (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 154; *Servant Leader* 85). Barton warns of the addictive nature of experiences and activities associated with leadership that makes the practice of solitude difficult for leaders (*Strengthening the Soul* 31). Leaders need solitude to disengage from the frantic pace and complexities of life in order to receive God's guidance and to ascertain where and how God is working (63).

The practice of prayer involves seeking the will of God, co-laboring with him, and a posture of waiting upon him (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 160; *Servant* 91). In addition, prayer includes interceding for those the servant leader serves. Through

intercessory prayer, the leader expresses a posture of openness to God for the needs of those he or she is leading. Intercessory prayer does not consist of demanding God to shape and change others into what the leader thinks they should become. Instead, intercessory prayer “is being present to God on another’s behalf, listening for the prayer of the Holy Spirit that is already being prayed for that person before the throne of grace, and being willing to join God in that prayer” (Barton, *Strengthening the Soul* 146). The discipline of prayer in the life of a servant leader provides an avenue for serving others.

The practice of dwelling in Scripture provides the leader with resources from God’s word in the midst of pressures and temptations (Blanchard and Hodges, *Servant Leader* 94). This practice includes individual encounters with Scripture through reading, memorizing, and meditating on God’s word, as well as the corporate practice of hearing God’s word in sermons (*Lead Like Jesus* 167-76). The leader avoids relegating Scripture to function as a how-to manual and instead experiences Scripture as God’s love letter (165).

Accepting God’s unconditional love plays a prominent role in the life of a leader. Leaders often find themselves seeking meaning and significance in their accomplishments, their positions, and their possessions. Accepting the unconditional love of God overcomes fear and pride, which seek to conquer leaders. Likewise, loving others becomes an expression of the leader’s acceptance of God’s unconditional love (Blanchard and Hodges, *Servant Leader* 97-99).

Lastly, a leader lives in an accountable community with others. Through accountable relationships, the leader receives support, shares vulnerabilities, and receives

feedback from others (Blanchard and Hodges, *Servant Leader* 101, 103). Through living in community, the leader seeks to live out the values of the faith community (Barton, *Strengthening the Soul* 175, 179-80). Barton contends that community reminds the leader that God's call is relational in nature, emphasizing God's relationship with the leader and the leader's relationship with others (179).

Leadership imprints the understanding of discipleship on others (Slaughter 46). Leaders, therefore, serve as examples of discipleship and live out the mission and values of the local church. Serving as an example for others involves investment and commitment for leaders (46-47). Training within the local church asks for more than a commitment to membership but an understanding and commitment of servant discipleship and daily practice of spiritual disciplines (49).

### **Leaders as Map Makers**

Due to the fact that culture leaves an imprint on the lives of people inside the church, a key responsibility for servant leaders consists of imprinting people's understanding of discipleship and kingdom values. This kingdom imprinting goes against the grain of a world filled with people who take their cues for understanding the world from the common culture surrounding them. Alan J. Roxburgh writes that people live by maps given by the culture in which they live, which provides them with an accepted worldview (6). Modernity functioned as the cultural map for much of the Western world until recently. It shaped how people view themselves, their relationships, and the world (6). Previous cultural maps held the conviction that truth and knowledge find their source in a divine being. The map of modernity replaced the divine being as the source of truth and knowledge with the autonomous self. In Western culture, the arrival of this age

signaled the end of the church's dominating role as the source of truth (Grenz 71). The self exists separately from all other objects. Through reasoning, the autonomous self derives what is truth and knowledge. The scientific method came to describe this worldview. Roxburgh describes the formation of this new paradigm: "These two elements combine to create the basic terrain of modernity's map: a fundamental division of all reality between the subjective human self and an objective, external world" (9). Modernity's cultural map ingrains within individuals the assumption that everything exists as an object, which can be separated into distinct parts (9). The predictability of the laws of nature allows for the assumption that human reason provides the knowledge necessary for discerning reality and the order of the world (Grenz 40). Applying the correct knowledge and techniques can break these objects down to their most elementary form. Breaking down and putting back together of the objects gives a sense of predictability and control (Grenz 165; Roxburgh 9).

The understanding that everything exists as a separate object or entity leads to an individualistic worldview. People generate their own independent meanings because, as distinctly separate entities, they live and operate "out of their own self-determined world" (Roxburgh 10). However, the map of modernity does continue to influence the current culture. Today's advertisements and television programs promote the autonomous self at the center of the cultural worldview (11).

The development of modernity took place over a long time period, replacing the agrarian civilizations in Europe and North America with the arrival of the industrial revolution. The agrarian society provided a stable culture for thousands of years. The Industrial Revolution brought transition to the known culture, transforming society.

While the transition put an end to the known social life and human understanding of life, the transition occurred over three hundred years, allowing time for the emergence of new social life. People were able to acclimate themselves to this new world. No longer did people find their identities shaped by a feudal system of the agrarian culture; now they found commonality in the societies of clubs and organizations that they freely joined in the cities. These social groups met in formal meetings structured by bylaws. The constitution and bylaws of churches largely come from these societies (Roxburgh 12-14).

In the early twentieth century, a new transition emerged with the electronic age. The electronic age allowed for community meetings to take place at night. These advances not only changed the way people worked but also created new, specialized professionals and experts. The development of the automobile also allowed for face-to-face communication through travel (Roxburgh 14-15).

The information age followed the electronic age at the end of the twentieth century. The information age, accompanied by the Internet, brought a cultural shift that changed the way people work and communicate with one another (Roxburgh 15). The Internet and mobile phone technology allowed for day and night accessibility and connection with one another over long distances (Hammett 8). Instead of holding face-to-face conversations, people may have multiple conversations going on at once with a diverse group of people with diverse opinions on a topic. Roxburgh points out that this multiplicity diffuses the notion of authority on the subject matter and does not deem the sources of knowledge as final voices (15). The ability to carry on multiple conversations does not imply that people have deeper, more meaningful relationships. Studies indicate that one-fourth of the people in America do not have a close friendship with whom they

can share life's hurts, struggles, and dreams (McKee and McKee 19). Because this group's relational involvement consists of community through computer technology, they remain isolated in their homes even when they are in community (19).

The advances in the information revolution changed the way people approached work and career. People were less loyal to organizations and companies as they had been in the industrial era (Roxburgh 15). The skilled worker of the industrial era was replaced with the information or knowledge worker. The knowledge worker desired empowerment to make decisions (McKee and McKee 22; Roxburgh 15). The technological changes fueled the economy. These rapid changes and advances have impacted every level of culture from the public to private sector (Hammett 8).

Seismic cultural shifts occur at a more rapid pace than in the past. Cultural transformation, once absorbed over centuries, now takes place within centuries or decades. The cultural shifts create constant disruptions of cultural maps, which once made sense of the world (Roxburgh 15). Roxburgh describes the term *postmodernism* as a "catch-all label" that attempts to define the current cultural era because it stems from the recognition that a seismic shift occurred in culture. However, people lack the ability to describe the shift and how to explain the skills needed to navigate this new space in time (100). In contrast to modernity, which assumed a single worldview, postmodernism rejects the idea of a single worldview (Grenz 40; Harper, "Grace" 54). In place of a worldview, postmoderns accept "a multiplicity of views and worlds" (Grenz 40). The map of modernity, which culture once followed to make sense of the world through human expertise and predictability, no longer exists (Roxburgh 121).

The church has remained unaffected by these changes and upheavals that have taken place. Because no boundaries exist between the local culture and the local church (Roxburgh 150), people inside the local church experience the same confusion as those unaffiliated with the local church (133). The church has had to change through the ages to reflect the new cultural maps.

In fact, because no boundaries exist, the current era of the church has been termed the *New Apostolic Age*, or *New Christendom*, the fourth era of the church (Choi 49). The first era of the church, from the time of Jesus' apostles until Constantine's conversion, was characterized by persecutions in the Roman Empire and beyond (42). The message of the spoken gospel spread during this time of persecution. The Gospels were written and church doctrine developed to protect the faith from heresies. The local church focused on faithful transmission of the apostles' teaching. By AD 200, clergy emerged, and church leadership became hierarchical in structure (43-44).

The age of Christendom began in 313 and lasted until the Protestant Reformation in 1521. Christendom changed the status of Christianity from a persecuted minority within the Roman Empire to the official religion. The church accommodated to the changes of society. As a result, the church of Christendom emerged in place of the Apostolic church (Choi 44). While the Apostolic era focused on outward witness and movement, the focus during this time period was on spiritual care, worship, and sacraments (42, 45). In addition, a greater division between clergy and lay leadership developed. However, some Christians influenced by the Apostolic era rebelled against the imperialist church, creating the monastic movement (44-45).

The Evangelical era (1521-1960s) focused on the truth of doctrine based in Scripture and the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist (Choi 46-47). During this time of reform, the Protestants challenged the leadership categories created by Christendom, but the paradigm for the division of lay and clergy remained. The focus on theological and doctrinal details perpetuated the further division of the church into a multiplicity of denominations. The Enlightenment had a great impact on the church during the Evangelical era (Choi 47; Grenz 161, 165). A spirit of skepticism moved the acceptance of traditional authority, in which the church found comfort, to the edge of society, and reason became the focal point (Choi 47). Therefore, the evangelical church presented the gospel in terms of “proofs for the existence of God, the trustworthiness of the Bible, and the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection” (Grenz 161). In order to accommodate to the standards of common culture, the church adopted the Enlightenment’s standards of *proof* for reliability and viability.

The Enlightenment brought about the New Christendom within the postmodern era. This era recognized the shift of the majority of the Christian world into Asia, Africa, and Latin America rather than in Europe and the West (Choi 49). Compared with the West, these new frontiers were impoverished, and persecution and martyrdom were realities. The church in these areas believed in the biblical teachings of the supernatural, healings, prophecy, and exorcism (50). In addition, Meesaeng Lee Choi labels the church of postmodernism *A New Apostolic Era* because of its focus on “apostolic and evangelistic missions” (50). The church of the New Apostolic era exists as a *postdenominational* movement, unencumbered by denominational hierarchy and



tradition. No longer oriented toward maintenance, the church of the New Apostolic era seeks to be kingdom centered (50-51).

One outcome of this kingdom-centered church is an ever-increasing emphasis on church leadership. Blackaby and Blackaby state that influence of a spiritual leader “moves people onto God’s agenda” (20-21), and a major role of church leaders involves creating a core identity (Roxburgh 137, 142). One of the crucial aspects of creating a core identity involves rediscovering Christian formation practices and habits (137). Practiced intentionally, these habits and practices create an alternative, parallel culture that shapes the community of faith (145). The formation of such leaders comes from God rather than from the surrounding culture (Snyder 65).

Tertullian (ca. AD 160-ca. 220) was an example of a leader who sought to form a group of people into God’s people with an alternate worldview than the one dominated by Caesar (Roxburgh and Romanuk 118-19). Tertullian was primarily concerned with the formation of a people through the cultivation of habits and practices from Scripture (119). The focus on formational practices that shaped God’s people and the imagination of Christians was lost during Christendom when the focus shifted to proper management of the church (119-20).

Rediscovering the formative practices cultivates a parallel culture in the midst of the constant change. Daily application of the formative practices and habits reformulates the “DNA” of the Christian community and changes reality for the community (Roxburgh 150). Teaching and preaching do not have that type of effect. Roxburgh compares the importance of the daily practices to the daily exercises one must go through for rehabilitation from a broken limb or rehabilitation following a stroke. The day-to-day

practices are what make the difference (150). In order to embrace a way of life that contrasts with surrounding culture, God's people need a community in which to participate, one that practices an alternate way of living to shape them (Barton, *Strengthening the Soul* 127). Furthermore, another purpose for cultivating Christian formation habits and practices is that they create the capacity to recognize the impact of culture upon shaping and deforming the Christian life (Roxburgh 150).

The monastic communities ordered their lives around the daily offices. Ordering life around the daily offices allowed for specific times for the community of faith to gather briefly for Scripture and prayer, reminding Christians that they belonged to God and his kingdom. Recovering the practice of the daily office reshapes the imagination of Christians and reminds them that they belong to God (Roxburgh 151). In addition, the offices create awareness and offer protection from the narratives of the culture around Christians as individuals and as a community. The narratives of the world misshape the narrative and the formation of God's people (153).

Creating new maps includes the recovery of practices of hospitality and receiving the poor (Roxburgh 154, 158). The practice of hospitality consists of welcoming the stranger, not as an evangelism function but, rather, as a neighbor. The stranger exists in a variety of persons such as a next-door neighbor, a widow, and young persons (154). Roxburgh describes a church that sets aside one night a month when members invite strangers into their homes. The only agenda for this act of hospitality consists of showing God's grace and listening to the stranger (156-57). Receiving the poor nurtures friendships with those of lower economic means. This practice means more than

volunteering at local shelters because it actually cultivates friendships with the poor (159).

A final practice that Roxburgh purports is the practice of learning. The community of God that seeks to live by the map of God's parallel culture exists as a learning community. The learning community seeks to learn God's story found in Scripture and live within this story. When communities no longer know their stories they lose their identities (160). The community of faith must recover formative practices that shape Christian identity prior to engaging in missional action in the world (138).

### **Research Design**

The research design for this study was an exploratory qualitative method study. John W. Creswell notes that qualitative studies do not seek to explain a "cause-and-effect" relationship among variables (358). Instead, qualitative studies seek to explore a single phenomenon (358). The single phenomenon this study explored was the relationship between the participants' knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and how the knowledge and practices impacted their readiness for servant ministry and leadership.

The exploratory method design consisted of qualitative methods of data collection. This method involved gathering qualitative data from the participants using semi-structured pre-intervention and post-intervention interviews to obtain data about the participants' knowledge and practice of Wesley spiritual disciplines and their readiness for servant leadership. In addition, qualitative data was received through the weekly Wesley Discipleship Response journals. The semi-structured questions provided focus for the interview while allowing freedom for the participants to share their understanding and

experience. The interview consisted of initial questions with follow-up questions for clarification as needed by the participants (Wengraf 159). In addition, time constraints dictated the amount of time spent with each participant interviewed, limiting the number of initial questions (160). Data from the interviews and journals were coded by patterns, relationships, and themes, giving careful consideration to the relationship between the twelve-week Wesley Discipleship study and participants' knowledge and practice of Wesleyan spiritual formation.

### Summary

Jesus' last words to his disciples in Matthew's Gospel gave instruction for the disciples to go to all the nations and make new disciples, baptize them, and teach these new disciples to *obey* everything that Jesus commanded. However, the church today lacks intentionality in discipling its members in a way that leads to obedience to Christ's commands. Therefore, the commands of Christ are viewed as optional to the Christian faith, making those who profess the Christian faith look little different from those who do not profess the Christian faith. Instead of imitating the servant nature of Christ, great numbers of those who profess the Christian faith imitate culture. Accommodating one's life to common culture stands in contrast to the master-disciple relationship that existed between Jesus and his followers in the New Testament.

Wesley held the early Methodists to the standards of living in fidelity to the Great Commandment of loving God and loving neighbor. Wesley encouraged participation in the instituted means of grace of prayer, Scripture, fasting, and receiving the Lord's Supper to keep Christians on the lifelong transformational journey and to stay rooted in God's love. The life of the Christian also consists of the prudential means of grace that

include works of mercy and acts of compassion, which focus on the love of neighbor. These formative practices empower Christians to have the mind of Christ dwelling within them. Wesley believes that meeting with other Christians for mutual support and accountability for loving God and neighbor is nonnegotiable. He required early Methodists to meet together, encouraging leadership to arise from these groups.

The formative spiritual practices remain essential for the church today and for developing leaders. Leaders often find themselves driven by pride and fear. Authentic servant leadership follows the way of Jesus, seeking first to follow God. Servant leaders are needed in today's world to make maps for disciples of Christ. In the past, culture served as a way for people to make sense of life. The postmodern era leaves culture without a specific worldview for people to grasp. In place of one dominant worldview, multiple worldviews exist, necessitating the creation of an alternate society in the midst of the unfamiliar territory of the world. The role of the servant leader is to make maps through cultivating formative practices in the lives of Christians where their allegiance is recognized in obedience to the values of the kingdom of God and not in the surrounding culture.

CUMC traces its heritage back to Wesley and the early Methodists, yet missing from CUMC is an intentional discipleship plan, or map, that directs people to the means of grace and the development of a lifelong relationship with God in order that people may grow in the love of God and love of neighbor. A growing, dynamic relationship with God enables people to hear God calling them into servant ministry and servant leadership. Furthermore, implementing a Wesleyan Discipleship Group focusing on Wesleyan

spiritual disciplines will keep the participants centered on their identity as servants who belong and serve in God's kingdom.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Problem and Purpose

The membership of CUMC continues to grow. However, the number of persons involved in an intentional discipleship group that holds them accountable dwindles. A large percentage of persons who attend CUMC identify a lack of disciplined spiritual practices and accountability as two of the major reasons they find themselves spiritually stalled (Willow Creek 37). The people of CUMC express the desire to grow and to have a pathway for growth (11). Furthermore, while over 85 percent of the members of CUMC attend church three or four times a month, only a little over half participate in ministries of the church one or two times per month, and less than a quarter serve those in need through the CUMC ministries one to two times a month (22).

Currently, CUMC offers a variety of classes through Bible studies, Sunday school classes, and small groups. These class opportunities coexist alongside one another but do not provide clear direction for life transformation that leads to love of God and love of neighbor. The majority of the classes follow a lecture format focused on the transferring of information. The result has been that participants are enlightened by new knowledge but not transformed into Christlikeness through a growing relationship with the Lord and service in God's kingdom.

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a pilot group from CUMC, called the Wesley Discipleship Group, in a twelve-week study of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices through which a core group emerged to develop a discipleship plan.

## **Research Questions and/or Hypotheses**

The design of this project was qualitative. The goal was to discover the relationship between the knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices and readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership in the kingdom. The study looked at trends and themes that emerged through the participants' involvement in the Wesleyan Discipleship Group that provided guidance for mapping out a discipleship plan. The research questions reflect the desire to examine the relationship between participation in the Wesleyan Discipleship Group and increasing knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship without predicting specific outcomes. The first research question examined the participants' knowledge and practice prior to their participation in the Wesleyan Discipleship Group. The second research question explored the changes that occurred in the participants' knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship as a result of participating in the twelve-week Wesleyan Discipleship Group. The third research question explored the effectiveness of the twelve-week intervention in enabling the participants to incorporate Wesleyan devotional practices into their lives and to prepare them for servant ministry in the kingdom.

### **Research Question #1**

What were the participants' practice and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices prior to their participation in the Wesleyan Discipleship Group?

This research question focused on providing a baseline for evaluating participants' knowledge and practice of the Wesleyan spiritual disciplines or means of grace. The data revealed the relationship between the participants' spiritual practices and their understanding of God's love. In addition, the data revealed the relationship between



the participants' current spiritual practices and their readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership in the kingdom. This data served as a crucial component for assessing the quality of change the participants experienced resulting from participating in the Wesley Discipleship Group.

### **Research Question #2**

What changes occurred in the participants' practice and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices as a result of participating in the twelve-week intervention?

This research question focused on the patterns and themes that emerged as a result of participation in the Wesleyan Discipleship Group. This question not only explored whether an increased awareness of the Wesleyan means of grace exists but also the impact of participating in the Wesleyan Discipleship Group on the participants' spiritual growth in their relationship with God and growth into Christlikeness. The weekly guided response journals and the post-intervention interviews served as the instruments for evaluating the changes that occurred as a result of participating in the Wesley Discipleship Group.

### **Research Question #3**

What was the overall effectiveness of the Wesley Discipleship Group process in helping participants to incorporate Wesleyan devotional practices into their lives and to prepare them for servant ministry in the kingdom?

This research question explored the effectiveness of the Wesleyan Discipleship Group process in equipping participants to incorporate Wesleyan spiritual disciplines in their daily lives. In addition, this question evaluated the relationship between practicing

Wesleyan spiritual disciplines and preparedness for servant ministry and servant leadership in the kingdom. Furthermore, this question explored the effectiveness of the Wesleyan Discipleship Group in mapping out a future plan for discipleship for CUMC with a core group who have been a part of the Wesleyan Discipleship Group.

### **Population and Participants**

The general population for this study consisted of members of Central United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Fayetteville is the third largest city in Arkansas with an estimated population of more than seventy thousand people. CUMC is the largest United Methodist Church in the Arkansas Conference with more than four thousand members and more than 1,400 in attendance each weekend for worship. The largest percentage of members joined CUMC ten or more years ago. The majority of adults who attend CUMC have a college education or higher and have an average household income of \$75,000 per year or greater. The majority of households have two or more children in the home. Minorities represent less than 1 percent of CUMC's membership (Willow Creek 7-8).

The participants for the study were selected through purposive sampling. The specific population for this study was determined on the basis of completing at least two years of *Disciple Bible Study* (Wilke and Wilke, *Disciple I; Disciple II; Disciple III; Disciple IV*), although the majority of them have finished all four years of *Disciple Bible Study*. The reason for this qualification was based on the assumption that those with previous participation in *Disciple Bible Study* understood and have demonstrated a commitment to a group. In addition, they have sound knowledge of Scripture from their two or more years in *Disciple Bible Study*.

By using this criteria, twenty-three persons participated in the study. They received an invitation to participate through an e-mail letter (see Appendix A). The e-mail letter described the basic outline of the study and the time commitment involved. In addition, the e-mail included an Informed Consent Agreement that the participants printed out and signed. By signing the Informed Consent Agreement, the participants agreed to be a part of the study. The group consisted of ten males and thirteen females. Their ages ranged from 41 to 80. Eighteen had earned college degrees or higher. Seventeen participants worked outside the home. Six had children in the home during the intervention. Four were retired. Thirteen were currently involved in an area of ministry at CUMC. Six were currently involved in an area of leadership at CUMC.

### **Design of the Study**

The study that occurred was an exploratory qualitative study. The qualitative approach to the study allowed me to discover themes and patterns not easily quantified. The qualitative method provided the ability to explore the participants' understanding and views of the subject matter. The study format consisted of open-ended questions utilizing pre-intervention interviews to ascertain the participants' understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines in relation to their understanding and preparedness for servant ministry and servant leadership. The weekly guided response journals provided the opportunity to assess the changes that occurred in the participants' understanding and behavior in relation to Wesleyan spiritual formation. Furthermore, the post-intervention interviews provided me with the ability to ascertain the growth of the participants' understanding of the relationship between the practice of Wesleyan spiritual disciplines and readiness for servant ministry and leadership.

The pre-intervention interviews took place in November and early December 2010. I conducted and voice recorded the interviews, which took place in the offices of CUMC. I asked the interview questions as printed on the pre-intervention Questionnaire to assure consistency from interview to interview. Following the interviews, Joan Porter, a member of CUMC, transcribed the interviews into *Microsoft Word* documents. The post-intervention interviews took place in April 2011, utilizing the same procedures as the pre-intervention interviews.

I provided the weekly guided response journal to participants at the beginning of each group session during the intervention. Each of the guided response journals related to the prior week's study and provided one or two questions as a prompt for the participants to respond how they had integrated the discipline studied into their lives. A ten-minute time frame allowed the participants ample time to respond.

### **Instrumentation**

I utilized two researcher-designed instruments to conduct the interviews with the twenty-three participants of the Wesley Discipleship Group. The first instrument was a questionnaire seeking pertinent background from participants, such as gender, age range, education/occupation, and involvement me at CUMC (see Appendix B). The bulk of pre-intervention interviews consisted of a series of open-ended, researcher-designed questions with input and guidance from the Research Reflection Team. The open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to respond in their own words instead of words that I supplied. Furthermore, the interview questions allowed me to ask follow-up questions and provide any needed clarification for the interviewees. A second researcher-designed questionnaire served as the post-intervention interview (see Appendix D). The post-

intervention questionnaire did not include the background questions, but the other questions were identical to the pre-intervention questionnaire.

The third instrumentation was the researcher-designed weekly response journal that was completed by the participants during the first ten minutes of the weekly Wesley Discipleship Group meetings (see Appendix C). The Wesley Discipleship Group response journal (WDGRJ) had guided questions focusing on the previous week's study, which allowed the participants time to process their implementation of Wesleyan discipleship practices into their spiritual lives based on the knowledge gained. The WDGRJ provided one to two questions, or statements, as a prompt about which participants could journal. The prompt focused on the impact of practicing the specific spiritual discipline and not on the number of times the discipline was practiced. The opened-ended, guided questions allowed the WDGRJ to stay congruent with the qualitative nature of the study.

### **Expert Review**

Three experts reviewed the instruments utilized for this study. Professor Judy Brittenum, a professor in the School of Architecture at the University of Arkansas, Dr. Phil Crandall, a professor in the Food Science Department at the University of Arkansas, and Mrs. Kim Witte each reviewed and provided feedback on the instruments. Mrs. Witte has written many Bible studies and led spiritual formation retreats in the Northwest Arkansas area. She works in the Northwest District of the Arkansas Conference and has solid knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices. All reviewers are from CUMC. I provided each reviewer with the problem, purpose statement, research questions, and the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires to check for congruence

between the questionnaires and the study. The experts filled out the Expert Review Chart to review the interview questions and offer suggestions for clarity (see Appendix E).

### **Field Considerations/Variables**

While the understanding of variables is different in a qualitative study as opposed to quantitative studies, various variables did influence the study. The independent variables in this study were the Wesley Discipleship Group study and weekly group meetings. The dependent variables were the participants' knowledge and understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and practices, which were influenced by participation in the weekly group meetings. Participants' readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership in the kingdom was another dependent variable. Participation in the Wesley Discipleship Group also influenced participants' readiness for servant ministry and leadership. The weekly group meetings provided a format for accountability in implementing the practices learned. The weekly Wesley response journal allowed the participants to reflect and record their experience of practicing the discipline studied from the previous week. Thus, the Wesley response journals gave participants a means to communicate their growth and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practice, as well as to provide evidence for their readiness for servant ministry and leadership. In addition, the pre-intervention and post-intervention interviews showed evidence of the growth in knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and the impact of Wesleyan discipleship on the participants' readiness for servant ministry.

Other factors that influenced the study included the dynamics of the group and the group demographics, as well as those who, through absence, did not participate in response journal entries. Some life situations involving job or family crisis could affect

the impact of the study in participants' lives. I recorded observations of the group dynamics and noted any crisis that occurred in the lives of participants. Another intervening variable was that some participants had four years of *Disciple* and others had two years. Those having four years of taking *Disciple* had studied the Bible more than others.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection began with pre-intervention interviews. In order to ensure accuracy, I recorded each interview with a digital voice recorder. Each of the participants signed permission forms, which allowed me to record the interviews. Following the interviews, I gave the voice recorder to Joan Porter, who served as the transcriber and was not a part of the study. I conducted the pre-intervention interviews in my office in late November and early December 2010.

The intervention, the Wesley Discipleship Group, lasted for twelve-weeks beginning in January 2011 and concluding in April 2011. The intervention focused on the relationship between Wesleyan discipleship and spiritual disciplines and their relationship to servant ministry and servant leadership. The weekly sessions of the Wesleyan Discipleship Group occurred in the following order:

- 12 January—The Marks of a Methodist: Focused on the aim of discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition as the love of God and love of neighbor;
- 19 January—Holiness of Heart: Focused on the Wesleyan understanding of *vital piety*, or love of God;
- 26 January—The Means of Grace: Focused on the broad understanding of the spiritual disciplines in the Wesleyan tradition;

- 16 February—The Wesleyan Discipline of Prayer: Focused on prayer as the chief means of grace to draw near to God;
- 23 February—The Wesleyan Discipline of Scripture: Focused on the role of Scripture in Wesleyan spiritual formation;
- 2 March—The Wesleyan Discipline of the Lord’s Supper: Focused on the Lord’s Supper as a means of grace for spiritual formation;
- 9 March—The Wesleyan Discipline of Fasting: Focused on Fasting as a means of grace through self-denial and creating room for God and others;
- 16 March—The Wesleyan Discipline of Corporate Worship and Covenant Community: Focused on the importance of communion with God and with one another as key disciplines shaping the life a disciple;
- 30 March—Holiness of Life: Focused on the outflow of grace to one’s neighbor;
- 6 April—The Ministry of the Whole People of God: Focused on the call of God’s people to be a priesthood of believers;
- 13 April—Reaching Out to the Poor: Focused on serving people who sit on the margins of society, as key ministry of the kingdom; and,
- 20 April—Sanctifying Grace and Going on to Perfection and the Way to Heaven: Focused on a deep growing relationship with God and neighbor through God’s grace while living daily with the destination of life in view.

I wrote each week’s study, drawing upon selected sermons and writings of Wesley, as well as other authors’ writings on Wesley. Beginning with the second week of the intervention, the participants filled out the weekly guided response journal at the



beginning of class. The journals allowed the participants to reflect on their experience of integrating what they had learned in their session and what they had done as a result of the previous week's study. The group session did not convene the week of 2 February or 9 February due to heavy snow closing most roadways and closing CUMC, nor did the group meet the week of 23 March due to many participants traveling during the spring break week for the University of Arkansas and Fayetteville public schools.

I constructed the weekly sessions as follows:

- 6:00-6:05—Gathering and opening prayer
- 6:05-6:15—Wesley Discipleship Group response journal entries
- 6:15-7:05—Teaching and discussion on Wesley discipleship and practice
- 7:05-7:10—Short break
- 7:10-8:00—Break out into three groups of eight for prayer and accountability.

This structure provided a guideline from week to week. However, because a main part of the study involved sharing life together in community, the structure was amended a few times, especially in cases where group members within the community experienced life challenges. In such cases, the entire group took time to support and pray for those persons.

I conducted the post-intervention interviews late April and early May 2011. The post-intervention interview process followed the same format as the pre-intervention interview process. In order to ensure confidentiality for both the pre- and post-intervention interviews, I assigned numbers to the interviewees instead of providing the names to the transcriptionist.

### **Data Analysis**

After completing the pre-intervention interviews, including transcription, I began coding the material. I followed the model provided by Creswell: reading through the text data, followed by dividing the text into segments, and then coding the segments. After coding the segments of information, I examined the codes for redundancy and reduced the number of codes if necessary. Finally, I narrowed the coding to themes (251). The same process was utilized for the post-intervention interviews. In addition, the same process of coding was followed for data collection from the weekly response journals in order to discover emerging themes.

The triangulation of the pre- and post-intervention interviews, as well as the weekly guided response journal entries, provided a process to ensure the validity of the themes that emerged (Creswell 266). To analyze the semi-structured interviews and the response journal entries, I examined the responses of the interviewee to each individual question. Following this procedure allowed me to identify common themes for individuals and for the group.

Members of the Research Reflection Team, consisting of persons from my ministry context, played a role in the data analysis. The Research Reflection Team members provided feedback with regard to the identified emerging themes. In particular, they aided me in validating that the patterns and themes that emerged related to the research questions and the central phenomenon of the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ensuring confidentiality of the information shared by participants was an important component for the success of this research project. Therefore, following the

transcription of the pre- and post-intervention interviews, I destroyed the tapes. In addition, following the dissertation approval, the transcripts of the interviews, as well as the weekly guided response journals, were shredded.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### **Problem and Purpose**

While church membership at CUMC continues to grow, the number of persons involved in intentional discipleship that holds them accountable to growth in Christlikeness continues to shrink. This phenomenon exists, in spite of the fact that CUMC offers a variety of classes through Bible studies, Sunday school classes, and small groups. These classes, however, do not provide a clear direction for life transformation that promotes growth in loving of God and neighbor. The majority of these classes follow a lecture format focused on transferring information from the teacher/lecturer to the student/participant. The result has been that participants are enlightened by new knowledge but not transformed into Christlikeness through a growing relationship with the Lord and service in God's kingdom.

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a pilot group from CUMC, called the Wesleyan Discipleship Group (WDG), in a twelve-week study of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices from which a core group emerged to develop a discipleship plan. Beginning 12 January 2011, the WDG met each Wednesday evening at CUMC from 6:00-8:00 pm for a twelve-week study of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices through which a core group emerged to develop a discipleship plan. The WDG did not meet the week of 2 February or 9 February, due to heavy snow, causing roads in Fayetteville to close, as well as closing CUMC on those evenings. The group also did not meet 23 March due to the Fayetteville Public Schools and the

University of Arkansas closing for spring break, resulting in many participants of the WDG traveling.

The study utilized a qualitative methodology comprised of pre-intervention and post-intervention interviews, which I conducted. The pre-intervention and post-intervention interviews consisted of a series of open-ended, researcher-designed questions (see Appendixes B and D). The open-ended questions allowed the participants to respond in their own words and allowed me to ask follow-up questions for clarification. In addition, participants completed a researcher-designed weekly response journal during the first ten minutes of each Wesley Discipleship Group meeting (see Appendix C). The Wesley Discipleship Response Journal (WDGRJ) consisted of questions or statements focusing on the previous week's study, which allowed participants to respond based on their experience of implementing Wesley discipleship practiced into their lives.

### **Participants**

Twenty-three people participated in the WDG. The selection process for inclusion in the WDG was accomplished through purposive sampling. The requirement for participation in the study was having completed at least two years of *Disciple Bible Study*. The group consisted of thirteen females (56.5 percent) and ten males (43.5 percent). The participant ages ranged from age 41 to age 80. The age ranges were broken down into five age categories: 35-44 (one person, 4.4 percent), 44-54 (ten persons, 43.5 percent), 55-64 (five persons, 21.7 percent), 65-74, (six persons, 26.1 percent), and 75-84 (one person, 4.3 percent). Twenty of the participants were married (86.9 percent), one participant was engaged (4.3 percent), one participant was divorced (4.3 percent), and

one was widowed (4.3 percent). Three participants had school-aged children living in the home (13 percent). Two participants had school-aged grandchildren living in the home (8.7 percent). Two participants had adult children living in the home (8.7 percent).

All participants had received a high school education or greater. Eighteen of the participants had undergraduate degrees (78.3 percent), and six had obtained post-graduate degrees (26.1 percent). Each of the participants worked outside of the home currently or at some point in their lives (73.9 percent). Seven were retired from their professions (30.4 percent). In addition, seven were not working outside the home (30.4 percent)

The participants' activities with CUMC consisted of worship, Sunday school, Bible study, and service on ministry teams, as well as serving on committees. All participants attended worship at least twice a month on average. Eleven of the participants strictly attended a traditional style worship service (47.8 percent). Eight participants (34.8 percent) strictly attended a contemporary style worship service. The remaining four participants (17.4 percent) alternated back and forth between traditional and contemporary worship services. Fifteen of the participants (65.2 percent) were actively involved in a Sunday school class or a small group. Seventeen of the participants (73.9 percent) were actively involved in a ministry of CUMC or a ministry partnership of CUMC, such as Habitat for Humanity and Cooperative Emergency Outreach. Seven of the participants (30.4 percent) currently served, or had served in the past year, in a leadership position on a ministry team or a committee within CUMC.

### **Research Question #1**

Research question number one asked, "What were the participants' practice and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices prior to their participation

in the Wesleyan Discipleship Group?” This research question focused on providing a baseline for evaluating participants’ knowledge and practice of the Wesleyan spiritual disciplines or means of grace. The data revealed the relationship between the participants’ spiritual practices and their understanding of God’s love. In addition, the data revealed the relationship between the participants’ current spiritual practices and their readiness for servant ministry and servant leadership in the kingdom. This data served as a crucial component for assessing the quality of change the participants experienced resulting from participating in the WDG. After multiple readings of the transcripts, I coded the answers into three categories: health of spiritual life, devotional practices nurturing spiritual life, and servant ministry/leadership component of spiritual life. *Health of spiritual life* describes answers by the participants based on their assessment of the quality of their spiritual lives. The *devotional practices nurturing spiritual life* section describes how the participants’ devotional practices influence their spiritual lives. Specific focus was given to the participants’ practice and experience of Wesleyan devotional practices. In addition, the answers given indicated the participants’ understanding of God’s love through the devotional practices. *Servant ministry/leadership component of spiritual life* describes answers given by participants regarding the relationship between their devotional practices and their involvement in servant ministry and servant leadership.

### **Health of Spiritual Life**

During the interview process, I asked the participants how they would presently describe the state of their spiritual lives. Fourteen of the twenty-three participants described their spiritual lives as growing (60.9 percent). Nine of the fourteen persons

(64.3 percent) who described their spiritual lives as growing were male and five (35.7 percent) were female.

One person responded to the question regarding spiritual health as a “continual, progressive, steady growth forward, always forward.” Another participant described growth in terms of a lifelong process:

Growing because that’s one thing I’ve learned over time is that it is a lifelong process and the more I seek to grow, I guess, the hungrier I am for it. So I know that it is a lifelong process and there’s always more to learn and new ways to grow.

Out of the fourteen participants who identified their spiritual lives as growing, eleven people (78.6 percent) communicated that growing consisted of gaining knowledge from reading Scripture, attending classes, or reading books. Three people (21.4 percent) spoke of growth in terms of growing in their relationship with Christ. Seven of the fourteen participants (50 percent) communicated that while their spiritual lives were growing they hungered for deeper spiritual lives. Four out of the seven were males (57.1 percent) and three were females (42.9 percent).

Eleven of the twenty-three participants (47.8 percent) described the state of their spiritual lives as lacking. Among those who described their spiritual lives as lacking, seven were female (63.6 percent) and four were male (36.4 percent). Seven of the eleven participants (63.6 percent) who described their spiritual lives as lacking had also defined their spiritual lives as growing. Five of those seven (71.4 percent) who defined their spiritual lives as lacking and growing had described their growth in terms of knowledge gained. One of the participants articulated his spiritual life as lacking in the following way: “To be honest, it’s not near what the rest of my family is, but I—lacking, I guess.” Others said, “I wish it was better,” and “I am not where I want to be.” One person



communicated his spiritual life as further releasing his life to Christ, “I’ve got a long way to go to release my life to Jesus totally. So I would say my spiritual life is average or marginal.” One of the participants recently had a conversation with a relative on the topic of the afterlife. This conversation brought about confusion for her spiritual life. She described her lacking in her spiritual life in terms of questioning the health of her spiritual life. Another participant stated, “Sometimes I don’t feel like I have the Spirit living in me.” Several other participants expressed that they felt a distance between themselves and God.

In response to the question of the state of their spiritual health, five participants (21.7 percent) communicated they were satisfied with their spiritual health. Three of the participants described their spiritual health in terms of assurance of their relationship with God. One person answered, “Good, satisfied and yet growing, maturing.” Another answered that she was satisfied stating, “I’ve had better. I’ve had worse. It goes up and down.” Four females (80 percent) and one male (20 percent) comprised those who described themselves as satisfied with their spiritual lives (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1. Pre-Intervention, Health of Spiritual Life (N=23)**

Heading	Growing N	%	Lacking N	%	Satisfied N	%
Males (n=10)	9	90.0	4	40.0	1	10.0
Females (n=13)	5	38.5	7	63.6	4	30.8
35-45 years (n=1)	1	100.0	1	100.0	0	---
45-54 years (n=10)	5	50.0	4	40.0	1	10.0
55-64 years (n=5)	3	60.0	2	40.0	2	40.0
65-74 years (n=6)	3	50.0	4	66.7	2	33.3
75-84 years (n=1)	1	100.0	0	---	0	---

### **Devotional Practices Nurturing the Spiritual Life**

The participants in the study identified devotional practices that were important to their spiritual lives and that were practiced on a regular basis. Sixteen of the twenty-three participants (69.6 percent) identified a set devotional time consisting of prayer and reading the Bible as spiritual disciplines they practiced on a regular basis. Eleven of the sixteen people practicing a set devotional time of prayer and reading the Bible were female (68.7 percent) and five were male (31.3 percent). Three of the twenty-three participants in the study (13.0 percent) communicated that prayer was a key part of their spiritual practices, but they did not have a set time for prayer. Instead, they practiced “ceaseless” prayer throughout that day as conversations with God.

Nine participants (39.1 percent) described worship attendance as a regularly practiced spiritual discipline. Five of the nine participants (55.6 percent) attended traditional worship services at CUMC, and four (44.4 percent) attended contemporary worship services at CUMC. In addition, of the nine people identifying worship as a

regularly practiced spiritual discipline, five were female (55.6 percent) and four (44.4 percent) were male. One person proclaimed worship played such a vital role in her life that if she had to miss worship she would watch worship on television.

Christian community as a spiritual discipline also played a role in the participants' spiritual lives. Nine participants (39.1 percent) stated that they considered Christian community necessary for their spiritual lives. Five of the nine participants who practiced the discipline of Christian community were male (55.6 percent) and four were female (44.4 percent). Six out of nine (66.7 percent) participated in an organized class, or group, providing Christian community. These classes and groups consisted of Sunday school classes, Stephen Ministry supervision groups, men and women's Bible studies, and other similar classes and groups. Three of the nine (33.3 percent) experienced Christian community in less structured settings, such as sharing their spiritual lives with their spouses or a Christian friend. Nine of the twenty-three participants (39.1 percent) in the study communicated that their practice of spiritual disciplines was aided by a class structure. Seven of the nine (77.8 percent) were male and two (22.2 percent) were female. Class structures, such as Bible studies and small groups, provided daily reading and prayer structures.

Twelve participants (52.2 percent) in the study identified a variety of other spiritual practices as well. Five of the twenty-three participants (21.7 percent) identified the reading of books by Christian authors, such as Nouwen, Bonhoeffer, and Philip Yancey, as important to their spiritual lives. Four participants (17.4 percent) described their experience of serving others as a spiritual practice important to their spiritual lives. This service took place through church involvement, such as teaching or serving on a

compassion ministry that reaches out to the grieving, as well as serving in their workplace by encouraging and reaching out to others around them. Three persons (13 percent) stated that physical exercise—walking and running—provided an opportunity for prayer and meditation. Fasting over the lunch hour during Lent was an important spiritual practice for two participants (8.7 percent). One person (4.4 percent) identified sharing her faith as an important spiritual discipline. Receiving the Lord's Supper was an important spiritual discipline to one participant (4.4 percent). This same person was the only participant (4.4 percent) out of the twenty-three participants to describe the experience of giving as an important spiritual discipline.

I asked the participants in the study how they related their practices of the spiritual disciplines to their understanding of God's love. Thirteen of the twenty-three participants (56.5 percent) stated that they grew in their understanding of God's love through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Of those thirteen participants, seven were female (53.8 percent) and six were male (46.2 percent). One participant said she felt God's love daily during her times of prayer and meditation. Another participant stated that through practicing spiritual disciplines he was given "a greater awareness of God's love, peace, presence, and guidance." Through practicing the spiritual disciplines, one person was reminded of God's unconditional love, saying, "My understanding of God through the spiritual disciplines, is that God loves me as I am, even though I slip up." One participant in the study stated that creating time for a relationship with God was essential to experiencing God's love. He said, "To me, without creating some time, creating some space and time to think about God, to pray to God, there's no way outside of that, to me, to experience or understand better what his love is." According to this

respondent, creating time and space took place through his practice of prayer, reading Scripture, and worship (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

**Table 4.2. Pre-Intervention, Spiritual Disciplines Practiced by Gender (N=23)**

<b>Spiritual Discipline</b>	<b>Male N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Female N</b>	<b>%</b>
Devotional time (n=16)	5	31.3	11	68.7
Worship (n=9)	4	44.4	5	55.6
Christian community (n=9)	5	55.6	4	44.4
Reading Christian authors (n=5)	2	40.0	3	60.0
Serving others (n=4)	2	50.0	2	50.0
Physical exercise (n=3)	1	33.3	2	66.7
Fasting (n=2)	1	50.0	1	50.0
Sharing faith (n=1)	0	---	1	100.0
Holy Communion (n=1)	0	---	1	100.0
Giving/stewardship (n=1)	0	---	1	100.0
Experience of God's love (n=13)	6	46.2	7	53.8

**Table 4.3. Pre-Intervention, Spiritual Disciplines Practiced by Age (N=23)**

<b>Spiritual Discipline</b>	<b>35-44 N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>45-54 N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>55-64 N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>65-74 N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>65-74 N</b>	<b>%</b>
Devotional time (n=16)	0	---	8	50.0	5	31.3	3	18.7	0	---
Worship (n=9)	0	---	5	55.6	1	11.1	2	22.2	1	11.1
Christian community (n=9)	1	11.1	5	55.6	2	22.2	1	11.1	0	---
Reading Christian authors (n=5)	0	---	3	60.0	0	---	2	40.0	0	---
Serving others (n=4)	1	25.0	1	25.0	1	25.0	1	25.0	0	---
Physical exercise (n=3)	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3	0	---	0	---
Fasting (n=2)	0	---	2	100	0	---	0	---	0	---
Sharing faith (n=1)	0	---	1	100	0	---	0	---	0	---
Holy Communion (n=1)	0	---	1	100	0	---	0	---	0	---
Giving/ stewardship (n=1)	0	---	1	100	0	---	0	---	0	---
Experience of God's love (n=13)	0	---	7	53.8	3	23.1	3	23.1	0	---

The pre-intervention interview process revealed that the majority of the participants had very little to no understanding of what Wesley called the “means of grace.” Fifteen of the twenty-three participants (65.2 percent) described themselves as having very little to no understanding of Wesleyan spiritual practices. Nine females (60 percent) and six males (40 percent) comprised the fifteen people who communicated they had little to no understanding of Wesleyan spiritual practices. Eight of the fifteen participants were ages 45-54 (53.3 percent), three were ages 55-64 (20 percent), three

were ages 65-74 (20 percent), and one was in the 75-84 year-old age range (6.7 percent). Five of the fifteen participants (33.3 percent) indicated that their lack of understanding of the Wesleyan spiritual disciplines stemmed from their growing up in another denominational background or with no religious background whatsoever. However, all of the participants had been actively involved in CUMC for more than five years. The following comments illustrate the lack of comprehension of Wesleyan discipleship by the fifteen participants. One participant said, "Not much, I grew up in a Baptist background." Another said, "I was Presbyterian until five years ago, so not much." Another participant said, "I've gone home and asked by husband, who grew up in the Methodist Church, and he knows less than I do." After asking one of the participants his understanding of Wesleyan spiritual practices, he sat silent for a moment and asked, "Can you help me out a little bit?" In response to this question, one person lamented, "I don't know and I've been in the Methodist church since my parents began bringing me at six weeks old." Several other participants gave statements of their lifelong involvement in the United Methodist Church, yet they had no knowledge of Wesleyan devotional practices.

Three of the twenty-three participants (13 percent) held a comprehensive understanding of Wesleyan discipleship. Two of the three were male (66.7 percent) and one was female (33.3 percent). Each of these was from a different age category. One was age 45-54 (33.3 percent). Another was from the 55-64-age range (33.3 percent). The third person was 65-74 years old (33.3 percent). One respondent stated that Wesleyan discipleship consists of the practices of "worship, prayer, Scripture reading, supporting charity, and fasting." One other participant said, "Wesleyan discipleships consists of inward and outward practices, including prayer, Bible study, conferencing, communion,

and fasting.” The third participant described the same practices but also included Wesley’s commitment to social reform with education for the poorer people.

Five of the twenty-three participants (21.7 percent) held a moderate understanding of Wesleyan discipleship practices. Each of these five believed prayer and Scripture to be important spiritual disciplines in the Wesleyan tradition. In addition, each of these five stated that small accountability groups were a feature of Wesleyan spiritual practices. Two out of five participants (40 percent) defined fasting as important Wesleyan discipline, though both confessed not to practice fasting. Additionally, one of the five persons (20 percent) who had moderate knowledge of Wesleyan spiritual disciplines insisted that service to others is an important component. Interestingly, none of the participants who had moderate knowledge of the Wesleyan spiritual disciplines related them to the transformation of the heart. Instead, the Wesleyan practices were activities carried out in response to expectations. Of those holding a moderate understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices, three were male (60 percent) and two were female (40 percent). Two were ages 65-74 (40 percent). The three other participants each represented a particular age group: age 35-44 (20 percent), age 45-54 (20 percent), and age 55-64 (20 percent; see Table 4.4).



**Table 4.4. Pre-Intervention, Understanding of Wesleyan Discipleship (N=23)**

<b>Subgroup</b>	<b>Little/None N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Comprehensive N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Moderate N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male (n=10)	6	60.0	2	20.0	2	20.0
Female (n=13)	9	69.2	1	7.7	3	23.1
35-44 (n=1)	0	---	0	---	1	100.0
45-54 (n=10)	8	80.0	1	10.0	1	10.0
55-64 (n=5)	3	60.0	1	20.0	1	25.0
65-74 (n=6)	3	50.0	1	16.7	2	33.3
75-84 (n=1)	1	100.0	0	---	0	---

### **Servant Ministry/Leadership Component of Spiritual Life**

In response to their understanding of servant ministry, thirteen of the twenty-three respondents (56.5 percent) defined it as serving others. Seven of the thirteen participants (53.8 percent) who defined servant ministry as serving others were female and six were male (46.2 percent). Five fell into the age category 45-55 (38.4 percent), three in the age category 55-64 (23.1 percent), three in the age category 65-74 (23.1 percent), one in the age category 35-44 (7.7 percent), and one in the age category 75-84 (7.7 percent). One participant described their understanding of servant ministry as follows:

I know we are not put here to serve ourselves. I know we are here to serve others and God tells us we are not an island unto ourselves and we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. I need to take the role that Jesus did, a servant's heart.

Another participant stated their growing understanding of servant leadership in this way:

“I’m coming to understand the importance of serving others. It’s not all about me but

reaching out to others in need.” One participant described servant ministry as ministering

to others through an organized effort, such as a mission trip or collecting food for the local food pantry, as well as being open and flexible to serve someone in simple and spontaneous ways in the routines of daily life.

Eight of the twenty-three participants (34.8 percent) described servant leadership as empowering others. Six were female (75 percent) and two were male (25 percent). Four of the participants were from the 45-54 (50 percent) age range and four were from the 65-74-age range (50 percent). Three of these respondents (37.5 percent) had also defined servant ministry and servant leadership as serving others. “Leading other people into servanthood” and “inviting others to come along beside you and serve” were consistent comments among these eight persons.

Three participants (13 percent) also described servant ministry and servant leadership as carrying out God’s plan and purpose for them. These people believed attentiveness to God’s leading through the Holy Spirit to be essential in the role of servant ministry and servant leadership. According to these participants, without the leading of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, carrying out God’s plan and purpose is not possible. Two of the participants describing servant ministry and servant leadership as carrying out God’s plan were female (66.7 percent) and one was male (33.3 percent). In addition, two were from the 45-54-age range (66.7 percent) and one was from the 65-74-age category (33.3 percent).

Only one participant (4.3 percent) described servant ministry and servant leadership as deriving from an appropriate disposition of the heart. This participant communicated the necessity of humility in order to be a servant to others. According to

this participant, humility allows him to understand others better in order to serve them, without judging them. This participant came from the 35-44 year-old category.

Almost one-third of the participants related their practices of the spiritual disciplines to enabling them to be involved in servant ministry and servant leadership. Seven of the twenty-three respondents (30.4 percent) stated that their practice of the spiritual disciplines served to teach them their role of a servant. For example, one participant said that in reading Scripture she was being taught to be a bolder witness to her clients. Another participant received guidance on how to serve through prayer and meditation. Males made up four of the seven participants (57.1 percent) who received instruction on how to serve through their spiritual disciplines. Three of the seven (42.8 percent) were females. Three age ranges represent the seven persons. Four people (57.1 percent) were from the age group 45-54. Two people (28.6 percent) were from the age group 65-74. One person (14.3 percent) was from the age group 55-64.

Seven of twenty-three respondents (30.4 percent) also reported that practicing spiritual disciplines in the morning brought about an awareness, or focus, throughout the day to be a servant to those around them. One person said, "By practicing those disciplines, it keeps me focused on what's really important." Another person responded, "The spiritual disciplines keep you aware of where God maybe had put someone in front of you that's hurting or needs to be comforted or needs God's word or something." Four of the seven (57.1 percent) were out of the 45-54 year-old age group, two (28.6 percent) were out of the 65-74 year-old age group, and one (14.3 percent) out of the 55-65 year-old age group.

Four other participants related their practices of the spiritual disciplines to empowering them to serve. This empowerment exists beyond the knowledge of what the spiritual disciplines teach about serving and the awareness and focus on serving to the actual empowerment to serve. One participant illustrated the importance of the discipline of prayer in empowering her to serve one of her patients from work:

Prayer is important because in the workplace when I pray for people I see them in a new light. I had an old patient that was crotchety but when I took care of him I had to wrap his legs and stuff. I did this for like two-and-a-half years before he finally passed away. But there were times when I could look at him and he looked like Jesus. It became so easy because I could pray for him and I could see Jesus' face in his face.

Another participant communicated that through the spiritual disciplines he felt empowered to serve a dying friend through visiting with him and sharing his witness with that friend. Of those who said that practicing the spiritual disciplines empowered them to serve, two were male and two were female. Each of the four represented a different age bracket: 35-44 (25 percent), 45-54 (25 percent), 55-64 (25 percent), and 75-84 (25 percent).

Two of the twenty-three participants (8.7 percent) stated that practicing the spiritual disciplines allowed them to care for their own souls so that they could have the spiritual strength to serve others. One participant spoke of needing balance between practicing the spiritual disciplines that nurture one's own soul and serving others.

Another communicated the need for being fed spiritually through the disciplines in order to serve. Both of these participants were females and in the 65-74 year-old age category.

Three people out of the twenty-three participants (13 percent) gave little evidence of their connection between practicing the spiritual disciplines and service. One stated, "I don't know how to answer that question. I don't really know how I really do this, to

relate it to that.” Another participant said that he does just want needs to be done without seeing that the practice of spiritual disciplines has any influence on service. Two of these participants were male (66.7 percent) and one was female (33.3 percent). In addition, two were ages 55-64 (66.7 percent) and one was age 45-54 (33.3 percent; see Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5. Pre-Intervention, Impact of Spiritual Disciplines upon Servant Ministry (N=23)**

<b>Subgroup</b>	<b>Teach N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Aware N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Empower N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Self-care N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>None N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male (n=10)	4	40.0	2	20.0	2	23.5	0	23.5	2	20.0
Female (n=13)	3	23.1	5	15.6	2	15.6	2	15.4	1	7.7
35-44 (n=1)	0	---	0	---	1	100	0	---	0	---
45-54 (n=10)	4	40.0	4	40.0	1	10.0	0	---	1	10.0
55-64 (n=5)	1	20.0	1	14.3	1	20.0	0	---	2	40.0
65-74 (n=6)	2	33.3	2	33.3	0	---	2	33.3	0	---
75-84 (n=1)	0	---	0	---	1	100	0	---	0	---

### **Research Question #2**

Research question number two asked, “What changes occurred in the participants’ practice and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices as a result of participating in the twelve-week intervention?” This research question focused on evaluating changes that occurred in the participants’ knowledge and practice of Wesleyan spiritual disciplines. In addition to revealing the changes in knowledge and practice, the data revealed the changes in how the participants related their spiritual practices to their understanding of God’s love.

The weekly, guided response journals and post-intervention interviews served as the sources for the data to assess the quality of change participants experienced from participating in the WDG. The guided response journals provided vital information as participants reflected on their experience of implementing Wesleyan discipleship practices weekly. A high percentage of participants filled out the weekly response journals. On average, twenty of the twenty-three participants responded (86.9 percent). The data for this research question was coded into two categories: health of spiritual life and devotional practices nurturing the spiritual life. I address the servant ministry/leadership component of spiritual life category under Research Question 3 in this chapter.

### **Health of the Spiritual Life**

When I asked the participants the state of their spiritual lives following their participation in the WDG, sixteen persons (69.6 percent) described their spiritual lives as growing. Eight of the participants were male (50 percent) and eight were female (50 percent). One of the sixteen persons (6.2 percent) who described his spiritual life as growing was in the 35-44 year-old age bracket. Seven persons (43.8 percent) were from the 45-54 year-old age range. The 55-64 year-old age bracket consisted of four persons (25 percent), as did the 65-74 year-old age range (25 percent).

While the number of persons who described their spiritual lives as growing increased only by two persons, the participants more frequently described their growth in terms of relationship with God. Seven of the sixteen participants (43.8 percent) described the state of their spiritual lives as growing in terms of growth in their relationship with God. For example, when asked about his spiritual life, one participant commented, “It’s

wonderful!” When asked what makes it wonderful, he replied, “I feel like I have had a huge transition from the head to the heart from this class.” Another participant described her experience of attending the WDG in the following terms:

I grew up Catholic, so I spent the first four years studying the Bible through Disciple because the Bible was a new thing for me. I didn't even own a Bible for most of my life. Now I'm getting more in touch with God and the Bible together. You've taught me a lot of things. I did certain things but never really thought about them.... [I]t is a whole new concept, having an actual relationship. That had never entered my mind too much over the years because it was never, as a child, ever discussed.

Each of the seven participants gave similar descriptions of their growth in relationship with God. The remaining nine of the sixteen participants (56.2 percent) who described their spiritual lives as growing spoke in terms of a greater understanding and commitment to devotional practices such as prayer, Bible reading and study, worship, and service to God and others.

Participants also offered other various responses when asked to describe the state of their spiritual lives. Five of the twenty-three participants (21.7 percent) of the WDG spoke in terms of satisfaction and assurance in their spiritual lives, based on their relationship with God and their spiritual practices. Prior to the intervention, three persons expressed satisfaction and assurance in their spiritual lives (13 percent). Most notably, only two persons (8.7 percent) described their spiritual lives as lacking in terms of practicing spiritual disciplines and relationship with God. Prior to the intervention, eleven participants (47.8 percent) described their spiritual lives as lacking (see Table 4.6).

Another significant note about the spiritual health of the participants following the intervention had to do with their preciseness in describing the state of their spiritual lives. Prior to the intervention, many of those communicating that their spiritual lives were

growing also described their spiritual lives as lacking. In the post-intervention interviews, these descriptions did not occur. Perhaps their involvement in the WDG provided the opportunity to evaluate intentionally their spiritual life over the twelve weeks, which they were not doing prior to the pre-intervention interview. Therefore, following the intervention they were more able to articulate their spiritual health clearly.

**Table 4.6. Post-Intervention Health of Spiritual Life (N=23)**

Heading	Growing N	%	Lacking N	%	Satisfied N	%
Males (n=10)	8	80.0	1	10.0	1	10.0
Females (n=13)	8	61.5	1	7.7	4	30.8
35-44 (n=1)	1	100.0	0	---	0	---
45-54 (n=10)	7	70.0	1	44.4	2	22.2
55-64 (n=5)	4	80.0	1	20.0	0	---
65-74 (n=6)	4	66.7	0	---	2	33.3
75-84 (n=1)	0	---	0	---	1	100.0

### **Devotional Practices Nurturing the Spiritual Life**

The weekly guided response journals, known as the Wesley Discipleship Group Response Journal, coupled with the post-intervention interviews provided evidence of changes in the participants' devotional practices, which nurture the spiritual life. In particular, the data shows the relationship between practicing the Wesleyan means of grace and their relationship with God and their growth in Christlikeness.

Through participating in the WDG people grew in their knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and Wesleyan spiritual practices. All twenty-three participants (100 percent)



communicated that they grew in their practice and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices in some way. Ten of the twenty-three participants (43.5 percent) who grew in their practice and knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship articulated a comprehensive understanding of Wesleyan discipleship. Six of the ten were male (60 percent) and four were female (40 percent). Six (60 percent) were ages 45-54. Two (20 percent) were ages 65-74. One (10 percent) was age 35-44 and one (10 percent) was age 75-84. The participants communicated their understanding of the Wesleyan order of salvation of prevenient grace, justifying grace and the new birth, sanctifying grace, and glorifying grace. They also communicated the aim of the Christian life as “going on to perfection.” Their understanding of Christian perfection was informed by Wesley’s definition from *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Wesley defines Christian perfection as love of God and neighbor filling the heart. Furthermore, Wesley believed Christians can expect to receive perfection by grace through faith in this lifetime (41, 51).

These participants grew in their practice of spiritual disciplines and their understanding of the means of grace not being ends in and of themselves but channels to receive God’s grace and nurture their relationship with God. For example, one participant in the study commented on his understanding of Wesleyan devotional practices in this way: “They are not things I pat myself on the back for or check off my list, but they are done as a way to allow God’s grace to work in my life and break through my ego.” Another participant commented that the Wesleyan spiritual disciplines “involve all the different ways that God bestows grace upon man and that could be anything from worship, public or private, Christian conferencing, prayer time, reading the scriptures, Communion, community, and all those different ways.” The participants who grew in

their understanding of the Wesleyan spiritual disciplines opened themselves up to allow God's grace to be at work within them through their spiritual practices.

Thirteen of the twenty-three respondents (56.5 percent) had a moderate understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and spiritual practices following their participation in the WDG. These participants grew in knowledge and practice of the means of grace as growing in their love of God and neighbor. However, these participants did not communicate Wesley's order of salvation. These participants consisted of nine females (69.2 percent) and four males (30.8 percent). Five of thirteen respondents were ages 55-64 (38.5 percent). Four were ages 45-54 (30.8 percent) and four were ages 55-64 (30.8 percent; see Table 4.7).

**Table 4.7. Post-Intervention, Understanding of Wesleyan Discipleship (N=23)**

Subgroup	Little/None N	%	Comprehensive N	%	Moderate N	%
Male (n=10)	0	---	6	60.0	4	40.0
Female (n=13)	0	---	4	30.8	9	69.2
35-44 (n=1)	0	---	1	100.0	0	---
45-54 (n=10)	0	---	6	60.0	4	40.0
55-64 (n=5)	0	---	0	---	5	100.0
65-74 (n=6)	0	---	2	33.3	4	66.7
75-84 (n=1)	0	---	1	100.0	0	---

The participants' growth in their understanding and practice of Wesleyan discipleship are evidenced below in the changes in their practice of the spiritual

disciplines. Following their participation in the twelve-week intervention, twenty-one of the twenty-three participants (91.3 percent) communicated that a daily devotional time that included Bible reading and prayer was an important spiritual activity that they practiced on a regular basis. Twelve of the twenty-one participants (57.1 percent) who described daily Bible reading and prayer as important to their spiritual lives were female and nine (42.9 percent) were male. Nine of the twenty-one participants (42.9 percent) were ages 45-54; six (28.6 percent) were ages 65-74; five (23.8 percent) were ages 55-64; and, one (4.7 percent) was from the 35-44 year-old age range.

In addition to the increased numbers of persons practicing Bible reading and prayer as devotional practices, twelve of the twenty-one participants (57.1 percent) described a new understanding and quality of those practices. For example, one participant communicated that the way he practiced prayer and reading Scripture changed:

I do read and pray much more regularly. I would say the biggest difference in my spiritual practices would be intentional prayer and reading slowly for transformation. I've always—I wouldn't say it is the fault of *Disciple*—but sometimes you feel like you're really cruising, especially in *Disciple I*. So that's what I would say I'm doing most regularly now that's different.

This participant illustrates the change in the quality of the reading that occurred for many participants. Their reading shifted from reading for information to reading for transformation. Another participant committed to memorizing a Bible verse weekly as a desire to focus on Scripture in a transformative manner. Each of the twenty-one participants who described a devotional time consisting of prayer and Bible reading as a regular discipline had committed himself or herself to a set, daily time of prayer. Fourteen of the twenty-one participants (66.7 percent) described their prayer lives as not

being contained to a set devotional time but to conversations held with God throughout the day, so that prayer was a natural part of daily life. This number of participants compares to three persons out of the twenty-three total participants (13 percent) that described *ceaseless* prayer as a part of their regular spiritual practices prior to the intervention.

The participants' new understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices informed their practice of prayer and Scripture. Ten of the twenty-three participants (43.5 percent) said they grew in their understanding and practice of the Wesleyan discipline of prayer as the chief means of grace. These participants began the day with prayer for God's guidance and ended the day with a time of praises, as well as confession. In addition, these participants sought to pray throughout the day and connect their prayers with everyday life concerns, such as work and family concerns. For example, one person communicated that Wesley's emphasis on family prayers impacted her prayer life. As a result, she began taking the opportunity to pray with her grandchildren before sporting events. Two other persons said they were led by the Spirit to pray for forgiveness and to offer forgiveness to others who had intentionally hurt them. In addition, these participants began utilizing prayer resources, such as *The Book of Common Prayer*, *Celtic Daily Prayer: Prayers and Readings from the Northumbrian Community*, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy Ordinary Radicals*, to aid them in their discipline of prayer.

In addition, participants grew in their understanding of the Wesleyan view of Scripture as a means of grace. Ten of the twenty-three participants (43.5 percent) had a greater knowledge and practice of the Wesleyan spiritual discipline of *searching the*

*scriptures*. These participants read the Scriptures through the lenses of the doctrines of sin, justification by faith, new birth, and inward and outward holiness. The focus of their reading moved them beyond merely obtaining information and into transformation as they read with their relationship with God and neighbor in view. One participant said the following about the discipline of Scripture reading following her involvement in the WDG:

Consciously I have always known that God loves me. But subconsciously I really knew I was unlovable and undeserving of God's love, but the more I open my heart to God, the more I realize the joy of really knowing God's love. Wesley's teachings have helped. Accepting Scripture as mine and making it a part of me is the key.

These participants adopted Wesley's pattern from reading from both the Old and New Testaments. Five of the ten participants (50 percent) stated they read Scripture in the evenings, as well as in the morning. One person communicated their new practice of reading scripture in the morning and the evening:

I found it very helpful to follow Wesley's guide to reading Scripture. I searched and read Scripture both morning and evening and spend more time meditating about what God was saying to me specifically. The morning study helped me to find a purpose and guide my day and the evening study allowed me to "wrap up" and reflect on following God's will for my day.

Her new understanding and new approach to the practice of reading Scripture finds congruence with Wesley's exhortation to read Scripture "with a single eye, to know the will of God and a fixed resolution to do it" (Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* 127). Living in accordance with Scripture was important for these participants to grow in their relationship with God.

Whereas, nine of the participants (39.1 percent) described Christian community as playing a key role in their spiritual lives prior to the twelve-week intervention, following

the intervention, nineteen participants (82.6 percent) believed that Christian community played a vital part in their spiritual lives. Ten of the nineteen participants (52.6 percent) were female and nine (47.4 percent) were male. Nine of the participants (47.4 percent) were ages 45-54, six (31.5 percent) were ages 65-74, three (15.8 percent) were ages 55-64, and one participant (5.3 percent) was from the 35-44 age range.

Eleven of the nineteen participants (57.9 percent) who described Christian community as important in their spiritual lives said that worshiping with the Christian community was a spiritual practice they practiced on a regular basis. Again, these participants' understanding and experience of this discipline was informed by Wesleyan practices. These participants communicated that worship provided the opportunity to praise God, be encouraged and challenged to Christlikeness, and receive grace to sustain them in their faith. One participant stated that following his involvement in the intervention he now attends worship more regularly and it has a little different meaning than before. Prior to the intervention, nine of the twenty-three participants (39.1 percent) described worship as a regularly practiced spiritual discipline. Of the participants describing worship as a regularly practiced spiritual discipline, seven (63.6 percent) were female and four of the participants (36.4 percent) were male. The eleven participants came from differing age categories. Seven of the participants were ages 45-54 (63.6 percent), two were ages 55-64 (18.2 percent), one was age 65-74 (9.1 percent), and one was age 75-84 (9.1 percent). Both traditional and contemporary worship styles were represented among those who expressed that worship was an important spiritual discipline that they practiced regularly. Six of the participants (54.5 percent) attended contemporary worship, four participants (36.4 percent) attended traditional worship, and

one participant (9.1 percent) attended both contemporary and traditional worship on a regularly basis.

Eleven of the nineteen respondents (47.8 percent) who communicated that Christian community was important said this was due to the encouragement and support they received from other Christian brothers and sisters through what Wesley called *Christian conferencing*. One participant described her experience of Christian community through the Wesleyan Discipleship Group in these terms: “Sharing experiences with other Christians helps me to feel I’m not unique in my struggles and questions, I sometimes feel confused about. It serves almost as a therapy to know others face the same types of concerns.” Others shared that they received encouragement through the acceptance they experienced from the group in sharing their concerns and praying for one another. The remaining eight of the nineteen participants (42.1 percent) said the accountability received from Christian community was the most important aspect of this spiritual practice. These persons placed a high value on sharing their success and failures in their daily walk with God. In addition, they valued correction from their brothers and sisters in Christ and received guidance from others who had experienced what they were experiencing in life. The understanding of Christian community for the persons changed from attending groups, such as Sunday school classes, men’s and women’s groups, and Bible studies, to being a part of smaller groups where they share life with one another.

Interestingly, while the number of participants who stated that Christian conferencing was a regularly practiced spiritual discipline increased following the intervention, those who said their practice of spiritual disciplines was aided by a class structure dropped. Prior to the intervention, nine of the twenty-three participants (39.1

percent) communicated the importance of class structure. Following the intervention five of the twenty-three participants (21.7 percent) stated that class structure was important in aiding them in practicing their spiritual disciplines. The rise in the importance of accountability and guidance from Christian conferencing for the participants could have replaced the importance of the class structure. The structure that once aided the participants in practicing their spiritual disciplines had been replaced by caring, accountable relationships.

The number of participants reading the writings of Christian authors as a spiritual practice increased as well. Prior to the intervention, three of twenty-three participants (13 percent) stated that reading books and devotional writings by Christian authors played a role in their spiritual growth. Following the intervention, eight participants (34.8 percent) communicated that Christian authors played a role in their spiritual growth as a spiritual practice. However, included in this list were new authors. For example, some participants began reading Harper's book *The Way to Heaven* to learn more about Wesleyan discipleship. In addition, as a part of the class, participants read excerpts from Wesley's sermons. Two participants chose to research Wesley more fully by reading more from Wesley. Other participants read various other authors' writings, such as *The Return of the Prodigal* by Nouwen. Of the eight who described reading Christian authors as an important regularly practiced discipline in their lives, five were female (62.5 percent) and three were male (37.5 percent). Three were ages 45-54 (37.5 percent). Two each were from age ranges 55-64 (25 percent) and 65-74 (25 percent). One was age 75-84 (12.5 percent).



As with the pre-intervention interview, three respondents (13 percent) viewed their physical exercise as a spiritual discipline. These participants believed being a good steward of their physical bodies was an important discipline. In addition, their time of walking or running gave them the opportunity to meditate and pray. Two of these three participants were female (66.7 percent) and one was male (33.3 percent). They represented three different age categories: 35-44 years old (33.3 percent), 45-54 years old (33.3 percent), and 55-64 years old (33.3 percent).

Holy Communion served as an important, regularly practiced spiritual discipline for twelve of the twenty-three participants (52.2 percent) following the intervention. Six of the twelve participants describing Holy Communion as a regularly practiced spiritual discipline were female (50 percent) and six were male (50 percent). Eight of the twelve (66.7 percent) were from the 45-54 year-old age range. Two participants (16.7 percent) were 65-74 years old. One participant (8.3 percent) was 55-64 years old and one (8.3 percent) was 35-44 years old. Seven of the twelve participants (58.3 percent) said that they focused on preparing themselves prior to receiving communion. Some stated that meditating on the meaning of communion aided them in receiving communion with new meaning and a sense of the Spirit's presence. One person commented, "My preparation was simply to be intentional a few days before to really meditate on what receiving Holy Communion means to me—the amazing sacrifice Christ made for me and what a gift it is." The remaining five participants (41.7 percent) stated that the symbols of bread and wine and the words of the communion liturgy took on a new meaning for them.

Following the intervention, four of the twenty-three participants (17.4 percent) in the study stated that fasting was an important spiritual discipline they were practicing on

a weekly basis. Two were male (50 percent) and two were female (50 percent). All four participants were in the 45-54 year-old age category. Prior to the intervention only one person said fasting was a spiritual discipline practiced weekly (4.3 percent). In addition, ten other participants (43.5 percent) fasted one day during the season of Lent while the intervention was occurring and commented that they would continue to fast during Lent on a yearly basis. Participants who were able to do so followed the pattern of the Wesley fast from Thursday after the evening meal until Friday at three o'clock to coincide with Christ' death on the cross. Those unable to fast for that length of time fasted during the noon meal.

More significant than the increased number of participants participating in fasting as a spiritual discipline were their comments about how fasting affected their relationship with God. Five of the fourteen (35.7 percent) total participants who fasted throughout the season of Lent commented that this practice allowed for more time with God through prayer and Scripture reading, as well as making them more aware of the needs of their neighbors. One participant put her experience in these words: "Fasting lets me know where it all comes from and a lot of people cannot afford it so I should give something to the poor." Another participant said, "I feel, by fasting, a closer relationship with or communication with God, just knowing that I experience, in a very small way, what Jesus experienced over and over again." Interestingly, while only four participants communicated that they continued to fast during the post-intervention interview process, the fourteen participants who fasted during Lent stated that this practice created great change in their heart for God and love for neighbor. One participant wrote, "I think of Jesus' forty-day fast and the Wednesday/Friday fasts of the early Methodists. My life got

better this week from this practice.” Others said they bonded with God and were more aware of others’ needs around them.

People’s awareness of their material blessings and sensitivity to the needs of others cultivated generosity in the lives of participants. Whereas prior to the intervention only one person mentioned giving and stewardship as an important, regularly practiced spiritual discipline, fifteen (65.2 percent) stated that they viewed their giving/stewardship as an important spiritual discipline that they practiced regularly. The practice of giving and stewardship described by participants went beyond monetary giving to the church. These persons gave clothing to local ministries, volunteered to do mission work for the poor and elderly, and visited nursing home patients. These fifteen saw giving and stewardship in terms of all resources and giving time for God and others. Seven of these fifteen were male (46.7 percent) and eight were female (53.3 percent). One of the fifteen participants was age 35-44 (6.7 percent). Seven people were 45-54 years old (46.7 percent). Three were ages 55-64 (20 percent) and ages 65-74 (20 percent). One person was 75-84 years old (6.7 percent).

The number of participants describing witnessing as a spiritual discipline increased as well. Twelve of the twenty-three participants (52.1 percent) described sharing their faith as an important, regularly practiced spiritual discipline. Sharing their faith included actions that gave witnesses to their faith in God in their workplace and community. One person commented, “Through this study I have become a bolder witness in my workplace.” Another person stated, “I am more open with my faith practices with my co-workers and friends.” These participants pointed to Wesley’s encouragement to reach out to the poor, which included care not only for bodies but for poor souls also.

Eight of these persons were female (66.7 percent) and four were male (33.3 percent).

Eight of the twelve participants (66.7 percent) were from the 45-54 age category and four (33.3 percent) were from the 65-74 age category.

One other significant change noted among the participants was a new understanding of service as a spiritual discipline. Following the intervention, seventeen of the twenty-three participants (73.9 percent) said that service was a regularly practiced spiritual discipline. Eight were male (47.1 percent) and nine were female (52.9 percent). Seven participants were ages 45-54 (41.2 percent). Five were ages 55-64 (29.4 percent). Four (23.5 percent) were ages 65-74. One of the seventeen (5.9 percent) was age 35-44. The understanding of service carried beyond the ministry of the church to the context of the participants' everyday lives. For example, one participant understood the discipline of service in encouraging her grandchildren. Others practiced the discipline of service through being less judgmental and critical of others. Another participant practiced the discipline of service by visiting a nursing home. One participant described their practice of the discipline of service in the following way:

A family situation arose where some money was needed. I was blessed to be able to help. I can't say that was my immediate response, but after prayer and reflection, it was clearly the right thing to do. Second, we learned of someone with a sick child in the hospital and quickly reached out and made a connection that is a vital help (or seems to be) the parents. Our faith and openness hopefully has led us to see these situations as opportunities to live the life and walk the walk rather than getting bogged down in tragedy.

These types of statements illustrated that the participants' view of service was not contained to ministry of the local church but was a spiritual habit cultivated in daily life.

As with the pre-intervention interviews, I asked the participants how they related their practice of the spiritual disciplines to their understanding of God's love. Prior to the

intervention, thirteen of the twenty-three participants (56.5 percent) stated that practicing the spiritual disciplines aided them in understanding God's love. The post-intervention interviews revealed that the number of participants relating their practice of the spiritual disciplines to their understanding of God's love grew to eighteen people (78.3 percent). One participant described her new understanding of God's love for her, which God revealed to her one day while she was doing the assigned Scripture reading and devotional readings for class. She stated her new understanding in the following terms:

I was reading the lesson and all of a sudden something came into my mind, across my screen of vision: God glorifies you. I had never thought that God loves me like that. It was as if those words were teletyped right across in front of me.

Another participant commented about having a greater awareness of God's love through practicing the spiritual disciplines:

My main focus would be the way that the Scriptures have really spoken to me more directly now. In my reading time and my prayer time, I have really felt God's love much more than I ever have in the past in that the words on the page are speaking to me in a much different way.

Other participants spoke of practicing spiritual disciplines as providing a change from a belief in God held in the mind to a belief held also in the heart. This change provided a greater awareness of God's love. Reflecting on her experiencing through the WDG, one person spoke of the change she experienced in her relationship with God:

Consciously, I have always known that God loves me. But subconsciously I really knew I was unlovable and undeserving of God's love but the more I open my heart to God the more I realize the joy of really knowing God's love. It makes me feel safer and more available to others. Wesley's teachings have helped. Accepting Scripture as mine and making it a part of me is the key.

Of the eighteen participants who communicated that the spiritual disciplines provided channels of grace to grow in their relationship with God and understanding of God love,

nine were male (50 percent) and nine were female (50 percent). Nine of the participants (50 percent) were ages 45-54. Four persons (22.2 percent) were ages 55-64. Five participants (22.2 percent) were ages 65-74. One participant was age 75-84 (5.6 percent; see Tables 4.8 and 4.9).

**Table 4.8. Post-Intervention, Spiritual Disciplines Practiced by Gender (N=23)**

<b>Spiritual Discipline</b>	<b>Male N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Female N</b>	<b>%</b>
Devotional time (n=21)	9	42.9	12	57.1
Worship (n=11)	4	36.4	7	63.6
Christian community (n=19)	9	47.4	10	52.6
Reading Christian authors (n=7)	3	37.5	5	62.5
Serving others (n=17)	8	47.1	9	52.9
Physical exercise (n=3)	1	33.3	2	66.7
Fasting (n=4)	2	50.0	2	50.0
Sharing faith (n=12)	4	33.3	8	66.7
Holy Communion (n=12)	6	50.0	6	50.0
Giving/stewardship (n=15)	7	46.7	8	53.3
Experience of God's love (n=18)	9	50.0	9	50.0

**Table 4.9. Post-Intervention, Spiritual Disciplines Practiced by Age (N=23)**

<b>Spiritual Discipline</b>	<b>35-44 N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>45-54 N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>55-64 N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>65-74 N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>65-74 N</b>	<b>%</b>
Devotional time (n=21)	1	4.7	9	42.9	5	23.8	6	28.6	0	---
Worship (n=11)	0	---	7	63.6	2	18.2	1	9.1	1	9.1
Christian community (n=19)	1	5.3	9	47.4	3	15.8	6	31.5	0	---
Reading Christian authors (n=8)	0	---	3	37.5	2	25.0	2	25.0	0	12.5
Serving others (n=17)	1	5.9	7	41.2	5	29.4	4	23.5	0	---
Physical exercise (n=3)	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3	0	---	0	---
Fasting (n=4)	0	---	4	100.0	0	---	0	---	0	---
Sharing faith (n=12)	0	---	8	66.7	0	---	4	33.3	0	---
Holy Communion (n=12)	1	8.3	8	66.7	1	8.3	2	16.7	0	---
Giving/ stewardship (n=15)	1	6.7	7	46.7	3	20.0	3	20.0	1	6.7
Experience of God's love (n=18)	0	---	9	50	4	22.2	4	22.2	1	5.6

### **Research Question #3**

The third research question asked, “What was the overall effectiveness of the Wesley Discipleship Group process in helping participants to incorporate Wesleyan devotional practices into their lives and to prepare them for servant ministry in the kingdom?” This research question focused on the effectiveness of the WDG process in equipping participants to incorporate Wesleyan spiritual disciplines in their lives. In addition, the data revealed the changes that occurred in the relationship between the

participants' spiritual practices and their readiness for servant ministry in the kingdom. Furthermore, this question explored the effectiveness of the Wesleyan Discipleship Group in mapping out a future plan for discipleship for CUMC with a core group who have been a part of the WDG. The weekly-guided response journals, along with the post-intervention interviews were the sources that provided the data to assess the overall effectiveness of the WDG.

### **Servant Ministry/Leadership Component of the Spiritual Life**

Eighteen of the twenty-three participants (78.3 percent) communicated that they grew in their understanding of servant ministry and servant leadership. All ten males (43.5 percent) participating in the study said they grew in their understanding of servant ministry and servant leadership. Eight of the eighteen persons who grew in their understanding of servant ministry and servant leadership were female (44.4 percent). The ages of the eighteen participants varied. Six were ages 45-54 (33.3 percent). Five were ages 55-64 (27.8 percent), and five were ages 65-74 (27.8 percent). One was age 35-44 (5.5 percent), and one was age 75-84 (5.5 percent). One participant described her new understanding of servant leadership:

Servant leadership was a totally new term to me when we started this class. I had never put those two together. You were either a servant or you were a leader. I'd never had the idea that you could be both of them. So now I serve God, and in that capacity he allows me to be a leader and with that is the compassion, the love, the mercy, the grace, the spiritual gifts, the spiritual walk, a new understanding.

Another person in the study stated that he now understood that servant leadership did not imply someone had a title as a cooperate leader. Instead, servant leadership takes place in everyday life in small ways that add up and make more of a difference in other people's lives than the occasional big things.



In response to their understanding of servant ministry, nineteen of the twenty-three respondents (82.6 percent) stated that it includes loving others through serving them, thus living out the command of Jesus to love one's neighbor. Of those nineteen participants, eleven were female (57.9 percent) and eight were male (42.1 percent). Ten of the respondents (52.6 percent) were ages 45-54. Four participants (21 percent) were ages 65-74. Three (15.8 percent) were ages 55-64. One person (5.3 percent) was age 35-44, and one person (5.3 percent) was age 75-84.

Thirteen of the twenty-three participants (56.5 percent) described their understanding of servant leadership as empowering others, either physically or spiritually. For example, participants commented that through servant leadership they spiritually empowered others to follow Christ more closely and to serve Christ. In addition, these participants commented that through their service they empowered others to have food and clothing they needed. Of the thirteen participants who described their understanding of servant leadership as empowering others, seven were female (53.8 percent) and six participants were male (46.2 percent).

Fifteen of the twenty-three participants (65.2 percent) described servant ministry and servant leadership as carrying out God's plan and purpose for them. Carrying out God's plan and purposes included attentiveness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and utilizing their spiritual gifts in service to God and others. For these participants, servant ministry and servant leadership were not confined to ministry offered inside the church. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit and attentiveness to God's voice through the spiritual disciplines, these participants saw every arena of life as a place to serve God and serve neighbor, including the workplace, home, neighborhood, and community, as well as

the local church. God's plan and purpose for their servant ministry and leadership called for a holistic view of life. Females made up eight of the fifteen (53.3 percent) who described servant ministry and servant leadership as carrying out God's purpose for them. Males made up seven of the fifteen (46.7 percent).

Furthermore, fifteen of the twenty-three participants (65.2 percent) communicated that an appropriate disposition of the heart was vital to servant ministry and servant leadership. An appropriate disposition of the heart included a heart in tune with the great commandments to love God and love neighbor. In addition, humility to serve and forgive others when wronged, were common comments among these fifteen participants. These fifteen participants pointed to the example of Jesus in washing his disciples' feet (John 13) as a heart with the disposition needed to serve. Seven of these participants stating the importance of the disposition of the heart were female (46.7) and eight were male (53.3 percent).

### **Disciplines Enabling Servant Ministry/Leadership**

Following their participation in the WDG, a considerably larger number of the participants described the practice of spiritual disciplines as enabling them to be involved in servant ministry and servant leadership. Twenty-two of the twenty-three participants (95.7 percent) communicated that they believed in a direct correlation between the spiritual disciplines they practiced and their involvement in servant ministry and servant leadership. The twenty-two participants included twelve females (54.5 percent) and ten males (45.5 percent).

Eleven of these twenty-two participants (50 percent) stated that the spiritual discipline of prayer enabled them to be better servants. Participants commented that this

discipline led them to pray for God to guide them into opportunities for service in their families, work places, community, and church. Through this discipline they were more sensitive to God's leading them to serve, and more willing. In addition, these participants saw prayer as an act of service for others. One participant commented, "Through prayer I stand before God, pleading the case of others." This same participant communicated a new understanding of prayer as servant ministry to others:

My insight was that the prayers I am giving are for many of my family and extended family that I remember but I have not thought about in months. They won't have anyone praying for them if I don't! What a realization.

Others said they prayed for their enemies. Praying for their enemies softened their heart to look for ways to forgive. Five of the eleven participants were male and six were female. In addition, each age range was represented: 35-44 (one person, 9.1 percent), 45-54 (four people, 36.4 percent), 55-64 (two people, 18.2 percent), 65-74 (three people, 27.3 percent), and 74-84 (one person, 9.1 percent).

Seventeen of these twenty-two participants (73.9 percent) stated that Scripture played a key role in equipping them for servant ministry and servant leadership. These seventeen people consisted of ten females (58.8 percent) and seven males (41.2 percent). "I am making a greater connection with what I read in Scriptures about how Jesus served and how I am called to serve" was a frequent comment made by these participants. One participant communicated the importance of Scripture in helping him to know God's love and share God's love with others:

It was only through dealing with my faith and accepting for myself the extent of God's love for me as I studied Scripture that allowed change to occur in my life. So, I think, until you are able to realize the extent of God's love for you as an individual you can't really participate in servant ministry or servant leadership. I think until you really get into Scripture and accept God's love for you and the fact that he has extended this grace

to you, you can't pass that love on to your fellow man. So I think that this study has brought me closer to God.

Another participant responded, "Reading Scripture has helped me see the people placed before me to minister and how love to them, just as Christ did." Eight of the participants were ages 45-54 (47.1 percent). Four of the seventeen were ages 65-74 (23.5 percent). Three of the participants were in the 55-64 age bracket (17.6). One person was age 45-54 (5.9 percent), and one was age 75-84 (5.9 percent).

Of the twenty-two participants who stated that a connection exists between their practice of the spiritual disciplines and being equipped for servant ministry and servant leadership, nine people pointed to Holy Communion as important for servanthood (40.9 percent): "The feeling of God's grace being poured out to a sinner like me was humbling but also the feeling, or call, to serve others was more present and convicting than ever," commented one participant. Another common comment was that receiving Holy Communion cultivated a spirit of humility to serve. Four of the respondents stating a connection between Holy Communion and servant ministry were male (44.4 percent) and five were female (55.6 percent). Five of the nine were ages 45-54 (55.6 percent). Two were ages 65-74 (22.2 percent). One person was age 35-44 (11.1 percent) and one was age 55-64 (11.1 percent).

Nine of these twenty-two participants (40.9 percent) also stated that the discipline of fasting enabled them to be more effect servant ministers and servant leaders. However, only four participants continued this practice outside the Lenten season. These nine respondents stated that fasting provided an opportunity to recognize people in their own community and around the world who suffer due to hunger. Through this awareness they had a greater desire to give to and serve the poor. One common comment from these

participants was that they sought to use their time of fasting to pray for others in need and to go to visit some of those they knew where in need during their normal lunch hour. One person made the following comments about how her experience of fasting led her to serve others:

I was more open to sharing Christ. I talked to people I usually try to avoid, even if it was just to say “hi.” I offered to pray for people, events, and circumstances after listening to others and really hearing what they had to say. I was much more attentive to the needs of others.

Of the participants describing the Wesleyan discipline of fasting having an impact on their servant ministry, four were male (44.4 percent) and five were female (55.6 percent). Four were ages 45-54 (44.4 percent). Three participants were ages 55-64 (33.3 percent). One was age 45-54 (11.1 percent), and one person was 65-74 (11.1 percent)

Fifteen of the twenty-two people (68.2 percent) who responded that spiritual disciplines enabled and equipped them for servant ministry and servant leadership pointed to the covenant community. Six were male (40.0 percent) and nine were female (60.0 percent). Six of the fifteen participants (40.0 percent) were ages 45-54. Four people (26.7 percent) were ages 65-74. Three respondents (20 percent) were 55-64 years old. One person (6.7 percent) was age 35-44 and one person (6.7 percent) was age 75-84 (see Tables 4.10 and 4.11).

These participants shared worship as important for cultivating the heart and mind of a servant. Worship, as a means of grace, provided the avenue for praising God, recognizing their sinfulness and need for forgiveness, and encouragement through the messages to live as God’s people in the world showing forth Christ’s love. In addition to worship, these fifteen participants communicated that the accountability received from the Wesley Discipleship Group was vital in equipping them for servant ministry and

servant leadership. Participants shared statements such as, “knowing that my group members pray for me gives me courage to serve.” Another stated, “[T]he example of the way my group listens to me helps me to listen and pray for others better.” Another common statement was, “I needed a place to confess where I failed and be encouraged to move forward.” The small group dynamics of the WDG gave participants opportunities to build accountable, Christian relationships.

Each participant in the WDG wrote a *rule of life* prior to the last group meeting. This rule of life consisted of two major headings—*Holiness of Heart* and *Holiness of Life*. The participants created their rule of life based on these two categories. For example, under the heading *Holiness of Heart* participants included practices such as the daily practice of prayer and reading Scripture, the weekly practice of fasting, or the weekly practice of worship. Under the heading *Holiness of Life*, participants included, the weekly practice of visiting the sick or participating in mission trips twice a year. Others included serving through ministries of the church by using their spiritual gifts. Some put nurturing the relationships God has blessed me with. The rule of life provided a basis for accountability as the group continued to meet monthly during the summer months of 2011 and as the group continues to meet bimonthly throughout the year. Not all of the participants of the Wesley Discipleship Group chose to continue to meet. However, a core group of twelve participants (52.2 percent) continued to gather for accountability and prayer. Through this group, a plan of distinctively Wesleyan discipleship, which leads people into an authentic relationship with Christ and servant ministry, is being conceived and developed for the broader context of CUMC.

**Table 4.10. Wesleyan Spiritual Disciplines' Impact on Servant Ministry by Gender (N=23)**

Spiritual Discipline	Male N	%	Female N	%
Prayer (n=11)	5	45.5	6	54.5
Scripture reading (n=17)	7	41.2	10	58.8
Holy Communion (n=9)	4	44.4	5	55.6
Fast (n=9)	5	55.6	3	44.4
Covenant community (n=15)	6	40.0	9	60.0

**Table 4.11. Wesleyan Spiritual Disciplines' Impact on Servant Ministry by Age (N=23)**

Spiritual Discipline	35-44 N	%	45-54 N	%	55-64 N	%	65-74 N	%	65-74 N	%
Prayer (n=11)	1	9.1	4	36.4	2	18.2	3	27.3	1	9.1
Scripture reading (n=17)	1	5.9	8	47.1	3	17.6	4	23.5	1	5.9
Holy Communion (n=9)	1	11.1	5	55.6	1	11.1	2	22.2	0	---
Fasting (n=9)	1	11.1	4	44.4	3	33.3	1	11.1	0	---
Covenant community (n=15)	1	6.7	6	40.0	3	20.0	4	26.7	1	6.7

### Summary of Major Findings

The qualitative nature of this study allowed participants to express in their own words, their understanding, knowledge, and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and Wesleyan devotional practices through semi-structured interviews and weekly guided response journal entries. In addition, the responses to the interviews and guided response

journal entries allowed the participants to articulate their connection between the spiritual disciplines and their involvement in servant ministry and servant leadership.

The major findings of this study include the following:

1. Participants displayed an increase of knowledge and understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices.
2. People demonstrated a growing relationship with God through participating in the means of grace.
3. A community of accountability provided strong support for participants' growth in Christlikeness.
4. Through practicing the means of grace, participants were better equipped for servant ministry and servant leadership.
5. The changes that occurred in the devotional practices and involvement in servant ministry due to participation in the Wesley Discipleship group were not gender or age specific.

In Chapter 5 these major findings are further developed, taking into account information from the literature review in Chapter 2.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Major Findings

CUMC offers a variety of adult studies as a part of its discipleship ministries. These studies allow persons to choose from long-term studies to short-term studies. Some of these studies focus on life application topics and others, such as *Disciple*, focus on learning Scripture. These classes exist in the form of small groups, Bible study classes, men's and women's groups, and Sunday school classes. While the studies may prove fruitful for participants, no clear plan of Christian discipleship has been established that yields life transformation, leading to love of God and neighbor. The majority of the existing classes focus on transferring knowledge from teacher to class member through lecture. The result of this approach has led to participants being enlightened with new information but has failed to transform class members into Christlikeness through a growing relationship with the Lord.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Wesley Discipleship Group. The WDG met once a week for twelve weeks to study Wesleyan discipleship and distinctive Wesleyan devotional practices, known as the means of grace. Through the Wesley Discipleship Group, participants grew in their knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship, and a core group emerged to begin developing a discipleship plan.

The study utilized a qualitative methodology, consisting of pre- and post-intervention semi-structured interviews. The qualitative methodology allowed participants to answer the questions with their own words and not my words. In addition,

throughout the twelve-week intervention, the participants filled out a guided response journal describing their experience of implementing Wesleyan spiritual practices based on what they had learned in the class session the week prior. Through these means of gathering data, five major findings emerged.

### **Increased Understanding of Wesleyan Discipleship and Devotional Practices**

Prior to the intervention, very little understanding of Wesleyan discipleship existed among the participants. The data confirmed that only a few participants understood Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices. The majority of the participants confessed not having any knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices. Other participants had some idea of what certain Wesleyan practices were; however, they described these practices in knowledge gained, not transformation in Christlikeness occurring through the utilization of those practices. Considering each participant had been actively involved in CUMC for five years or more, this finding points to the reality that teaching Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices have not been a priority for the discipleship ministries of the church. The varieties of classes offered at CUMC do not focus on teaching the Wesleyan understanding of growth in grace or the means of grace.

Following the intervention all individuals stated that they grew, not only in their understanding of Wesleyan discipleship but also in their practice of Wesleyan spiritual disciplines of prayer, Scripture reading, fasting, Holy Communion, worship, Christian conferencing, and service. One participant made this comment following the intervention:

The Wesleyan spiritual disciplines involve all the different ways that God bestows his grace upon man. This includes worship (public or private), Christian conferencing, prayer time, reading the Scriptures, communion,

and community. That's what I was introduced to in our study of Wesley. Community has been the real eye opener to me.

Another participant communicated his understanding of Wesleyan spiritual disciplines as means of grace on the journey toward Christian perfection. The participants understood Wesleyan spiritual disciplines as having both a personal and social dimension consisting of the holiness of heart and the holiness of life.

The high number of persons who grew in their understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and employing the means of grace suggests their receptivity to intentional faith development. While the research points toward a lack of intentionality on the part of CUMC in teaching Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices, no lack of receptivity existed with the participants. The research indicates that people stand willing to be taught, learn, and grow. In addition, it indicates the relevance of practicing the means of grace, not just as a private religious endeavor but also, for living life in relationship with other people, such as family members, coworkers, strangers, and the family of faith. The implication is for CUMC to teach the means of grace and the aim of the Christian life, which is all of heart and life devoted to God, or Christian perfection (Wesley, *Plain Account* 30).

In addition, participants gained a greater awareness of their responsibility of growing in Christlikeness through the means of grace. The first class session of the WDG focused on Wesley's sermon "On Working Out Your Salvation." Wesley bases his sermon on Philippians 2:12-13 where Paul writes, "[W]ork out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Wesley proclaims in this sermon that salvation is both instantaneous and gradual, occurring the moment one is justified and gradually

increasing, as the Christian grows in their love of God and neighbor. Since God is at work within the Christian, the Christian can cooperate with God's grace, thereby, working out his or her salvation (*Bicentennial Edition 3*: 204-05). Wesley states that Christians work out their salvation by avoiding evil and by being zealous for good works through practicing works of piety and mercy (205). Commenting on a class session focusing on Wesley's sermon, a participant recorded these insights in the weekly guided response journal: "I never thought of working out my salvation. I never knew I had a part in my salvation. I thought that was a done deal, the day I received Christ." Many others in the class expressed the same sentiments. The belief commonly held by participants was that their salvation was a one-time event and not an ongoing process toward Christlikeness. This belief suggests that CUMC only teaches a portion of Wesley's order of salvation. The portion taught at CUMC includes sin, prevenient grace, justification, and the new birth. In other words, the salvation God offers to humans through Jesus Christ is exhausted at the point someone receives Christ as his or her savior. In order to instruct people in a fuller understanding of God's grace, CUMC needs to concentrate on teaching about God's sanctifying grace, or going on to perfection, and how the means of grace serve as channels whereby people work out their salvation for continued growth in grace.

In Chapter 2 the literature discusses the lack of intentional focus on people's formation into Christlikeness on the part of the church. Instead, the goal for many churches has been church membership and not growing into the image of Christ (Willard, *Great Omission* 4-6; *Spirit* 260). Wesley lamented the lack of Christian formation in the church during his life, saying it was not producing "real" Christians (Maddox, "Wesley's

Prescription” *Quarterly Review* 15; Wesley, *Bicentennial Edition* 4: 87-88). According to Wesley, the organized church’s failure to teach Christian doctrine was one reason real Christians were not produced (Maddox 15; Wesley 4: 89).

This study found that Wesley’s concern for the church still remains true for the Methodists of today at CUMC. The lack of understanding of the Christian’s responsibility of cooperating with God’s grace through practicing holiness of heart and life was evident from the pre-intervention interviews and the responses to the first guided response journal. Considering the active involvement and commitment of participants in the various Bible study opportunities at CUMC, this finding points out that the existing discipleship model is a consumerism model. Participants attended classes in order to absorb, or consume, information without any realization of their role in transformation into Christlikeness. The absence of transformational discipleship illustrates a major philosophical flaw and praxis breakdown in the discipleship ministries of CUMC.

Following the intervention, however, participants of the WDG grew in their understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices, pointing out that transformational discipleship was something the church failed to communicate and to teach. For example, when asked through the guided response journal to describe their experience of “working out your salvation” or “cooperating with God’s grace at work within you,” participants described their spiritual practices in terms of opening themselves up to allow God’s grace to work in their lives and not activities performed because it was expected of them by God.

This finding speaks to the importance of developing a discipleship process for church members that leads them into growing in faith. A discipleship process not only

involves teaching the main components of being a Christian but also their role in taking responsibility for their discipleship. A discipleship plan, as such, teaches a correct understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and leads them to a deeper understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines that allows transformation into Christlikeness through God's grace. Developing a discipleship plan at CUMC would provide church members with an understandable discipleship process that leads them to Christlikeness (Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* 52).

### **Growing Relationship with God through the Means of Grace**

The second major finding closely relates to the first major finding. Whereas the first finding focused on gained knowledge and understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices, the second focuses on the actual implementation of Wesleyan devotional practices in the participants' lives. The study showed that the participants in the Wesley Discipleship Group demonstrated a growing relationship with God through participating in the means of grace.

The majority of participants practiced spiritual disciplines prior to their involvement in the WDG. However, following their participation in this group, a new quality in their relationship with God existed through their spiritual practices. Participants communicated that they experienced a deeper understanding of God's love for them. For example, one participant commented on his new understanding of God's love through practicing the means of grace by saying, "Through practicing the means of grace I am more prone to listen to what God says and have put myself in a situation where God's love is much more apparent." Another participant spoke of an intimate loving relationship with God through practicing the spiritual disciplines stating, "Through

practicing the spiritual disciplines I know that God loves me by name.” These findings give credibility to the role of the Wesleyan means of grace in the Christian’s transformation into Christlikeness. Furthermore, these findings give credence to the importance of a discipleship plan that includes practicing the means of grace. When a discipleship process, such as the WDG, is in place, the process bears fruit in the lives of the participants.

According to Wesley, God’s grace changes the hearts and lives of people, not devotional activities in and of themselves (Henderson 134). However, through the means of grace people make themselves available to God’s grace and power (135). The participants’ involvement in the WDG showed evidence of God’s grace at work in their lives and a growing relationship with God. The practice of the means of grace allowed the participants to grow in their relationship with God. One person described the change that occurred in her life through participating the in WDG process:

When I was a non-practicing Catholic, I thought about God but really he was just out there somewhere. He had no connection in my life whatsoever. I think differently now. I tell you, I think totally differently. I think my whole focus has totally changed because I know I can have and do have a personal relationship with God.

Following the intervention other participants shared similar stories of an assurance of their relationship with God that they did not communicate prior to the class. These findings gave witnesses to the impact of the WDG discipleship process. A growing, intimate relationship with the Lord is what God desires for all members of CUMC. This process provided the environment for a growing relationship with the Lord to occur.

Paul writes in Romans 8:16 about the relationship between the believer in Christ and God:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Commenting on this passage, Wesley states that those with this assurance know and believe that Christ loved them and gave himself for them (*Bicentennial Edition 2*: 161). Wesley goes on to proclaim that God has appointed for his children to wait for complete salvation by attending to the works of piety, such as prayer, Holy Communion, searching the Scriptures, and fasting. In addition, Wesley says the Christian must also engage in the works of mercy by “doing good” to the body and souls of others (166).

The findings in the study point to the importance of a discipleship process, which moves people into a deeper relationship with God by practicing the means of grace. The deeper relationship allows believers to experience an assurance of their identity as a child of God, as well as grow in maturity in their faith. A discipleship process must take into account the vital importance of relationship instead of focusing on the transference of knowledge alone.

A number of participants described their spiritual lives as growing. This growth, however, was described in terms of knowledge gained and not a growth in their experience of God’s love and their love for neighbor. These findings reveal what type of growth is needed for the people of CUMC. Whereas the current model of discipleship includes divulging theological and biblical information in a lecture format, the growth needed for a vital relationship with the Lord involves the whole person through practicing the means of grace in their inward and outward expressions.



## **The Impact of Accountable Discipleship**

Perhaps the most meaningful aspect of the WDG for participants came in the form of the accountability groups. Each week, as a part of the WDG process, time was allotted for the class to split into three different groups based on gender for accountability: two women's groups, six in one and seven in the other, and one men's group of ten people. These groups held one another accountable for putting into practice what the participants had learned each week in the WDG class. The accountability groups served as an expression of Christ's love to one another as they committed to pray for one another in implementing the specific devotional practice studied that week. In addition, the accountability groups provided a safe place for participants to voice when they succeeded in implementing the disciplines, as well as when they failed on following through with their commitments.

Following the intervention, the number of persons describing their participation in Christian community as important doubled from nine persons to eighteen persons. The people shared that the encouragement, support, and accountability shared through Christian conferencing significantly aided them in their journey toward Christlikeness. One person described of his experience of accountability in the WDG with these words: "The group acts as a support system and gives me a place to make sure I am staying on track." Another person shared the following in her response journal: "My accountability group helps me to understand from others where I need to grow. This community does this for me. I love learning from my group time!" Other participants shared that they found comfort knowing that through group sharing they discovered they were not alone in their struggles. Many shared that the group allowed them to confess where they failed

and how the group encouraged them. The vast majority stated that relationship with others who desired to go on to perfection was vital to their spiritual lives. One person shared that her group experience enabled her to be a better servant leader.

The participants' positive experience of the accountability component in the WDG raises two important aspects of the discipleship process. First, people desire to share their spiritual journeys with others and not as isolated individuals. While the larger culture contends that spiritual issues are a private matter, these participants discovered the necessity of walking toward Christlikeness with one another as an essential component. Second, due to the encouraging and nurturing nature of accountability groups, they provide an environment for transformation to occur in the lives of individuals. The group accountability format provides a striking contrast to the teacher-pupil format of the majority of the adult discipleship classes at CUMC. In many instances, people can enter into these predominantly large, lecture-style classes without truly being known by another person other than on a casual basis. Faithful Christian discipleship at CUMC will call for a shift away from the teacher-pupil model to a model of accountability, which allows for a leader to serve as a facilitator for the group. These groups will include cognitive learning but will take the whole person into account, providing accountability for practicing the means of grace (heart) and living out their faith in faithful service to God and neighbor (life).

This finding also implies that the groups are small enough for participants to get to know one another. The small accountability groups of the WDG allowed time for each group member to share their successes and failures. A discipleship plan that values

people knowing each other will lead CUMC away from the larger classes as the model for learning and transformation.

### **Equipping for Servanthood through the Practice of the Means of Grace**

One participant made this comment in reference to how practicing the spiritual disciplines made him more available to serve others and be more obedient to God:

The most recent example is the Easter feed, which I honestly kind of struggled with do I really want to do this thing or sit at home and read the newspaper and drink coffee. So I thought, all right, I'm going to go. It was incredible. I really felt very blessed just to be there and see everyone, the volunteers, the workers, the people for who this thing was put on. Then it was sadness. I was talking with one person who had so little. I was almost crying because of the predicament and helplessness, but in the overall scheme of things, just sensing people wanting to come and do what God directs us to do was very rewarding. So in the end I was very, very glad I came.

During the post-intervention interviews and through the guided response journals, participants stated that they not only grew in their understanding of servant ministry and servant leadership, but also, through the spiritual disciplines they felt better equipped for service. The participants, filled with the love of God, opened their hearts to love and serve the poor.

One example of the means of grace enabling participants to be better equipped for service was through the area of fasting. A frequent comment by the people who practiced fasting through Lent was that this practice made them more aware of the plight of the poor who had so little. Many participants sought out ways to serve the poor and those less fortunate as a result of making room in their lives for God and neighbor through these practices. One of the ways they served the poor was at the M. N. Augustine Foundation Easter Feed held at CUMC on Holy Saturday. The Easter Feed served over six thousand people throughout northwest Arkansas. Volunteers from churches all over northwest

Arkansas participated in preparing meals, providing transportation, making Easter baskets for children, and providing other resources. The servants from the WDG practiced hospitality in welcoming those coming to eat, took out trash, filled food trays, wiped down tables, and did whatever was needed to be a servant so that those who had little could be blessed.

Another fruit of the WDG process derived from the participants' application of Scripture and prayer in their daily lives. Participants spoke of reading Scripture with a greater awareness of how to apply it and seeking to become answers to the prayers they prayed for others. One example includes a WDG participant sensing a burden to pray for the poor while northwest Arkansas was experiencing the coldest winter in one hundred years. The participant became an answer to those prayers by going through his closet to look at all the extra clothes, gloves, and coats. He loaded his car down with those items from his closet and took them to the local Salvation Army. Again, through the spiritual discipline of prayer, he placed himself in a position to listen to God and hear the Spirit whisper to him about being an answer to his prayers for the poor through his giving.

One participant wrote of her desire to become more conscious of how she uses her time and resources to can give more to those in need and also to serve in more of the ministries of the church. Other participants describe using their time and resources to serve others through visiting the sick, listening to others, comforting the grieving, buying groceries for neighbors, helping others with yard work, serving as worship greeters, and having a servant's heart toward difficult customers at work.

Many participants spoke specifically of the means of grace enabling them to be better servant leaders. These persons sensed a call by God to take on the role of servant

leaders by empowering other people to do what they could not do otherwise. One participant spoke of the modeling servant leadership for employees that worked for him. Furthermore, these participants stated that the means of grace of Scripture gave them a mandate for true leadership. A new understanding of the practice of leadership emerged in the lives of these participants, moving them from an understanding of leadership that promotes self to keep, or gain, a position of power to an understanding of leadership seeking to serve and empower others. Furthermore, this new view of leadership was not only understood cognitively but also lived out pragmatically. For example, one participant sought out ways to serve his employees by encouraging them. In this way, he hoped to cultivate a culture of encouragement among those who worked for him. Another person shared their desire to serve:

My work allows us to take a day each month for community service. There is a thrift store that reaches out to the Hispanic community close to my work. I can volunteer there. This summer I plan on taking my son with me to volunteer since he will be out of school.

Through this servant activity, this participant was being a servant leader to his grade-school child, empowering his son to serve and mentoring him in a life of service.

A key component of a clearly articulated discipleship plan at CUMC should include challenging people to servant ministry and servant leadership that calls participants to look beyond their own needs. A possibility for cultivating the life of a servant at CUMC might come in the form of a mentoring relationship where a servant leader disciples a person growing in the faith in servanthood. For instance, if a person was going to work on a Habitat for Humanity home in the area, he or she could invite someone else to come serve, too. The possibilities are endless and are greatly needed at CUMC to cultivate servanthood.

John 13:1-12 tells the story of Jesus giving an example of servant leadership to his disciples when he washes the disciples' feet. Jesus not only provided an example but also empowered the disciples to follow his example of servant leadership:

Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. (12-17)

As their master and Lord, Jesus was greater than the disciples, yet he empowered them by demonstrating to them that this type of service was not beneath him. The participants in the WDG received empowerment for servanthood by the Holy Spirit through practicing the spiritual disciplines.

Hirsch states that leadership extends from discipleship (119). An essential element of discipleship is character formation. Character formation plays a vital role if leadership is to be *servant* leadership (Blanchard and Miller 27). According to Blanchard and Hodges, leaders face the temptation to become self-serving leaders instead of servant leaders (*Servant Leader* 29; *Lead Like Jesus* 48-49). Servant leadership flows out of one's growing relationship with God (Blackaby and Blackaby 100). Jesus not only serves as a model of leadership in the passage found in John 13 but also in the spiritual practices of solitude, prayer, study of Scripture, and living within community (Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* 154; *Servant Leader* 85). Leadership, therefore, is a heart issue (*Lead Like Jesus* 29; *Servant Leader* 48-49). Leadership originating from the heart was witnessed in the lives of the participants as God worked in their hearts and lives through practicing the means of grace.

As a large church, CUMC constantly needs leadership in many areas of the church from children's ministries to adult ministries, as well as leaders to serve as heads of various ministry teams and committees. CUMC spends a large amount of energy in recruiting volunteers and placing people on committees. However, the findings of this study point out that the greatest needs are not people to fill leadership positions but for members of CUMC to participate in discipleship that focuses on the means of grace. According to this study, people who practice the means of grace have a greater awareness of God and the needs of others and, therefore, are more ready and better equipped for service. The findings suggest that CUMC refocus where energies are best spent. Instead of spending energy in finding people to fill positions and hoping it works, energy would be better spent on developing and investing in a discipleship process that equips people for servant ministry.

### **Changes Not Gender or Age Specific**

The changes that occurred in the knowledge and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices were not gender or age specific. Both males and females grew in their knowledge and understanding, as well as implementing Wesleyan spiritual disciplines. The same was true regarding age. Each participant grew in his or her understanding of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices on some level. In addition, each age grouping showed evidence of implementing Wesleyan spiritual disciplines such as fasting, Christian conferencing, and serving others. Furthermore, many of the spiritual practices that the participants practiced prior to their involvement in the WDG were understood in Wesleyan terms of the means of grace following the intervention.

Through the participants' involvement in the WDG, they found their identity and significance in their relationship with God, regardless of their age or gender. Their lives became more strongly rooted in God and were taking their cues for living from the Spirit. Being led by the Holy Spirit provides a contrast to the majority of people in the world where people find their cues of how to live based on surrounding culture. Roxburgh refers to these cues as maps that provide people with an accepted worldview (6). However, with the rapid changes, which have taken place in the world, a single worldview no longer exists. In place of the worldview of modernity, which assumed a single worldview consisting of truth, knowledge, and predictability, postmodernity has no single worldview (Roxburgh 9; Grenz 40). Instead, the postmoderns accept "a multiplicity of views and worlds" (Grenz 40). The cultural map of modernity that people once followed in order to make sense of the world no longer exists (Roxburgh 121).

Due to the rapid changes in culture, people need maps to provide direction for living. Roxburgh states that one of the major roles of church leaders involves creating a core identity (137, 142). Christian formation habits and practices are essential for creating this core identity. Practiced regularly, these Christian formation practices create a parallel culture that shapes the faith community (145).

The findings of this study suggest that people do seek a map for life by practicing the spiritual disciplines. Since male and female, as well as every age range, involved in the study feels the effects and confusion of a rapidly changing culture, an expressed desire for direction in life exists within them. The direction desired for is a culture anchored in something deeper than a constantly changing worldview. A parallel culture can be created in the midst of constant change as Christians partake in formative practices



(Roxburgh 150). The participants in the WDG live in a world of constant change, which proves difficult to navigate. They need more than a one-time-per week worship experience or a lecture format to guide them in their lives. Daily application of the formative practices and habits reformulates the DNA of the Christian community and changes reality for the community. Roxburgh compares the importance of the daily practices to the daily exercises one must go through for rehabilitation from a broken limb or rehabilitation following a stroke. The day-to-day practices are what make the difference (150).

In the current setting, what makes a *good* Methodist involves coming to worship on Sunday, attending a Bible study or Sunday school class, and serving in the church on a committee or a ministry area. However, this model of what makes a good Methodist does not lead to life transformation or creating parallel culture that is not at the whims of the changing world. The model of a Methodist for life transformation must include daily practices of the spiritual disciplines, accountability, and service in the world as nonnegotiable for authentic discipleship.

Developing a discipleship process within CUMC, and the larger United Methodist Church, includes rediscovering the importance of catechism. Catechism provides the opportunity to teach the foundations of the Christian faith such as the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Creeds. In addition, Wesley's order of salvation and the means of grace would play a central role in guiding people into kingdom living, as opposed to trying to live by the map of a changing culture. Beyond teaching the means of grace, accountability groups are necessary for the process to

provide encouragement for participants and to provide a sense of knowing others walk along with them in this journey.

Returning to Acts 2, following the day of Pentecost, a new, alternate kingdom-based worldview was necessary for the new Church. The first converts to the faith lived in an area of differing worldviews consisting of both Romans and Jews, among others. Luke records the habits and practices of the first converts, which illustrates their commitment to their new way of life:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.... Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42, 46-47)

For the early converts to Christ, formative practices and habits did not occur once per week but were a daily reality.

In addition, the invitation for renewal in the image of Christ is given to all people. Paul writes that in Christ "there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!" (Col. 3:11). Likewise, he writes in Galatians, "There is neither Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Christ invites all people, regardless of gender, race, age, and ethnicity to renewal.

Again, the findings in this study illustrate the necessity of teaching the Wesleyan spiritual disciplines to all adult ages. While one could make the assumption that certain ages may not be receptive to learning and practicing new disciplines, this study did not confirm this assumption. Instead, the study showed that persons in their senior years were

receptive to being taught and led into practicing Wesleyan spiritual disciplines. Perhaps the reason such receptivity existed was because each age range finds the fast-paced changes in culture equally confusing to navigate. The participants in the WDG found the day-to-day spiritual practices necessary to kingdom living. While weekly worship serves as an important discipline, the daily disciplines, or means of grace, provide the continuity needed for growing in Christlikeness and developing a kingdom culture.

### **Implications of the Findings**

The CUMC staff desires that people grow in their Christlikeness, yet no clear pathway of spiritual growth exists for its members. A large percentage of persons who attend CUMC desire a pathway for spiritual growth, consisting of disciplined spiritual practices and accountability. The current model for adult discipleship includes a lecturer, or teacher, transferring information to participants in a classroom setting. This model operates on the premise that the more knowledge people have the greater likelihood of life transformation.

The findings of this study showed life transformation taking place through participation in the Wesleyan spiritual disciplines. The life transformation was evidenced in the participants' deeper understanding of God's love for them and their growing love for God. In addition, participants revealed a heart of forgiveness and freedom from a spirit of judgment toward those who had hurt them in the past. The transformational work of the Holy Spirit was most evident in their desire to express God's love to others through service.

According to Wesleyan discipleship, participating in the means of grace allows God's grace to work in the lives of people, bringing about transformation. The means of

grace allow Christians to grow in in their love of God and neighbor (Henderson 134-35; Matthaiei 152). While transferring knowledge to participants served a purpose in this study through the teaching of spiritual disciplines and servant leadership, the accountable nature of the WDG participants to one another provided the environment necessary for them to encourage one another in their growth in holiness through discipline and service. Even though the participants were well educated through the lecture-style settings of Sunday schools and Bible studies, those settings did not provide an environment for maturing into true disciples of Jesus. Therefore, accountability groups stand at the center of rediscovering Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices. Through the practices of the means of grace and the encouragement and accountability of others, people felt better equipped to serve.

The findings imply the necessity of a clearly articulated discipleship plan that points to the aim of the Christian life, Christian perfection. This discipleship plan moves people along from entry-level studies, such as small groups, Sunday school classes, and *Disciple*, into a WDG. Entering into the WDG process, participants would commit to two hours per week over two years for class sessions. These class sessions would instruct the participants in the Christian faith, Wesley's order of salvation, practicing the means of grace, and servant leadership. Accountability would be a major component of the WDG. Following the teaching time each week, participants would split into smaller groups for accountability, encouragement, and prayer. The accountability groups provided an environment where participants were able to share with one another how they were doing in practicing the means of grace and growing in Christlikeness. In this way, participants moved on toward perfection.

Wesley defined Christian perfection as being like Christ, “in other words to be inwardly and outwardly devoted to God; all devoted in heart and life” (*Plain Account* 30). He also writes of perfection being “pure love, filling the heart, and governing all the words and actions” (51). The implications of this study point to need of a clearly articulated discipleship map that leads people to Christian perfection, where people know they are on a journey toward Christlikeness. This journey toward Christlikeness includes spiritual disciplines, accountability, and actions that reflect the servant life of Christ.

In addition to a clearly articulated discipleship process, the findings imply the necessity to utilize the appropriate metrics of measurement for what is considered a successful church. Currently, the metrics for measuring success in the Arkansas Conference of the UMC include worship attendance, Sunday school attendance, number of baptisms, number of professions of faith, and percentage of funds paid to the annual conference. None of these measurements evaluate church members’ transformation into Christlikeness. In the current model for successful churches, people can show up for worship or sit in a lecture-style class and not truly be known by another person. In addition, many people make professions of faith and are baptized but may not continue in their journey towards Christlikeness through participating in the means of grace and experiencing small group accountability. Instead, many people choose to hide among the numerous people in the large Sunday school classes and large worship services. A new metric should include measuring how many people are in small accountability groups where participants hold one another to practicing the means of grace and serving others.

The findings of this study revealed the need for the church to recover catechesis as an essential element in the process of disciplining persons. This study pointed to the

lack of understanding and practice of Wesleyan discipleship even though all of the participants had been a part of CUMC for over five years. The vast majority of the participants had spent their entire lives as members of the United Methodist Church. Recovering catechesis would include more than teaching Wesleyan doctrine due to the fact that mere knowledge does not make disciples. Churches can have the correct theology and yet the practice of that theology can be missing. Catechesis must focus on inviting people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ by participating in the means of grace. Through practicing the means of grace, participants in catechism would experience Christian spiritual formation as they move toward union with Christ throughout their lifetimes.

A final implication from the findings reveals the importance of understanding that *being precedes doing*. Servant leadership flows out of a relationship with Christ. People who are equipped for servant leadership do not rely on their own skills and abilities but ultimately their formation into Christlikeness as they grow into the full stature of Christ from their inward being. Growing into the full stature of Christ consists of a lifetime of responding to God's grace in Jesus Christ.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited to twenty-three persons (thirteen females and ten males) in a large church United Methodist church in northwest Arkansas. In addition, limitations existed regarding the number of participants. Twenty-three participants joined in the study out of a membership of over four thousand people. Also, limitations existed with regard to ages represented in the study. While five different age ranges were represented, the majority of participants were ages 45-74. Only one person represented a lower age

range (ages 35-44), and only person represented a higher age range (75-84). Furthermore, no participants represented adults ages 18-34, which is a large segment of the northwest Arkansas population.

Another limitation includes the length of the study. The study involved twelve weeks to focus on Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices and how they relate to servant ministry. I would like to see the study expanded to two years to incorporate more teaching on Wesley's order of salvation and servant leadership. Expanding the group to two years allows more time for lasting transformation and for accountability relationships to develop more fully. While the study of the devotional practices gave people a good basis for implementing Wesleyan practices, more time spent on the Wesleyan order of salvation could provide a greater understanding of God's grace being operative throughout their spiritual journey. In addition, more time spent on servant leadership allows for a further understanding and implementation of being a servant leader in one's life. I envision the first year of the WDG as a catechism of teachings on the Christian faith from the Sermon on the Mount (utilizing Wesley's sermons), the creeds, Wesley's order of salvation, and the means of grace. The second year I envision focusing on servant leadership. Throughout both years, accountability groups would be utilized for the participants to care for one another's souls through prayer, encouragement, accountability, and confession.

Even with the limitations mentioned, I believe that the recovery of Wesleyan discipleship and devotional practices are needed within in the United Methodist denomination. I do not think CUMC is unique in the need for groups such as the WDG and a discipleship process for church members. In talking with other colleagues, not only

the Arkansas Conference but also in other areas of the country, a lack of servants for the kingdom exists. I believe the reason for lack of servants is due to the absence of intentional discipleship and a discipleship process.

### **Unexpected Observations**

The first unexpected observation existed in my own soul as a leader. As I led the WDG, I grew in my relationship with God much more than I thought I would or could. I believe my growth occurred because I felt a true burden to shepherd this group.

Following the pre-intervention interviews, I became aware of the conditions of the participants' souls. While they struggled to remain faithful to God in spiritual practices, I observed a lack of connection between their current spiritual practices and their relationship with God. Eleven of the participants described their spiritual life as lacking. My prayer to God became, "Lord, don't let me be a hindrance to their relationship with you." In doing so, I thoroughly participated in everything I asked of the participants, from Scripture reading, to accountability, to reading excerpts from Wesley's sermons daily, to serving.

I found my own participation in the WDG to be the most transforming and growing experience I have had in my nine years at CUMC. In addition, I developed authentic, Christian relationships with those in my accountability group. In this discovery, I grew in the awareness of my need to practice the means of grace continually so that my heart is shaped into Christlikeness as a leader. In other words, I observed in my life that my leadership is only as good as my own discipleship.

The second unexpected observation deals with a fractured community. Throughout this WDG process, a number of persons confessed that a spirit of judgment



and unforgiveness burdened their hearts and minds. For example, when I asked participants about how God was working through the spiritual discipline of prayer to help them grow in the love for neighbor, several participants stated that God had revealed to them that they needed to be less judgmental of people with differing lifestyles, dress, social status, and beliefs. In addition, many people communicated that God had impressed upon their hearts that forgiving others for wrongs committed was their way of seeking to love their neighbor through prayer. While I did expect these issues to be present in the WDG, I did not expect them to be as prevalent. However, the WDG allowed God to deal with those issues, and they began unburdening their souls.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, two recommendations appear to be vital for the health of CUMC, as well as the broader United Methodist Church. One recommendation involves mapping out a discipleship plan that moves people into a deep, growing relationship with Christ. A discipleship plan focused on a relationship with Jesus, would point people in the direction of living in fidelity to the Great Commandment. The discipleship plan includes teaching the Wesleyan order of salvation and both the prudential and instituted means of grace. In addition, groups of accountability for growth into Christlikeness would be essential for this discipleship plan to experience success. Without the accountability, such as was experienced in the WDG, I fear people would receive teaching on Wesleyan spiritual disciplines as knowledge received and not activities to put into practice for transformation to occur.

A second recommendation involves the area of servant leadership. Many times leadership positions are filled based on the competency of persons but not on the basis of

the person's commitment to transformation into Christlikeness. This study illustrates the effects of character formation on the ability to lead as a servant after the example of Christ. Therefore, this recommendation is that leadership is selected from among persons who have committed themselves to the discipleship process of being in a discipleship group such as the Wesley Discipleship Group.

### **Postscript**

In 2004 a pastoral colleague and friend, who also happens to have a Doctor of Ministry degree from Asbury, encouraged me to seek out the Doctor of Ministry program. At the time I was serving as the pastor of congregational care at CUMC. While serving in that capacity, I also taught many Bible study classes and shared heavily in the preaching schedule. As I served in the role, I began to investigate what type of care the souls of CUMC needed. The more I observed, the more I realized that people tended to exercise their minds to gain knowledge but neglected their souls. In addition, many people remained stagnant in their relationship with God, even though they were engaged in worship and Bible study groups.

In 2005, I began my degree at Asbury Theological Seminary. I started out in the mission evangelism track, but as I became more and more burdened over the souls in my own church, I changed to spiritual formation, which also involved several classes in the leadership concentration. In 2009 some pastoral staffing changes occurred, and I became the pastor of discipleship. Since my time of becoming responsible for the discipleship ministries of CUMC, I have sought to refocus the discipleship ministries on Wesleyan spiritual disciplines and teach Wesleyan doctrines on sin, prevenient grace, the new birth, justification, sanctification, and Christian perfection. In addition, in working with many

leaders in different ministry areas, my desire has been to focus on character formation so that leaders are servant-leaders after the pattern of Christ. This study gave the opportunity to explore, through research, the relationship between the Wesleyan spiritual formation and servant leaders. I am grateful for this opportunity and have witnessed the connection among people's growing in Christlikeness through practicing the means of grace, accountability, and being equipped as servants. For this experience, I am forever grateful. I rejoice that my friend, no doubt prompted by the Spirit, encouraged me to seek out Asbury for the Doctor of Ministry degree.

## APPENDIX A

### INITIAL CONTACT LETTER

Dear (participant's name),

In July 2005, through much prayer and guidance, I enrolled in Asbury Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program in order to become a better pastor. I have finished all of my coursework. As many of you are aware, I am now working on the research for my dissertation. The dissertation project focuses on how to make better disciples for Jesus Christ and remain faithful to our Wesleyan roots. I am inviting you to help me by participating in my research project.

The research involves a few components. One of the components includes two interviews that I will conduct. The first interview will take place in late November or early December. The second interview will take place in April. The other component consists of a twelve-week study in Wesleyan discipleship that will take place in the months of January-March (we will not meet the week of spring break). Your participation involves a commitment from you to be present each week unless illness or travel prevents you from being present.

I believe this research project will help me be a better pastor who makes disciples. Furthermore, I believe we will learn together how to strengthen our church in the area of making disciples for the Kingdom of God. Let me assure you the conversations in the interviews will be held strictly confidential, as will any other forms of communication. Information from the interviews may be included anonymously in my dissertation. After my research project is completed, I will share what I have learned about making disciples. If you would like to participate in this research project, please sign and return the informed consent form.

Thanks for your consideration of my request.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Steven K. Pulliam

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary requires that all students complete a research project in their ministry context. The design of the ministry research project is to equip pastors for ministry better, as well as to benefit the local church and other churches that may learn from the research and implement a similar ministry. In addition, you will discover benefits through participating in the study through a greater knowledge of Wesleyan discipleship and Wesleyan spiritual formation practices.

In participating in this project, you understand that your interviews will be recorded by a digital voice recorder and then transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. After checking the typed transcript against the voice-recordings for accuracy, the voice recordings will be destroyed. Any material utilized in my dissertation from the interviews or the response journals will be cited anonymously.

I have asked you to participate in my research project to help me, and our church, in making disciples for Jesus Christ and to remain faithful to our Wesleyan roots. Participation in this research project requires that you be present throughout the twelve-week study on Wednesday evenings during the months of January-March (we will not meet the week of spring break), unless illness or travel prevents you. Each week I will provide a response journal that will allow you time to reflect on the experience of integrating what you have learned. Agreement to be a part of the study also includes participation in two interviews—one in late November or early December and the other in April. The interviews will take approximately one hour.

Please indicate as quickly as possible your desire to participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to participate in the research project.

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**

**PRE-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. What is your name?
  
2. What is your age range and family status?  
25-34            35-44            45-54            55-64            65-74  
  
S                M                D                W
  
3. How many children do you have in the home and what are their ages?
  
4. What is your educational background/professional background?
  
5. What is your involvement at Central United Methodist Church?
  
6. How would you describe the state of your spiritual life?
  
7. What type of spiritual practices/disciplines do you practice regularly?
  
8. What is your understanding of Wesleyan spiritual practices/disciplines?
  
9. How do you relate your practice of spiritual disciplines to your understanding of God's love?
  
10. What is your understanding of servant ministry and servant leadership?
  
11. How do you relate your practice of the spiritual disciplines to equipping/enabling you to be involved in servant ministry or servant leadership in your church, community, or workplace?

**APPENDIX C**

**WESLEY DISCIPLESHIP GROUP GUIDED RESPONSE JOURNAL**

**TOPIC: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER**

Describe your experience of practicing the discipline of prayer over the past week based on last week's study, as it relates to your understanding of servant ministry and servant leadership.



## **APPENDIX D**

### **POST-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. What is your involvement at Central United Methodist Church?
2. How would you describe the state of your spiritual life?
3. What type of spiritual practices/disciplines do you practice regularly?
4. What is your understanding of Wesleyan spiritual practices/disciplines?
5. How do you relate your practice of spiritual disciplines to your understanding of God's love?
6. What is your understanding of servant ministry and servant leadership?
7. How do you relate your practice of the spiritual disciplines to equipping/enabling you to be involved in servant ministry or servant leadership in your church, community, or workplace?

**APPENDIX E**

**EXPERT REVIEWS**

**Pre-Intervention Questionnaire**

<b>Q#</b>	<b>Needed</b>	<b>Not Needed</b>	<b>Clear</b>	<b>Unclear</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
9					
10					
11					

Signature of the expert reviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Post-Intervention Questionnaire**

<b>Q#</b>	<b>Needed</b>	<b>Not Needed</b>	<b>Clear</b>	<b>Unclear</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

Signature of the expert reviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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