ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF MILLENNIALS:

AN EXPLORATION OF BEST PRACTICES FOR CROSSPOINT CHURCH

by

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Churches in North America are wrestling with the same challenge – how to make disciples. It is the subject of many books, articles, conferences, and podcasts. Added to this challenge is the complexity of contextualizing discipleship methods and practices for the emerging generations. Millennials are the most diverse, most technologically adept generation in human history. They are also the least religiously affiliated. The rise of the "nones and dones" is reaching its zenith in this age cohort, which presents challenges for religious engagement as well as spiritual formation. Since its inception in 2010, Crosspoint Church has attracted many Millennials who make up a high percentage of its population. Like most churches, Crosspoint is seeking to discover some of the best practices for discipling Millennials.

This pre-interventive dissertation project combined two types of qualitative data, from semi-structured interviews with pastors in both Canada and the United States, as well as from focus groups with Millennials from Crosspoint Church. The findings affirm that an effective strategy for discipling Millennials will include a culture of empowerment, transformative small groups, missional engagement, consistent spiritual disciplines, and gospel-centered, biblical teaching that is both challenging and culturally relevant.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides the general framework for the research, which identifies recommendations that will inform the development of a discipleship strategy for Millennials through Crosspoint Church. It begins with a personal introduction, followed by the statement of the problem, the purpose of the project, and the three primary research questions. It continues with a rationale for the project, as well as a definition of key terms, a set of delimitations, and a summary review of the relevant literature. It is then followed by the specific pre-interventive, qualitative research methodology, including the type of research, participants, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and generalizability. The chapter concludes with an overview of the remainder of the project.

Personal Introduction

If I could devote myself to one ministry task in the next five years, I would implement an intentional reproducing discipleship strategy in my local church. I am the Lead Pastor of Crosspoint Church, a growing, evangelical church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. I am also the church planter who helped launch Crosspoint in 2010. Like many churches, Crosspoint is trying to develop spiritually mature disciples.

I have experienced this struggle personally. I committed my life to following Christ when I was eighteen, as a senior in high school. In my early faith journey, my local church provided no clear pathway, no travel guide, for spiritual formation. I had to resort to hacking my way through my own proverbial wilderness of spiritual obstacles,

cramming as I went along, and sometimes improvising to survive. I was blessed, early in my spiritual journey, to participate in formal theological training, which provided foundational teaching and a nurturing environment, both of which helped accelerate my spiritual formation.

This challenge of making disciples is not uncommon. In my twenty-five years of full-time vocational ministry, I have worked in six different local churches, with sizes ranging from one-hundred to three-thousand adherents. Each church wrestled with the same problem of how to make disciples. When I query fellow Christ-followers about their discipleship journeys, most respond that they had no formal processes or persons to disciple them. Their pathways were more trial-and-error and less methodical. Crosspoint is not alone in this - my pastoral colleagues often share with me their struggles of building disciples in their contexts. Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation explain how widespread this challenge has become:

> Since Christ-centered discipleship results in transformation, we can confidently assert that most churches are deficient in discipleship . . . If Apple is deficient in designing computers, it doesn't matter if they excel in outfitting and decorating their stores. If Starbucks is deficient in coffee, mastering the art of creating loyal employees means nothing. To be deficient in your core reason for existence is always unacceptable . . . And as our churches grow, we become increasingly proficient in a myriad of other things from branding to facility management. But are we making disciples? Have we become proficient in many things while simultaneously becoming deficient in the one thing that matters? (10-11)

It is this pervasive problem that provides the impetus for this study. As the Lead Pastor of Crosspoint Church, I am committed to creating a pathway for developing spiritually mature disciples.

Statement of the Problem

Crosspoint Church must become better at making disciples. Since its inception in 2010, this discipleship deficiency has become evident in three ways. First, new believers are not being discipled effectively. Since Crosspoint's launch, over seventy people have made positive faith commitments, surrendering their lives to Christ. Most of these have been first-time commitments, while some have been recommitments. Over the years, many of these new believers experienced minimal growth as disciples, and some have abandoned their once-vibrant faith. Also, believers who helped launch the church or who joined the church along the way, have not moved on to spiritual maturity. These believers regularly attend Sunday gatherings but wrestle with spiritual lethargy and are not pursuing the abundant life in Christ. Some continue to struggle with habitual sin patterns or relational brokenness.

The final evidence for discipleship deficiency stems from the first two. To grow mature disciples requires disciples. This deficiency had hindered Crosspoint's growth, both numerically and spiritually. While a strong core of spiritually mature disciples is present within the Crosspoint community, they have reached the limit of their capacity to reproduce disciples effectively. Many of these mature disciples are highly engaged in church ministries, including youth, children, small groups, and externally focused projects. Without more mature disciples, Crosspoint's growth is hindered and will not be able to multiply more ministries that form disciples.

Developing a cohesive strategy is no easy task. Like most churches, Crosspoint adherents have diverse schedules and life-rhythms. It is challenging to mature disciples when they cannot agree when to meet. Crosspointers also have busy lives – some are shift-workers, some are new parents, and many have overextended themselves with extracurricular commitments. As a result, they have difficulty finding or making time for discipleship. Further, learning styles and media habits are changing. In an image-driven, social-media-saturated, Netflix-dominated world, old models of discipleship may not be as effective as they once were.

The challenge of strategic discipleship is knowing where to start. As the well-worn adage goes, "if you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time." Before creating a strategy, one must be clear on the underlying assumptions that support the strategy. Well-intentioned people can often jump to solutions and, in the end, do more harm than good. To implement past methods or strategies, without an eye on cultural changes or local distinctives, can result in failure to launch.

Like many Canadian churches, Crosspoint has a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, genders, and ages. One distinct feature of Crosspoint is that it has a large population of Millennials and emerging adults – those in their thirties or younger. This population group is the focus of this study. If a discipleship strategy is to have effectiveness now and longevity later, then it must understand this younger adult population and seek to frame a contextualized discipleship structure for them. This task is imperative for the future of Crosspoint Church. What follows is a study about spiritual formation, but more particularly, the spiritual formation of Millennials through Crosspoint Church.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to identify best practices for developing a discipleship strategy for Millennials through Crosspoint Church. The purpose statement shaped the overall direction of the research. It included interviews with ministry practitioners, focus group conversations with Crosspoint Millennials, and the most current data from the relevant literature.

Research Questions

In order to identify these best practices for the strategic development of disciples, the study focused on three research questions:

Research Question #1

What are churches doing to disciple Millennials?

Research Question #2

How is Crosspoint Church helping and hindering Millennials to grow as disciples?

Research Question #3

What are the best practices for making disciples of Millennials?

Rationale for the Project

This research is essential for several reasons. First, Christ mandated that the task of growing disciples. Jesus commanded his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations" (*NIV,* Matt. 28:18-20). Since the church is Christ's community of disciples, this mandate is paramount. Even Paul was dedicated to "present everyone mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). Making disciples is an essential requirement.

Second, discipleship does not happen in a vacuum but should be contextualized. To proclaim the gospel effectively, one must understand the people one seeks to reach. Paul exemplified this principle in his first letter to the Corinthians: "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). The apostle understood that "winning" people requires a posture of understanding those you are trying to reach, and the willingness to embody the gospel within their cultural context (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Given this principle, if churches are to disciple Millennials effectively, they must understand the unique characteristics of this generation.

Next, neglecting discipleship will hinder the advancement of the kingdom of God. To see the exponential expansion of God's kingdom, the church must learn to make disciples who will make disciples. If Christ's mission is dependent on paid professionals or a select group of skilled workers, it will be stifled. Activating discipleship will liberate the church from an over-dependency on paid staff or clergy and propel an exponential kingdom movement.

Finally, Millennials have already begun to provide leadership in churches across North America, including Crosspoint Church. An effective discipleship strategy will build future generations of spiritually mature believers and leaders, but a laissez-faire or misguided approach could have anemic results. The stakes are high, and the implications are far-reaching.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions clarify the terminology used in this study:

Disciple – A disciple is a person who has made a positive confession of faith, demonstrated through repentance, conversion, and receiving Christ as Savior and Lord

(Rom. 10:9-10). Having been spiritually regenerated through the indwelling, life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, this person has begun the journey of transformation (sanctification). The power of the Holy Spirit facilitates this process of spiritual formation as he sanctifies the disciple and transforms them into the image of Christ. No real distinction between a believer in Christ and a disciple exists; every disciple is a believer, and every believer is a disciple.

Discipleship – Discipleship is the act of making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). The work of discipleship is not limited to post-conversion disciples. In the gospels, Jesus taught crowds of people before what would have been their conversion experience. He taught them and called them to leave the crowd and follow him. Technically, discipleship encompasses the entire spiritual continuum from pre-conversion, to conversion, to sanctification. It, therefore, includes both evangelism and edification. This study focuses solely on post-conversion discipleship and does not include pre-evangelism or evangelism. With this in mind, the term discipleship will be used narrowly to describe the spiritual maturation of disciples.

Millennials – Among demographers, some discrepancy occurs regarding the age range of Millennials. In this study, Millennials include those born from 1980 to 2000. An explanation of this date range is in Chapter 2.

Ministry Leaders (ML) – These include pastors or paid ministry staff who give oversight to churches or ministries within churches.

Five Marks of a Disciple (FMD) – Crosspoint Church has developed a clear definition of a maturing disciple, which includes five characteristics of a disciple: growth,

pursuit, community, service, and mission (*Crosspoint Church Membership Manual*).

These will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Delimitations

The study included semi-structured interviews with MLs from churches in both

Canada and the United States. These ministries needed to have a reputation for reaching

Millennials and had at least fifty Millennials in regular worship attendance. These

churches were also limited to conservative, Protestant, evangelical churches in urban or

suburban settings. While other Christian faith traditions - or rural churches - could have

provided helpful information, the limitations improved the relevance of the data, because

these churches had more in common with Crosspoint Church. Crosspoint is a Canadian

church, and while there are apparent cultural differences between Canada and the United

States, some overlap exists. Canadian churches commonly use resources from the United

States, and Crosspoint is no exception. Further, including US churches in the study

provided a broader range of perspectives. Therefore, this study used research from

American churches.

The study also included focus group interviews with Millennials who were

adherents of Crosspoint Church and who confessed Christ as Lord. Since this is a study

about post-conversion spiritual formation, it did not include seekers or non-believers.

Four separate focus groups were conducted, each with 6-8 participants. This total of 24-

32 participants was a significant sample-size for qualitative research, especially in a

church of approximately three-hundred adherents.

Review of Relevant Literature

The literature review brought together the two broad themes of discipleship and

Millennials and was therefore divided into two sections. The first section explored the

biblical and theological concepts of a disciple, discipleship, and spiritual formation. A

close analysis of the relevant biblical texts was the primary source for this exploration,

which was supplemented by multiple books and articles. It extensively referenced

Michael J. Wilkins' book. Other authors of note included Richard Longenecker, N.T.

Wright, Bill Hull, Dallas Willard, Aubrey Malphurs, and Greg Ogden. The study further

explored the five key characteristics of a disciple and used Crosspoint's *Five Marks of a*

Disciple (FMD) as its outline. It drew largely from Crosspoint's *Membership Manual* as

well as other relevant books and articles. The study then consolidated numerous reference

materials as it explored the historical development of discipleship from the patristic era to

the twentieth century. Finally, it explored contemporary discipleship strategies and

highlighted the relevant and recurring themes that contribute to making disciples. The

review incorporated numerous contemporary authors with considerable expertise in this

area, including Ed Stetzer, Bill Hull, Aubrey Malphurs, Eric Geiger, Scot McNight, Mike

Breen, Andy Stanley, and Reggie Joyner.

The second section of the review examines the broader theme of Millennials. It

begins by defining the date range of the Millennial cohort after probing the various date

ranges used by different authors. It also explores the distinction between Millennials and

emerging adults, and the uniqueness of Canadians and Canadian Millennials. Multiple

studies, both American and Canadian, are cited in this section. Of note are the works of

Christian Smith, Reginald W. Bibby, Thom Rainer, and Pew Research. After this, the

section focuses on the spiritual formation of Millennials by tracing challenges to discipleship. It follows these challenges using the FMD framework while exploring each of the five marks in-depth. It uses the research of Christian Smith and the *National Study on Youth and Religion* extensively as well as research conducted by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin. Two Canadian-based studies, *Hemorrhaging Faith* (Penner, Harder, and Anderson) and *Renegotiating Faith* (Hiemstra, Dueck, and Blackaby), were also invaluable for this review. Other recent books that added current input were *Faith for Exiles* by David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, as well as *You Found Me* by Rick Richardson.

Research Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, the project employed a qualitative, pre-interventive research methodology that included semi-structured interviews with ministry practitioners and focus group interviews with Millennials from Crosspoint Church. The data from these interviews were compared with the findings from the literature review.

Type of Research

The project employed a qualitative, pre-interventive, mixed-methods research methodology. It included semi-structured interviews with ministry leaders in churches as well as focus group interviews with Millennials who were adherents of Crosspoint Church. The participants in the focus groups were also required to complete a brief demographic survey. This mixed-methods approach triangulated the perspectives of outsiders (MLs), insiders (Crosspoint Millennials), and the researcher (literature review) so that it tested for consistency in the findings and surfaced new perspectives.

Participants

The study selected two population groups. It conducted semi-structured interviews with the first population group, which included twelve ministry leaders (MLs) within churches, whose ministries had a reputation for reaching Millennials and had at least fifty Millennials in regular worship attendance. The second population consisted of Millennial Christ-followers who were adherents of Crosspoint Church. These Millennials completed a demographic survey before participating in the focus groups. The research project used four separate focus groups, each with 6-8 participants.

Instrumentation

The study used three instruments for data collection. The semi-structured interviews employed The Ministry Leader Survey (MLS), and the focus group interviews used the Focus Group Protocol (FGP). Each of the focus group participants also completed the Demographic Survey (DS). Both of these instruments were researcher-designed but were submitted for expert review and then modified.

Data Collection

The semi-structured interviews were conducted either over the phone or in person, using the MLS. These took place over four months, beginning in October 2019 and ending in January 2020. The MLS guided the interviews. The interview was recorded electronically, in audio format, and then later made into written transcripts.

The focus group interviews took place between November 2019 and January 2020. Each ML was sent a digital copy of the DS and asked to complete and return it, before taking part in a focus group. Four focus groups were hosted at the Crosspoint

Church campus and used the FGP to guide the conversation. These interviews were also recorded in audio format and then later transcribed into written format.

Data Analysis

The written transcripts from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were studied separately, with the goal of identifying common themes. The data points from each were tracked and then coded into separate classification systems that identified these themes. Each classification system was then compared to discover both convergence and divergence in the discoveries. This data was then synthesized with the literature review, resulting in a final list of implications and recommendations for discipling Millennials.

Generalizability

Crosspoint Church is not alone in its pursuit of making disciples of Millennials and the emerging generations. Many churches are endeavoring to meet this discipleship challenge head-on. The results received from the research will be helpful for other Protestant, evangelical churches that are developing discipleship strategies for Millennials. The research will be particularly helpful for churches that are similar to Crosspoint in culture, style, and ministry philosophy. While the findings from the focus groups were specific to Crosspoint Church, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with ministry leaders from different geographical regions in both Canada and the United States. These created more considerable variation in the sample, resulting in greater transferability of the findings.

The research used standardized, carefully worded, expert-reviewed instruments, which reinforced consistency in the results. These helped to ensure efficient and reliable analysis of the data.

Project Overview

This project outlines a pre-interventive, qualitative analysis of discipleship for Crosspoint Church's Millennials. Chapter 2 examines the pertinent literature relevant to both discipleship and Millennials. Chapter 3 explains how mixed-methods research was conducted in order to answer the three research questions. Chapter 4 explores the data received from the semi-structured interviews, demographic surveys, focus group interviews, and literature review. Chapter 5 reveals the study's most significant findings and explores possibilities for the application of the data with Crosspoint Church.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this project was to identify recommendations that will inform the

development of a strategy for making disciples of Millennials through Crosspoint

Church. This chapter covers two separate but integrated themes: discipleship and

Millennials. It begins by specifying the biblical and theological descriptions of a disciple

and highlights five characteristics of a follower of Christ. It further examines the task of

discipleship through the lenses of historical movements as well as contemporary

strategies. Next, it introduces the Millennials and defines the age parameters for this

cohort. It then clarifies the distinction between Millennials and emerging adults and

highlights similarities and differences between Canadian and American Millennials. It

concludes by thoroughly examining the opportunities and challenges of discipling

Millennials.

What is a Disciple?

When embarking on a journey, wisdom indicates that it is helpful to start with the

end in mind. Therefore, the starting point for formulating a disciple-making strategy is to

have a clear definition of a disciple. Many have studied the biblical data and have arrived

at nuanced or different destinations. Wilkins identifies five commonly used definitions of

a disciple: learners; committed believers; ministers; converts; and converts who are in the

process of discipleship (*Following the Master* 13-20). Even with multiple definitions, not

every definition is necessarily a good definition. As it turns out, many churches do not

have a clear definition of a disciple. This apparent lack of clarity calls for a biblical

definition as much as any journey demands a destination.

<center>Biblical Definition</center>

In the New Testament, the Greek noun most translated as "disciple" is *mathētēs*.

In its basic sense, it means "learner," and is derived from the verb *manthanō*, which

means "to learn." *Mathētēs* was in common use in the first century and was employed in

various contexts to describe different kinds of relationships between leaders and their

followers. In the Greek world, the term appeared in various political, philosophical, and

religious contexts, and had a range of meanings including learner, adherent to a great

teacher, imitator, or institutional pupil (Wilkins, "Disciples and Discipleship" 202–03). It

was used in the mystery religions and Greek philosophical schools, in both the classical

and Hellenistic periods. Within Judaism of the first century, different subgroups used

either the term *mathētēs* or its Hebrew equivalent, *talmîd*, to label their students. The

Gospels reveal that the Pharisees had disciples (Matt. 22:16; Mark 2:18), as did John the

Baptist (Matt. 9:14; 11:2; 14:12; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; 7:18-19; 11:1; John 1:35, 37;

3:25; 4:1). Not all discipleship relationships were the same but were dependent on the

specific relational context between master and disciple.

Longenecker states that *mathētēs* likely appears three times in the LXX (Jer.

13:21; 20:11; 46:9), but only in some variant manuscripts, and adds that the only

occurrence of *talmîd* exists in 1 Chronicles 25:8, which references a music student or

apprentice (2). Nevertheless, master-disciple relationships are evident within the Old

Testament (e.g., Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jeremiah, and Baruch). While

these had similarities to other ancient forms of discipleship, they were set apart by the overshadowing of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel.

> The roots of biblical discipleship go deep into the fertile soil of God's calling. That calling is expressed in the pattern of divine initiative and human response that constitutes the heart of the biblical concept of covenant, and is manifested in the recurrent promise, 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.'
>
> (*Following the Master* 39)

This covenantal bond was central to each master-disciple relationship, a concept that would eventually carry over into Judaism of the first century (68-69). While Jesus' form of discipleship was rooted in the traditions of the Old Testament and had similarities with other secular forms of discipleship in his day, his form of discipleship was distinct from all the others (Wilkins, "Disciples and Discipleship" 203).

Each New Testament writer presents the discipleship relationship between Jesus and his followers from a unique perspective (Longenecker 6). When these perspectives are combined, a well-rounded understanding of discipleship can be formed by developing a composite sketch (Wilkins, "Disciples and Discipleship" 207). Within the gospels, the nature of the discipleship relationship unfolded in unique stages, evolving throughout Jesus' public ministry, as Jesus provided increasing clarification about his identity and purpose. Ultimately, it would culminate with his revealed status as the Messiah and Son of God, whom his disciples worshiped (Matt. 28:16-17) and declared as both Lord and God (John 20:28). The first followers of Jesus were disciples of John the Baptist, who responded to Christ's invitation to follow (John 1:35-49). Beyond these, the early band of disciples emerged from the region of Galilee, through common familial, business, or

neighbor relationships. These early disciples had mixed understandings of what it meant to be a disciple, as well as different discipleship expectations (Wilkins, *Following the Master* 90). Two groups eventually emerged out of this larger group of followers: the crowd and the disciples (Matt. 5:1).

Large crowds often accompanied Jesus in his itinerant ministry. They were not always serious followers and shadowed him for various reasons, some because they were attracted to his miracles (John 6:2) and teaching (Mark 11:18), and others because they believed he was the Messiah or a prophet (John 6:14-15). Jesus called the crowd to costly discipleship – as he did his own disciples - challenging them to ponder the price of following him (Luke 14:25-33). Within the gospels, the crowd's allegiance to Jesus was often tentative. They abandoned him in the face of difficult teaching (John 6:60-66). They laughed at him in their unbelief (Matt. 9:23-24) and, in the end, were culpable for his crucifixion (Matt. 27:24-25). For this reason, Jesus was not willing to entrust himself to them (John 2:24-25).

In stark juxtaposition to the crowd, the disciples were those who were committed to Jesus and who observed his teachings. He called them to follow him in a personal commitment, which required setting aside the old life in order to find new life in him (Luke 9:23-25). This call to discipleship was universal in its scope. Jesus proclaimed the good news to the poor (Matt. 5:3, 11:4-5; Luke 4:17-21; 6:20; materially or spiritually) as well as to sinners (Matt. 9:9; Mark 2:17; Luke 7:37-39; 15:1-2; 19:1-10). He also invited women to follow him (Matt. 12:49-50; Luke 8:19-21; 10:39, 42; cf. Acts 9:36), which set him apart from the other religious leaders of his day.

Some disciples followed Jesus in the strictest sense by accompanying him in his itinerant ministry (Mark 3:13-15; Matt. 8:19-21; Luke 6:13; 9:59-62; 23:49, 55; John 6:66) while others followed him "only in a figurative sense" (Wilkins, *Following the Master* 111). The latter of these included Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38; Matt. 27:57), Zacchaeus (19:1-10), Nicodemus (John 3:1-21; 7:50; 19:39), as well as a demon-possessed man (Mark 5:18-19). All disciples, itinerant or otherwise, were called to this figurative sense of followership (Luke 14:27), which included counting the cost (Mark 8:34), becoming like their master (Matt. 10:24-25; Luke 6:40), holding to his teaching (John 8:31-32), walking in obedience (John 14:23-24; John 15:8), participating in his suffering (Matt. 5:11-12), and imitating his servanthood (Matt. 20:26-28; John 13:12-17).

Central to Christ's followership was a two-sided call to "repent and believe" (Mark 1:15). On one side was the radical challenge of repentance which required, beyond mere sorrow or a change in thinking, complete redirection and reorientation of one's life. "What Jesus called for was *conversion,* for a turning round of heart and will and life, as well as a change of mind…He called for a conversion to God, a yielding of life in and from innermost values and purpose to God's direction" (Dunn 25). All followers of Jesus, literal or figurative, took up this radical challenge. The other side of this call was to believe. Whereas repentance meant turning away *from*, belief meant turning *to* (25). This call was more than intellectual assent. Contextually, for first-century hearers, it meant trusting in the trustworthiness of God (26) and walking in faithfulness as a demonstration of trust (27). This two-sided call of Jesus had gravitas, whether one followed him on foot or figuratively.

From this broader group of disciples, Jesus called his twelve apostles (Luke 6:13, 17). The Twelve were given a different role and function than the other disciples. They were invited "to be coworkers with Jesus, and leaving all to follow Jesus was a necessary sacrifice, in order to join with him in the proclamation of the kingdom (Mt. 10:1-15) and as a training time for their future role as apostles in the church (Mt. 19:23-30)" (Wilkins, "Disciples and Discipleship" 205). The Twelve played a symbolic role, reflecting the twelve tribes of Israel, and representing "the eschatological people of God, the Israel of the end time" (Dunn 96). The Twelve were not the only disciples appointed with a distinct role – the Seventy-Two were also sent ahead of him to proclaim the kingdom of God (Luke 10:1-24) in anticipation of his triumphal journey to Jerusalem.

Mathētēs occurs 28 times in the book of Acts in reference to the followers of Jesus. It is used synonymously to describe a believer in Christ. It first appears in Acts 6:1 and designates the same group of people who are previously referred to as "believers" and "men and women who believed" (Acts 2:44; 4:32 and 5:14). These occurrences demonstrate that disciples and believers should be understood as an equivalent group of people (Wilkins, *Following the Master* 237; Longenecker 4). It is important to note that while the word "Christian" is also used twice in Acts (11:26; 26:28), and then later by Peter (1 Pet. 4:16), this was a title given to the disciples by outsiders, rather than a self-designation. It was also used in a manner that was disparaging (Acts 26:28) or unfriendly (1 Pet. 4:16). In both the Gospels and Acts, the plural form of disciples is most often employed, which demonstrates that discipleship occurs typically within the context of community (Wilkins, *Following the Master* 244). What is clear is that in the post-resurrection era, "disciple" remains an appropriate title for Christ's followers.

An important question to consider is, "Which of Christ's teachings are directives for present-day disciples?" The commission for the disciples to teach everything Jesus had commanded them (Matt. 28:20) demonstrates a sense of continuity for his teachings as the basis for discipleship in the era of the church. Even so, there is also some discontinuity, particularly with his teachings specifically addressed to the Twelve, who had "a special salvation-historical role in founding the church" (Wilkins, *Following the Master* 249). These teachings were specific to their ministry with Jesus while he remained on earth; however, this does not mean that they have no bearing whatsoever for a present-day disciple: "At the same time, we must carefully observe where some of the teachings directed toward the Twelve may have application for leaders of the church and for disciples in general" (250). In addition to the teachings to the Twelve, the same might be said of his teachings to the Seventy-Two, who were commissioned for a specific time-bound purpose (Luke 10:1).

In the remainder of the New Testament, *mathētēs* is noticeably missing. This omission does not mean it is absent conceptually. The language of followership continues to be used (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21; Rev. 14:4), and as Paul Helm explains, the concept of discipleship "is filled out and enriched, the emphasis falling not on following Jesus but on being united to him, though the idea of following Jesus is by no means absent" (630). Beyond Acts, alternate designations begin to be used for followers of Jesus, including believers (Gal. 6:10), church (1 Cor. 1:2), brothers and sisters (1 John 3:13, 16), and servants (1 Pet. 2:16-17). While *mathētēs* does not occur in the remainder of the New Testament, there is no evidence that the community of Christ-followers discontinued its use. There is evidence that it was used well into the second century (Wilkins, *Following*

the Master 274). Malphurs agrees there is a discipleship continuity between the Gospels and the rest of the NT, and notes that the discontinuity "is only in who made disciples— in the Gospels it was Jesus, and in the Epistles, the church made disciples" (ch. 6).

Discipleship vocabulary in the remainder of the New Testament shifts to spiritual formation terminology. An example of this is found in Galatians 4:19: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is *formed in you*" Hull explains that this English word *formed* is derived "from the Greek, *morphe*, which means 'to shape'" (*The Complete Book* 35). In other places, the word is combined with other Greek prepositions, which takes on more nuanced meanings: "it is rendered as 'conformed' in Romans 8:29 and 'transformed' in 12:2" (35). Spiritual formation describes the sanctifying process, empowered by the Holy Spirit, whereby a believer in Christ is being transformed to become like Christ. It is a complete character transformation, affecting not just behavior, but the inner person and affections. Ogden argues that this shift to spiritual formation language came about because of the post-Pentecost emphasis on the indwelling Holy Spirit (ch. 5).

The New Testament further describes discipleship as a continuum of spiritual growth. The Apostle Paul differentiates between mature followers and those who are like infants, influenced by the changing winds of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). He also instructs Timothy not to consider new converts for leadership positions (1 Tim. 3:6). Peter challenges immature believers to long for pure spiritual milk, so that they can grow up in their salvation (1 Pet. 2:1-3), a metaphor that is continued by the author of Hebrews: "Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness." Paul also writes about the 'spiritually mature' (1 Cor. 2:6; Eph.

4:13,15; Phil. 3;15; Col. 4:12), as does the author of Hebrews (5:14), and James (1:4).

Paul saw spiritual maturity as the ultimate goal of his ministry: "He is the one we

proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present

everyone fully mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

Given the continuity between the above themes, spiritual growth, spiritual

formation, spiritual maturation, and discipleship can be used interchangeably. The goal of

spiritual formation is to become like Christ (Rom. 8:29), just as the goal of discipleship is

to become like Jesus (Luke 6:40).

Clearly, from the biblical evidence, every person who puts their faith in Christ is a

disciple of Christ. Discipleship is not an optional add-on feature for the religious

consumer. A prevalent misunderstanding in churches is the assumed difference between a

convert (believer) and a disciple. This problematic dichotomy is observable in Leroy

Eims' classic work, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. He distinguishes between a convert

and a disciple and assumes that every believer is a convert but not yet a disciple (74).

While he maintains that spiritual growth is vital for every believer, the framework he

proposes makes discipleship seem optional. Dallas Willard contends against such a

dichotomy:

> Vast numbers of converts today thus exercise the options permitted by the
>
> message they hear: they choose not to become—or at least do not choose to
>
> become—disciples of Jesus Christ. Churches are filled with 'undiscipled
>
> disciples,' as Jess Moody called them. Of course there is in reality no such thing.
>
> Most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that
>
> members have never decided to follow Christ. (*The Great Omission* 4-5)

Ogden adds that this dichotomy is an unstated assumption in many churches and that "we have made an uneasy peace with this distinction" (ch. 2). The biblical data demonstrates that every believer is a disciple and every disciple is a believer. A disciple is one who has moved beyond the crowd and can no longer remain a religious bystander.

<center>Characteristics of a Disciple</center>

One must clarify what a disciple is before one begins to make disciples. This axiom compels the question: "How does one define a disciple?" George Barna argues that having a clear and measurable definition of spiritual success is essential for every church that is serious about making disciples:

> Lacking a clear notion of what we're trying to become as believers, we often settle for something less than the biblical standard—and certainly less than what we are capable of becoming. Why? If success is negotiable, why not include 'comfortable and easily achievable growth' among the factors that make us successful? (89)

On the one hand, clarity about the end-product is essential. On the other hand, if one tries to describe every characteristic of a disciple in microscopic detail, one may never complete the list. Because of this tension, many have classified these characteristics into broad categories.

The literature contains much agreement about these broad categories, and the differences are minor, contextual, and almost arbitrary. Sometimes authors combine otherwise separate categories under one broader category. At other times, specific characteristics are emphasized while others are neglected. These minor differences present challenges when one attempts to consolidate the categories from among the

various authors. For example, Geiger, Kelley, and Nation list eight attributes that consistently show up in the life of maturing believers: 1) Bible engagement; 2) Obeying God and denying self; 3) Serving God and others; 4) Sharing Christ; 5) Exercising faith; 6) Seeking God; 7) Building relationships; and 8) Unashamed (Geiger, Kelley, and Nation). Hull marks five characteristics of a disciple: 1) submits to a teacher who teaches her how to follow Jesus; 2) learns Jesus' words; 3) learns Jesus' way of ministry; 4) imitates Jesus' life and character; 5) finds and teaches other disciples who also follow Jesus *(The Complete Book* 68). Later in his book, he also lists six areas of transformation that are required for a maturing disciple: 1) transformed mind; 2) transformed character; 3) transformed relationships; 4) transformed habits; 5) transformed service; 6) transformed influence (130). Wilkins describes three dimensions of discipleship in a believer's life: the spiritual life, the ethical life, and the community life (*Following the Master* 120-27). These characteristics can be categorized in multiple ways.

Malphurs suggests that in order to develop a clear, biblical strategy for making disciples, churches need to define the characteristics of a mature disciple and determine an effective way to communicate them to their people. He provides instructions and examples of how numerous churches have done this (ch. 7). Crosspoint Church has identified five characteristics of a disciple, called "The Five Marks of a Disciple." These include 1) Growth; 2) Pursuit; 3) Community; 4) Service; and 5) Mission (*Crosspoint Church Membership Manual* 17). The five marks also form the basis of Crosspoint's introductory discipleship course, "The Journey." This five-week course explains the five marks and reveals how participants can personally develop and practice the five marks (Chartrand). These five marks also inform the overall direction of Crosspoint's

discipleship strategy, including the development of a discipleship pathway, membership,

weekend preaching, and children's ministry curriculum. For this reason, each mark will

be examined, with some input from the relevant literature.

<center>The "Growth" Mark</center>

The Crosspoint Membership Manual defines the 'Growth" mark as follows: "We

will imitate Jesus because we are his followers. Every believer in Christ is a disciple, and

every disciple is a believer. We, therefore, live in glad submission to him, being

transformed through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as we live in the gospel"

(*Crosspoint Church Membership Manual* 17). A disciple with 'Growth' is being

transformed into the image of Christ (Col. 1:28). It is a holistic transformation, that

affects the entire person, from the inside-out. This metamorphosis is possible only

through the enablement of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5;16-23; 2 Cor. 3:17-18;

John 15:1-8) through the process of sanctification.

The outcome of this transformation is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), which

Wright describes as "fully flourishing Christian character" (32). This transformation is

the restoration of the *imago Dei*, God's original design and purpose for humans (Gen.

1:26). As Wright explains, the goal of the Christian life is not to escape earth or to follow

a set of rules, but to take on the character of Christ, which "properly anticipates the

promised future state" (141). This outcome requires living in the now, how God intended

people to live from the beginning, and will ultimately one day live in the future

anticipated *eschaton.* Virtue is the appropriate goal of the Christian life as "the New

Testament invites its readers to learn how to be human in this particular way, which will

both inform our moral judgments and form our characters so that we can live by their

guidance. The name for this way of being human, this kind of transformation of character, is virtue" (18). This matter is taken up further by James K.A. Smith, who contends that discipleship is not merely a matter of the mind – we are more than just *thinking things* (3). Spiritual transformation does not happen simply by changing one's mind, but by transforming one's habits in order to shape one's loves (19). "Virtues, quite simply," J. Smith writes, "are good moral habits…like internal dispositions to the good – they are character traits that become woven into *who you are* so that you are the *kind* of person who is inclined to be compassionate, forgiving, and so forth" (16). The outcome of the "growth" mark is virtue or Christ-like character, that looks like the fruit of the Spirit.

This transformation can only occur by living in submission to Christ. The life of faith begins with regeneration, but it continues through sanctification. The linchpin for sanctification, as it is for regeneration, is surrender. "Christian spiritual formation rests on the indispensable foundation of death to self and cannot proceed except insofar as that foundation is being firmly laid and sustained" (Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* 64). The catalyst for transformation is a will that surrenders, through repentance and ongoing submission. Submission is a form of continual conversion. It is both an event and a process; it begins by taking up one's cross and then continuing to bear one's cross throughout life (Hull, *Conversion & Discipleship* 86). A posture of ongoing submission is essential for spiritual transformation.

This submission is to be a glad surrender. When Paul described his seemingly outrageous desire to persuade others of the gospel, he revealed the fuel behind his passion: "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all,

and therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14). It was the love of Christ, demonstrated through the gospel, that brought Paul into glad surrender. Timothy Keller argues that what keeps believers from growing is the misunderstanding that the gospel is important only for their initial conversion:

> The gospel is not just the ABCs but the A to Z of the Christian life. It is inaccurate to think the gospel is what saves non-Christians, and then Christians mature by trying hard to live according to biblical principles. It is more accurate to say that we are saved by believing the gospel, and then we are transformed in every part of our minds, hearts, and lives by believing the gospel more and more deeply as life goes on . . . (48)

This theme is picked up by Paul in Romans 12:1. After Paul has finished describing the infinite wisdom of God, demonstrated through the gospel, he urges the church to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, but only "in view of God's mercy." Again, this surrender is not motivated through fear, or by an attempt to gain favor with God, but by glad submission through the gospel.

<div align="center">The "Pursuit" Mark</div>

To understand this mark, we turn again to the Membership Manual: "We will seek to know God personally and corporately. We will seek him through prayer, know him and his will through the Word, and worship him as a lifestyle, loving him with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength" (*Crosspoint Church Membership Manual* 17). This mark states that the goal of every believer's life is to know God. This desire was expressed by the Apostle Paul: "I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings" (Phil. 3:10 NIV). Prior to the fall, humanity knew God

personally. He spoke with them (Gen. 1:16-17) and visited them in the garden (Gen. 3:8). The restorative work of Christ and the Holy Spirit is to bring people into a personal relationship with God.

This mark further assumes that God is knowable and that a believer can commune with God personally through the spiritual disciplines, especially prayer and Bible reading (including study and meditation). Spiritual disciplines are practices that enable one to "attend to the work of grace in our lives and our times" (Thompson ch. 1). The spiritual life, like a garden, can be cultivated through these practices. Spiritual disciplines are not a form of works righteousness but are practices where the believer receives grace and welcomes the Holy Spirit to do his sanctifying work. They require effort, but this effort is a co-laboring between the believer and God. Disciples work out their sanctification (Phil. 2:12) as God works in them (Phil 2:13). "Grace is opposed to earning, not effort," Willard reminds his readers, "And it is well-directed, decisive, and sustained effort that is the key to the keys of the Kingdom and to the life of restful power in ministry and life that those keys open to us" (*The Great Omission* 34). Churches will often place a high value on prayer and Bible study but deemphasize other spiritual disciplines. Geiger, Kelley, and Nation caution against offering a one-size-fits-all approach to spiritual disciplines, since no single plan will work for everyone. "As we interviewed the experts from across the world, we discovered that different emphases work in different cultures. The same is true of churches in North America. For different congregations and for different believers, different methods are needed" (121). Each person is different, and each person's circumstances vary. Churches will help more people pursue spiritual disciplines if they provide flexible plans, with more options.

This word "discipline" can be off-putting to some as it seems harsh or restrictive. The development of virtue requires intentionality and attentiveness. Paul instructed Timothy to "train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:7-8; cf. 1 Cor. 9:4-25). Virtue, as it turns out, does not occur automatically, but "when someone has made a thousand small choices, requiring effort and concentration, to do something which is good and right but which doesn't 'come naturally'—and then, on the thousand and first time, when it really matters, they find that they do what's required 'automatically,' as we say" (Wright 20). The spiritual gifts provide environments and moments for character development – formation into the image of Christ.

Knowing God is not an individualized experience. Pursuing God is also a corporate reality. The early church prayed together as one body (Acts 4:23-31). The Apostle Paul implored them, as one body, to "[l]et the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts" (Col. 3:17; cf. Eph. 5:19). The disciplines must be cultivated in community as well as in private. The believer in Christ therefore lives in tension between pursuing God personally, as well as corporately.

<center>The "Community" Mark</center>

The membership manual further describes the third mark of a disciple: "We will live life together in small groups, practicing the 'one-anothers' of Scripture, in loving, transparent, accountable, and truth-telling relationships" (*Crosspoint Church Membership*

Manual 17). This mark assumes that spiritual formation takes place in community. God never intended believers to grow in isolation, as is evidenced throughout the New Testament. As Chris Shirley explains, disciples in the early church were commonly referenced in relationship to a group of believers or a particular city. They understood themselves as part of a local body of believers – not as isolated individuals (209-10). The church is a plurality in unity – many members of one body who are interconnected through the Holy Spirit, under Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). When believers in Christ live together, in community, they are living out God's original mandate of being his image-bearers (Gen. 1:26) by reflecting the image of God, who *is* perfect eternal community. "Our diversity in unity mirrors the diversity in unity of the Trinity" (Seamands ch. 2). Discipleship must happen within community.

Crosspoint encourages its members to participate in a Home Group. As the entire church grows in numbers, developing intentional, Christ-centered relationships becomes increasingly tricky. The overall group dynamic changes, and it becomes more challenging to know others and to be known. The Sunday worship service is also not conducive to building community since the room is set up in rows facing the same direction. Crosspoint's solution for building community is to have members participate in Home Groups, consisting of four to twelve members.

The Home Group Leaders Training Manual explains that the primary purpose of Home Groups is "transformation into Christ-like disciples" (4). Home Group leaders are trained and coached to build transformational communities. Crosspoint members are encouraged to participate in these communities for spiritual growth and are invited to live out the "one-anothers" of Scripture. These are the New Testament practices that mandate

how the church should live together and include: honoring and being devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10); accepting one another (Rom. 15:7); carrying one another's burdens (Gal.6:2); being kind and compassionate to one another (Eph. 4:32); encouraging and building up one another (1 Thess. 5:11); being concerned for one another (1 Cor. 12:25); spurring one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24); confessing sins to and praying for one another (Jas. 5:16); and using one's gifts to serve one another (1 Pet. 4:10). The community that reflects God's image to the world requires Christ-like intentionality and effort.

<center>The "Service" Mark</center>

The fourth characteristic of a disciple is service which focuses on the attitude and actions of a disciple:

> We will be the hands and feet of Jesus to our church community and our city, through the sacrificial giving of our time, treasure and talents. We will discover, develop and use our gifts for the glory of God and building up of his body.
>
> (*Crosspoint Church Membership Manual* 17)

Jesus embodied servanthood (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:7) as an example for his disciples to follow (John 13:5, 14-17). Therefore, when believers engage in service, they are reflecting the image of God to the world. Jesus further taught that greatness in the kingdom results from servanthood (Matt. 20:26; 23:1; Mark 9:35; 10:43; Luke 22:26-27). Servanthood includes a transformation in both attitudes (Phil. 2:5,7) as well as action (1 Pet. 4:10). A follower of Jesus is a servant to all; this includes those both inside and outside of the church.

For Crosspoint, service includes three specific aspects of a disciple's life: time, treasure, and talents. Spiritual formation is other-focused and not just self-focused. This posture, therefore, results in other-focused activity. It includes sacrificing time for the sake of others in need, as well as contributing financially toward the local church and the needs of others. It also means using one's spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ (Rom. 12:6-8). The church is not a vendor of religious programs and services which are distributed by paid professionals. Instead, the church is a living body, where every member is a minister, and each person contributes towards its maturity (Eph. 4:11-14).

<div align="center">The "Mission" Mark</div>

Crosspoint's fifth mark of a disciple is mission. "We will make disciples and mature disciples, through evangelism and edification. We will share the gospel, in word and in deed. We will incarnate the gospel in our families, neighbourhoods, and workplaces—or wherever Christ sends us to go" (*Crosspoint Church Membership Manual* 17). Every disciple is responsible for making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20), and includes evangelism, the mission of proclaiming the gospel, as well as edification, the maturation of believers. The mission of God stems from God's very nature. God is a sending God, and when the people of God live on mission, they are reflecting Christ's image. Stephen Seamands' words aptly summarize this biblical concept:

> Mission, then, was first an attribute of God before it was an activity of individual Christians or the church. It is derived from God's triune nature, from the *sending* of God, and should be grounded primarily in the doctrine of God, not the doctrine of salvation or the church. According to Scripture, God the Father sends the Son (John 3:17; 5:36; 6:57; Galatians 4:6; 1 John 4:9), the Father and the Son send the

Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:6; Acts 2:33), and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

send the church into the world (Matthew 28:19-20; John 17:18; 20:21; Acts 1:8;

13:2-3). (ch.8)

The church magnifies the Trinity as it lives on mission in the world.

Crosspoint's identity has been shaped by the missional movement, which called

the church to move away from internally focused, program-driven ministry toward a way

of thinking and living that engages with God's mission in the world (McNeal xiv). In this

framework, one sees the church as a body of sent disciples who are engaged in God's

redemptive work in the world. "We must change our ideas of what it means to develop a

disciple, shifting the emphasis from studying Jesus and all things spiritual in an

environment protected from the world to following Jesus into the world to join him in his

redemptive mission" (10). This mission extends beyond the walls of the church, through

gospel incarnation. The church's missiology is primarily shaped by its Christology

(Hirsch 143). Jesus was sent from the Father, to live and dwell among humanity (John

1:14; Phil. 2:6-7).

In the same way, the church has been sent on mission, to incarnate the gospel in

the world. Peter instructed the church to "live such good lives among the pagans that,

though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God

on the day he visits us" (1 Pet. 2:12). The operative word in Peter's exhortation is

"among." He does not call the church to live "away from" or even "beside" the world.

Alan Hirsch contends that a missional-incarnational impulse is "the practical outworking

of the mission of God (the missio Dei) and the Incarnation" (128). Reggie McNeal argues

that churches have traditionally identified themselves as places, "where things happen

and where congregants receive religious goods and services. As such, they produce worship services, programs, and events that attract people to attend" (49). This attractional culture can work against an incarnational way of life (51). Hugh Halter and Matt Smay contend that this prevalent attractional paradigm is not the appropriate missiological response to the predominant patterns that exist in our culture (60). They advocate for an incarnational gospel response as the best means of influencing the three paradigms of western, eastern, and postmodern worldviews (60–81) Disciples thus incarnate the gospel by intentionally developing relationships with those outside the church, demonstrating the gospel through love and good deeds, and declaring the gospel when appropriate.

Every believer in Christ is a disciple, and every disciple is a believer. Spiritual transformation is not an option for those who seek to follow Christ. Disciples are committed to growing spiritually, pursuing God through the spiritual disciplines, living in loving, transparent, accountable community, serving others with their whole lives, and following Christ in his redemption mission in the world. This clearer picture of a disciple can serve as the foundation for the development of a strategic discipleship model.

What is Discipleship?

Discipleship is the task of making disciples. Interestingly, the term "discipleship" does not occur in Scripture. Its meaning is derived from *matheteuesate*, translated "make disciples" in Matthew 28:19. The church's mission orbits this commandment, commonly known as the Great Commission (Malphurs; Ogden; Hull; Wilkins; Eims; Willard; Rainer and Geiger; Geiger, Kelley, and Nation.; Putman; Coleman). This task of making disciples is broken down into three subordinate participial clauses in Matthew 28:18-20:

going, baptizing, and teaching. Each of these functions is mandated under the authority of Jesus, the king of God's kingdom (v.18), and through his enduring presence and power (v.20). They are also reflected in Christ's missional activity throughout Matthew's gospel (Keener 19).

The Great Commission includes both mission and maturation. It does not follow from this division that every person is a disciple. As explained above, every believer is a disciple, and every disciple is a believer. Malphurs explains:

> The answer is that the Great Commission has both an evangelism and an edification or spiritual growth component. To make a disciple, first one has to win a person (a nondisciple) to Christ. At that point, he or she becomes a disciple. It doesn't stop there. Now the new disciple needs to grow or mature as a disciple, hence the edification component. (ch. 1)

Discipleship includes the activity of calling people to become disciples (mission) as well as the activity of helping people mature as disciples (maturing). A complete discipleship strategy will, therefore, include both activities. Again, the focus of this study is the spiritual maturation of believers. This emphasis does not diminish the importance of mission and evangelism.

The task of discipleship is malleable in its methods. While Christ provided the fundamental principles for discipleship, he did not create a rigid system for how it was to be carried out. The Apostle Paul demonstrated this versatile framework. As far as his missionary methods were concerned, he was able to leave behind a church of reproducing disciples after spending only five or six months in one location (Allen 106). What he left behind with each fledgling community was somewhat minimal. As Allen explains:

Thus St Paul seems to have left his newly-founded churches with a simple system

of Gospel teaching, two sacraments, a tradition of the main facts of the death and

resurrection, and the Old Testament. There was apparently no form of service,

except of course the form of the sacraments, nor any form of prayer, unless indeed

he taught the Lord's Prayer. (113-14)

The genius of the Christian faith is that the "how" of discipleship can be reshaped to fit

any specific context. The practice of discipleship evolved so that today, we discover a

multi-faceted kaleidoscope of approaches. This next section will focus on the historical

development of discipleship and will then highlight themes emerging from contemporary

models.

<div align="center">Historical Development of Discipleship</div>

Discipleship remained a priority after the New Testament era, but its meaning,

emphases, and methods changed throughout church history. Examining this evolution,

and identifying some of the more salient approaches, will help inform the development of

a discipleship strategy.

Following the death of the apostles, the spiritual authority of the church was

transferred to bishops, who presided over each city. The early church fathers, including

Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, continued to use the term disciple "in a manner

reminiscent of biblical usage, implying that believers are members of the same family of

God" (Wilkins, *Following the Master* 307). They also used the theme of imitating Christ,

which bore a close resemblance to Jesus' idea of discipleship in the Gospels (308). They

emphasized prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and connecting in community, particularly

around the Lord's Table (Hull, *The Complete Book* 80). This period also saw the

emergence of the catechumenate, which flourished between the second and fifth centuries, evolving from less formal to more formal structures. Generally, it was utilized to guide the journey toward baptism but was also used as post-baptism development (Packer and Parrett ch. 3). The catechism emphasized doctrinal teaching through scriptural exegesis, as well as apologetics against heretics and philosophers (Marthaler 2). It was taught orally, and learned from memory, through call and response recitation. There was no emphasis on personal Scripture reading or study since the books of the New Testament were not yet recognized in their authorized form, nor were they accessible to most individuals (Hull, *The Complete Book* 76). Both Ignatius and Polycarp seemed to maintain a strong association between discipleship and martyrdom, which was understandable, given that this was a period of church persecution. Ignatius stressed conversion resulting from faith and viewed discipleship as developmental, in keeping with the other apostolic fathers. He saw martyrdom "as the time when he would attain final development of the discipleship process and when he would be fully vindicated as one who was a diligent and faithful servant of Jesus Christ" (Wilkins, *Following the Master 317*). In this period, discipleship was treated reverently, as a growing reality in the life of every believer, that came after a genuine conversion to follow Jesus.

In 325 AD, Constantine legalized Christianity through the Edict of Milan and ended two centuries of sanctioned persecution. The church then began to unify under bishops, who soon centralized their power under the bishop of Rome. Discipleship began to change in this Christendom era, as persecution stopped, and Christianity became the state religion. Catechism became more formalized, in keeping with the increased emphasis on structure and hierarchy in the church (Packer and Parrett ch. 3). In the

Middle Ages, with the church as the state religion, nominalism increased, as did infant

baptism. This was rarely followed up by catechizing baptized children. Adult catechism

became even rarer, and illiteracy increased, resulting in little direct access to the

Scriptures for the common person. Three primary discipleship influences emerged,

including art (which served as the Bible for the illiterate), the Eucharist, and community

life. The Christian faith was transferred mainly through the public reading of Scripture,

prayers recited during corporate worship, or listening to sermons which were taught by

the educated clergy. Thus, discipleship became a more communal and less personal

experience (Hull, *The Complete Book* 91).

In time, corruption found its way into the clergy and papacy. In reaction to this

corruption, the monastic movement gained traction so that by the fourth century,

Christians were leaving the cities in search of a renewed faith. They found this in

communities of solitude (Hull, *The Complete Book* 82). While some monastic

movements engaged in extreme asceticism, others embraced submission, sacrifice,

service, and humility, seeing discipline as a road to godliness. They formed rules of life,

which shaped their isolated faith communities. Three notable monks from the Middle

Ages include Benedict of Nursia (480-550), Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), and Dominic

(1174-1221). While the monastics did isolate themselves from society, they "committed

themselves to restoring the way of Jesus to the church. As it matured, the movement

formed great forces for good and improved the lives of both the monks and countless

others" (83).

When Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door at Wittenburg Castle in

1517 AD, it was a watershed moment for the Reformation and a turning point for

discipleship. The invention of the printing press, nearly fifty years prior, allowed for the mass proliferation of Luther's ideas. The Reformation embodied the idea that individuals could go to God directly through Jesus Christ, and because of this, discipleship became less communal and more personalized (97). Luther translated Scripture into the language of his people. He also printed and distributed catechisms, to instruct both children and adults in the fundamentals of the faith. Luther saw the printed catechism "as a means of instruction and instrument of reform" (Marthaler 6). Catechism, therefore, gained new ground with the Reformers. "Indeed, it could well be argued that the Reformation itself was a response to centuries of catechetical decline" (Packer and Parrett ch. 3). Other reformers followed suit by printing their own catechisms, and church congregations were taught through catechetical preaching and instruction of children. As catechisms took on a more polemical tone, the church of Rome in 1566 responded and produced its own catechism (Marthaler 6).

The printing press opened other doors that affected personal discipleship. John Calvin's *Institutes* provided grounded theology in a time of theological volatility, and he became the most widely published author in England for a hundred years (Hull, *The Complete Book* 97). He also established a system of universal education and a catechetical system for youth that was widely used. His Geneva school trained men who spread Presbyterianism across Western Europe (Vos 96). Another reformer, Thomas Cranmer, utilized the printing press in 1549 to mass produce *The Book of Common Prayer*. It was designed as an everyday devotional guide and "was the first time that common people had a book in their hands that gave them a daily structure, the church calendar, special days, along with plenty of Scripture and prayers. The book remains a

rich resource for millions of members of the Catholic Church, as well as the worldwide

Anglican Communion and its counterparts in other denominations" (Hull, *The Complete*

Book 98-99). The printing press gave greater access to teaching resources and Scripture,

which helped personalize discipleship.

Within two hundred years of the Reformation, there were multiple individuals and

movements that contributed to the evolution of discipleship. The Pietists played a

significant role in the personalization of discipleship. Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705),

the father of the movement, stressed passionate spirituality, with an emphasis on spiritual

disciplines. He urged believers to gather in small groups (the *collegia pietatis*), to

minister to one another, read and discuss Scripture, and hold one other accountable (Hull,

The Complete Book 99-100). The Pietists were part of a cultural shift taking place in

Europe, from a God-centered to human-centered spirituality:

> Within the pietist world of experiential biblicism, however, a world in which life-
>
> transforming adult regeneration by the Holy Spirit was well understood and real
>
> personal fellowship with the Father and the Son really flourished, three specific
>
> shifts gradually occurred. Each went unnoticed at the time but was far reaching in
>
> its effects. First, the Reformation tag sola scriptura, which had originally meant
>
> "no authority over the Bible," came to mean "no authority except the Bible."
>
> Second, the godliness of the individual, rather than the glory of God in the church,
>
> became the primary focus of interest. Third, the study of the Bible directly came
>
> to be thought of as a much more trustworthy source of truth and wisdom for
>
> serving God than any aspect of the church's historical heritage. (Packer and
>
> Parrett ch. 3)

Because of these three shifts, the role of catechism in discipleship began to decline. Other factors contributed to its demise, including growing resistance to external authority in Western culture, and its corollary, a resistance to authoritative teaching within the church (Packer and Parrett ch. 1).

The Moravian Brethren were religious exiles who experienced persecution from the Church in Rome, because of their ties to the Reformers. Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf, sympathetic to their plight, established a sanctuary for them on his estate in 1722 and helped them build a village, called Herrnhut. In the next five years, other religious refugees began to arrive at Hernnhut from various Protestant backgrounds. Inevitably, this led to bitter factions as few were willing to set aside their religious convictions. Zinzendorf stepped in and restored harmony by introducing structure in the community. He created a covenant called *The Brotherly Agreement,* which established the basis for Christian life and character. He also established "bands" within the community – groups of two or three people focused on encouragement, correction, and prayer. "Herrnhut became well-known as an example of Christians choosing to live together in intentional community" (Hull, *The Complete Book* 101). On August 23, 1727, the community experienced a revival, which was birthed as they celebrated the Lord's Supper (Addison 40).

Further reconciliation followed, as well as instances of divine physical healing, and an around-the-clock prayer meeting that occurred every day for the next one-hundred years. The Moravians' spiritual zeal spawned the first Protestant missions movement: "Within two decades the Moravians sent out more missionaries than all Protestants had sent out in the previous two hundred years" (41). Most of these missionaries were

untrained laity who saw themselves as evangelists rather than theologians. The

Moravians' story demonstrates the importance of personal, passionate discipleship, but

also the impact that community has on one's discipleship journey. Further, they

emphasized that the mission of God – to make disciples – is the personal responsibility of

every believer. The impact of the Moravians cannot be overstated: "They profoundly

influenced both William Carey, known as the 'father of Protestant missions,' and John

Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement" (42).

John Wesley led what is arguably one of the most influential discipleship

movements in church history. He emphasized salvation by grace alone, through faith. His

preaching focused on holiness, personal devotion, and discipline. Not only was he a great

open-air preacher and evangelist, but he was also a brilliant strategist. The Methodist

movement was organized into class meetings, modeled after the Holy Club – a society he

and his brother Charles had formed in 1729 at Oxford University. Meetings consisted of

Bible reading, prayer, confession, and encouragement. One of his significant

contributions was his ability to use the laity to accomplish the mission of the church

(Hull, *The Complete Book* 103). He organized lay-led class meetings and trained lay

preachers, which resulted in changed lives, and inevitably led to social reform.

> Wesley was not interested in just attracting crowds. As a brilliant strategist and
>
> innovator, he created and adapted structures that strengthened and united his
>
> followers in a rapidly expanding movement. What set Wesley apart was not the
>
> gospel he preached but his ability to gather converts into a disciplined movement
>
> . . . Wesley multiplied a variety of groups – classes, bands, and societies – to
>
> bring individuals to conversion and then to ensure their progress in discipleship.

(Addison 57)

Not only were masses of people converted, but thousands became workers. "At least one in ten had a formal leadership position in the movement" (59). Francis Asbury pioneered the Methodist movement in North America, using the same models as Wesley. When he began in 1771, there were only 300 American Methodists and four ministers. By 1816, those numbers had swelled to 200,000 members and 2,000 ministers (88). Like Wesley, Asbury traveled on horseback – over 300,000 miles in his career – and preached more than 16,000 sermons. He also developed a lay-led fleet of circuit-rider preachers who were committed to bringing the gospel across the new frontier. These preachers were not seminary graduates, but apprentices who were trained on the job by more experienced workers (91). The Methodist movement grew from 2.5 percent of the church-attending population in 1776, to 34 percent in 1850. After this peak, the movement began to decline. Steve Addison argues this decay was probably due to its loss of lay-led vision:

> By the end of the nineteenth century the Baptists had overtaken them. Before 1840, and during their meteoric rise, the Methodists had virtually no college-educated clergy among their thousands of circuit riders and local preachers. Their relative slump began at the same time that their amateur clergy were replaced by seminary-educated professionals who claimed the authority of the church hierarchy over their congregations. (93)

The Methodist movement, under Wesley and Asbury, revealed that every disciple could be equipped to reproduce disciples. It is this ethos that reinforces an environment for rapid multiplication.

Another influential historical figure who contributed to the development of

discipleship was Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). A young pastor-theologian, he

refused to capitulate to the Nazi party when the German Evangelical Church was

accommodating to the regime. As an activist, he protested the "Aryan Clause" which kept

Jews out of the church and civil service. In 1934, he formed a new "Confessing Church,"

in opposition to Hitler's unconstitutional new church elections, and built a coalition

against Nazi-supported churches. The following year, he formed his own clandestine

seminary for the Confessing Church. The seminary was closed by the Gestapo in

September 1937. This same year, Bonhoeffer published his great classic work, *The Cost*

of Discipleship, which was followed by his other work, *Life Together*. He eventually

became involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler but was discovered and imprisoned. He

spent the final two years of his life in the Tegal prison, before being hanged in 1945. The

power of Bonhoeffer's life and subsequent martyrdom are what make his writings about

the Christian life so poignant. *The Cost of Discipleship* is a study based on the Sermon on

the Mount, which attacks "cheap grace" and preaches "costly grace":

> Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism
>
> without church discipline, Community without confession, absolution without
>
> personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the
>
> cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate . . . Costly grace is the
>
> treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that
>
> he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his
>
> goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye
>
> which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple
>
> leaves his nets and follows him. (44–45)

Bonhoeffer's contribution to discipleship is his affront to the problematic dichotomy described previously, namely, that one can be a believer in Christ without being a disciple of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, every believer is a disciple - and every disciple is a believer.

Throughout history, there have been various methods used for making disciples. While many of these developed because of specific contextual realities, this does not mean that they have no relevance for present-day disciple-making. They need not remain locked in antiquity but can be taken as timeless principles that inform the future of discipleship. While this study focuses on looking around at present models of discipleship, it also favors looking backward at past movements of discipleship.

Contemporary Discipleship Strategies

A church will be more effective at reproducing disciples if it has an intentional discipleship strategy. Most churches do not have a clear public pathway to maturity, and this is a contributing factor in their diminished discipleship results (Ogden ch. 2). Barna's research supports this assertion: "Knowing what you're striving to produce, having a philosophy that supports that outcome, implementing a plan to accomplish the goal, and evaluating the sufficiency of the outcomes is [sic] crucial to successful discipleship" (32). Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger surveyed hundreds of churches, measuring the discipleship process design of each. Their research demonstrates that "vibrant churches are more than twice as likely than comparison churches to have a clearly defined process" (112). They conclude that four key elements in a discipleship process contribute to church vibrancy: clarity, movement, alignment, and focus (64). Jim Putman maintains that a church's discipleship strategy should be intentional rather than accidental since Christ was intentional in his disciple-making. An effective discipleship strategy will have

an intentional leader, relational environment, reproducible process, and an unlimited

number of disciples (36). The importance of having a clear and intentional discipleship

strategy cannot be overstated.

The variety of discipleship strategies seems endless, and cataloging each is

beyond the scope of this study. This section instead highlights some of the more relevant

themes that contribute to producing disciples. What makes them relevant is that these

themes are congruent with Crosspoint's theology, ecclesiology, ministry philosophy, and

polity. They include gospel clarity, personal, simple, reproducible, challenging, and

measurable.

Gospel Clarity

A discipleship strategy's success follows its understanding of the gospel. "The

gospel we preach determines the disciples we produce" (Hull, *Conversion & Discipleship*

31). Several authors highlight the importance of understanding and appropriating the

gospel. "If people in our churches graduate from the gospel, they are not advancing to

spiritual maturity but rather to lifeless religion" (Geiger, Kelley, and Nation 70). Keller

argues that the gospel has implications for all of life and that it changes everything:

"Most of our problems in life come from a lack of proper orientation to the gospel.

Pathologies in the church and sinful patterns in our individual lives ultimately stem from

a failure to think through the deep implications of the gospel and to grasp and believe the

gospel through and through" (51). Hull highlights five common, yet insufficient, versions

of the gospel: forgiveness only gospel; the left gospel (liberalism); prosperity gospel;

consumer gospel; and the religious right gospel (*Conversion & Discipleship* 33–40). "A

different gospel leads to a different Christ, a different church, a different Christian, and a

different culture" (32). An understanding of the gospel is paramount for developing a

discipleship strategy.

Some contend that for much of the twentieth century, evangelicalism has reduced

the gospel to a plan of salvation, which has had a detrimental effect on discipleship.

Willard describes this as the "gospel of sin management," which provides no effective

bridge between faith and life (*The Great Omission* ch. 2). One of the more extensive

treatments of this gospel deficiency is taken up by Scot McKnight. He argues that the

reason why people struggle to become disciples is that their gospel has been reduced to a

plan of salvation (ch. 2). He summarizes the gospel as "declaring the Story of Israel as

resolved in the Story of Jesus" (ch. 7). It announces the critical events in the life of

Christ, as the saving news of God. It also completes the story of Israel in the Old

Testament, beginning with Creation and the Fall, and culminating in the New Creation.

The way we enter this gospel story is through faith, demonstrated through repentance and

baptism (ch. 9). This gospel, framed by Israel's story, and centered on the lordship of

Jesus, summons people to respond through faith and repentance, which saves and

redeems (ch. 10). Hull terms this the "kingdom gospel." In contrast to the five

"insufficient gospels" described above, the kingdom gospel best captures the teachings of

Jesus and the early church, and calls believers to true discipleship: "Being a disciple of

Jesus, learning from him and submitting to his leading and his teaching, is the norm

rather than the exception or the option. It calls us to become apprentices of Christ and

learn from him how to live our life as though he were living it" (*Conversion &

Discipleship* 39). The gospel is far more involved and expansive than a personal salvation

plan. Having a fuller understanding of its grand narrative and cosmic implications will

improve our understanding and commitment to discipleship. It will inevitably lead to faith, repentance, and baptism.

Relational

Any discipleship strategy requires personal, intentional, life-on-life attention. Robert Coleman concludes that people were Christ's method: "This revealed immediately the direction his evangelistic strategy would take. His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow" (21). While relational discipleship can occur in various forms (one-on-one, micro-groups, small groups, communal living), the driving force is still the same – it requires personal interaction among disciples. Discipleship programs, divorced of relationship, will have limited results. "The motivation and discipline will not ultimately occur through listening to sermons, sitting in a class, participating in a fellowship group, attending a study group in the workplace or being a member of a small group, but rather in the context of highly accountable, relationally transparent, truth-centered, small (three or four people) discipleship units" (Ogden ch. 2). Mike Breen and Steve Cockram draw from decades of experience in establishing missional discipleship movements around the world. He maintains that the best environment for making disciples is one of high-invitation and high-challenge (ch. 2). Discipleship produces better results in a high-invitation environment of immersion, where the disciple has access to a disciple-maker's everyday life. It does not develop through mere information transfer, but more through observation and imitation. Discipleship training environments often do not allow a disciple to observe or imitate the disciple-maker's life, from the vantage point of ordinary life experiences. "Invitation is about being invited into a relationship where you have access to a person's

life and all the vibrancy, safety, love and encouragement that reside there" (ch. 2).

Understandably, giving a disciple access to one's life requires more work, but the payoff

is worth the effort. For the disciple-maker, it need not require scheduling additional time

to spend with a disciple; rather, it means inviting the disciple into ordinary life

experiences, a principle Breen describes as "folding" (ch. 4). For example, a disciple-

maker might invite a disciple to shop for groceries or attend a child's soccer practice -

folding the disciple into your everyday life. This need not require additional time from

the disciple-maker, and it allows the disciple to see faith modeled in real-life scenarios.

Breen's level of personal involvement may not be practical for everybody, but it does

reinforce the principle that discipleship is effective when it is personal.

<div align="center">Simple</div>

Most of the literature supports a lean, simplified discipleship strategy. Rainer and

Geiger vie for a simpler way of doing church, as a more effective way to make disciples:

> A simple church is designed around a straightforward and strategic process that
>
> moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the
>
> church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The
>
> process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church
>
> (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not part of the process
>
> (focus). (67–68)

Complexity can often create confusion, and churches often attempt to do more by adding

more. Adding more programs can limit focus, energy, finances, participation, and

attention for those programs (21). In short, less is more. Simplifying an older, established

church, with dozens of ministries, is a challenging task, but it can be done. Since

Crosspoint is a younger church, it does not struggle with eliminating cumbersome

programs. Instead, the foreseeable challenge will be creating discipleship ministries that

have alignment and movement while avoiding creating programs for the sake of making

programs.

<center>Reproducible</center>

Since the biblical responsibility of every disciple is to "make disciples" (Matt.

28:19), discipleship has a reproductive mandate. Dave Ferguson and Warren Bird

challenge leaders to stop being the hero and to begin multiplying heroes at every level:

disciples, leaders, and churches. Hero-makers must live and teach multiplication (77).

"Every leader who wants to multiply leaders needs to understand how to become a

disciple multiplier and equip those around them to be disciple multipliers" (114). This

multiplying vision is reflected in Ogden's discipleship model, which is built around

micro-groups of three or four people who enter into a discipleship relationship. After one

year, each group multiplies, and the members invite two or three others into their newly

formed groups (ch. 9). A core component of his discipleship model is an agreed-upon

covenant, which includes a reproductive mandate. To be part of a group, a participant

must agree to disciple others, once the group life cycle concludes.

A memorable, transferable curriculum is essential for discipleship reproduction

(Ogden ch.9; Breen and Cockram ch.5). Breen and Cockram add that this common

language is needed to build a discipleship culture:

> The reality of our church communities is that we simply do not have a shared
>
> language in which we can create a discipling culture. If we are to give our lives as
>
> living examples and create an environment for people where we can disciple

them, we have to have an easily transferable language that we can pass on. (ch. 5)

Their curriculum incorporates visual images, which are believed to enhance their

memorability. One should consider the relationship between a centralized curriculum and

reproducibility.

Challenging

Discipleship strategies that challenge disciples have a higher tendency to produce

mature disciples. Commitment and obedience were fundamental to the discipleship

methodology of Jesus; therefore, any effort at discipleship must include the same

(Coleman 58). Churches sometimes emphasize information transfer, yet fail to reinforce

this essential element in their discipleship strategy. Breen and Cockram stress the

importance of having a "high-challenge' environment: "A gifted disciple-maker is

someone who invites people into a covenantal relationship with him or her, but

challenges that person to live into his or her true identity in very direct yet graceful ways"

(ch. 2). Ogden vies for a discipleship strategy that includes high accountability. He

explains that small groups, a common discipleship strategy used in churches, may stress

intimacy and fellowship, but accountability and mission are secondary. This lack of

accountability is even greater in classroom settings, or preaching contexts, such as the

weekend worship service (ch. 8). For this reason, he supports a model that uses smaller

micro-groups, with three or four members, that have an environment of high

accountability and transparency. Each group forms around a covenant that supports these

ideals (ch. 9).

Measurable

A discipleship strategy needs to be measurable in order to determine its

effectiveness. Barna provides nine reasons why churches have struggled to produce

disciples; first, they lack a measurable definition of spiritual success (88). Andy Stanley,

Reggie Joyner, and Lane Jones explain the value of keeping score: "Keeping score helps

everyone involved stay informed about the condition of the organization . . . Most

churches do not have a reliable system for defining and measuring what success looks

like at every level of the organization" (70). The starting point for good measurement is

first to clarify the "win": "As long as the 'win' is unclear, you force your team to guess

what a win looks like" (71–72). Metrics matter in discipleship.

Regrettably, churches often focus on the wrong metrics or an incomplete set of

metrics. Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer call for a new scorecard for the church. "The old

scorecard of the church valued the external measures of the three Bs: bodies, budget, and

buildings. North American culture likes to count, and so does its church. So we count the

number of people attending, the number of dollars being used, and the number of square

feet being inhabited for the purpose of the church" (26). They vie for a new church

scorecard that "must measure how well we make disciples" (38). This new scorecard

emerged from their research of Transformational Churches – churches that had grown by

at least 10 percent in worship attendance between 2003 and 2008, and that had a specific

percentage of attendees involved in some small group, Sunday School class, or similar

group. It includes the following metrics: a missionary mentality, vibrant leadership,

relational intentionality, prayerful dependence, worship, community, and mission. These

provide an example of how a set of discipleship metrics can be tied to an overall vision

for making disciples. Ferguson and Bird agree that the right scorecard is essential for a

"hero-making" church. Their simple scorecard includes disciples – apprentices who are

celebrating, connecting, and contributing in the body of Christ (167), as well as movements produced through those apprentices (168-9). A scorecard, with a clear set of metrics, will contribute to the strategic effectiveness of a discipleship strategy.

Discipleship Summary

This first section looked at two major themes: disciples and discipleship. It began with the formation of a biblical definition of a disciple, which included a focused investigation of Crosspoint's FMD. Next, it explored both historical and contemporary frameworks of disciple-making. This examination of present-day frameworks probed even deeper into multiple themes of strategic discipleship. Having studied these two major themes, we turn our attention to the people group that Crosspoint is endeavoring to disciple.

Who Are the Millennials?

The starting point for discipling Millennials begins with understanding who they are. Often referred to as Generation Y, Millennials have also been called Echo Boomers (because they are the children of the Baby Boomers), Generation XX, Generation 2000, Generation Next, Y2Kids, or Bridgers. The term "millennial" was popularized by Neil Howe and William Strauss, who classified Millennials as those born between 1982 and 2000. These dates were drawn based on what they describe as a "generational persona," defined accordingly:

> It is a distinctly human, and variable, creation embodying attitudes about family life, gender roles, institutions, politics, religion, culture, lifestyle, and the future. A generation can think, feel, or do anything a person might think, feel, or do. It can be safe or reckless, individualist or collegial, spiritual or secular. Like any

social category (race, class, religion, or nationality), a generation can allow plenty

of individual exceptions and be fuzzy at the edges. But unlike most other

categories, it possesses its own personal biography. (ch.2)

The start and end dates for defining Millennials varies among authors, ranging

from the early 1980s to 2000. Different rationales are given for selecting these dates,

including the number of live births or common historical experiences and behaviors, but

these dates are somewhat arbitrary. Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer use the years

1980 to 2000, based on the pattern of the number of live births, opting for a "pure

demographic definition for the Millennial Generation" (13). The Pew Research Center

announced in 2019 that it would "use 1996 as the last birth year for Millennials for our

future work. Anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 23 to 38 in 2019) is considered a

Millennial, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation" (Dimock).

Reginald Bibby, Joel Thiessen, and Monetta Bailey set their cut-off points between 1986

and 2005 in order to maintain a clean 20-year interval, in keeping with the 20-year

intervals they use with Boomers and Gen Xers (5).

This study uses the same dates as Rainer and Rainer (1980-2000), for very

pragmatic reasons. First, a young adult born in 2000 will have been out of high school for

one year, having graduated in 2018. Since this study was conducted in 2019, a young

millennial born in 2000 will have experienced at least one year of adulthood. At the other

end of the spectrum, a person born in 1980 will be 39 years old in 2019. Numerous

Millennials in their mid- to late-thirties have been part of the Crosspoint community since

its inception in 2010. The inclusion of these older Millennials in the study, along with

younger adults, has been helpful.

Understanding Millennials is essential because communicating the gospel effectively to any people group requires sound contextualization. Keller explains the necessity of this practice:

> All gospel ministry and communication are already heavily adapted to a particular
> culture. So it is important to do contextualization *consciously*. If we never
> deliberately think through ways to rightly contextualize gospel ministry to a new
> culture, we will unconsciously be deeply contextualized to some other culture.
> Our gospel ministry will be both overadapted to our own culture and
> underadapted to new cultures at once, which ultimately leads to a distortion of the
> Christian message. (96)

Keller further describes contextualization as "translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essence and particulars of the gospel itself" (89). Contextualization is not compromising or capitulating to culture; rather, it means entering and adapting to a culture, identifying with its questions, hopes, and beliefs, in an effort "to become as fluent in their social, linguistic and cultural reality as possible" (120). It also means challenging the culture when necessary and appealing to listeners with the gospel (124–30). While most of Keller's application of this concept relates to gospel-centered preaching and communication, it is also applicable to ministry methods. Culture includes not only language or worldview, but its rituals and practices – it embodies a way of life. While Millennials are not a distinct culture *per se*, the practice of contextualization still applies. One can assume that a ministry framework – models, practices, rituals – can be contextualized for Millennials in a particular local context. Gaining a better

understanding of Millennials will help facilitate the construction of a contextualized

discipleship model.

This section attempts three goals. First, it reveals a common confusion about

Millennials, which equates them with emerging adults. Second, it exposes some of the

general characteristics of Canadian Millennials. Finally, this section highlights challenges

one might face when discipling Millennials. These challenges are investigated, in

consideration of each of Crosspoint's FMDs.

<div align="center">Millennials and Emerging Adults</div>

Equating Millennials with *emerging adults* is a common misnomer. This latter

term, first coined by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, describes a life stage rather than an age

cohort. Arnett argues that emerging adulthood should be recognized as a distinct new life

stage that follows adolescence and ends somewhere between the ages of 25 and 29 (7).

Multiple factors have contributed to the emergence of this post-adolescent life stage,

including "longer and more widespread education, later entry to marriage and

parenthood, and a prolonged and erratic transition to stable work" (7). Arnett proposes

five distinctive features of this life stage:

1. Identity explorations: answering the question "who am I?" and trying out various life options, especially in love and work;
2. Instability, in love, work, and place of residence;
3. Self-focus, as obligations to others reach a life-span low point;
4. Feeling in-between, in transition, neither adolescent nor adult; and
5. Possibilities/optimism, when hopes flourish and people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives. (9)

Not all Millennials are emerging adults, and so avoiding the error of assuming they share

the same characteristics is important. Some Millennials have transitioned into adulthood,

while others remain as emerging adults.

Nevertheless, the realities of emerging adulthood cannot be ignored since roughly half of Millennials are still in this life stage. A notable feature of present-day emerging adults is they are taking longer to grow up than in previous generations. Powell, Mulder, and Griffin observe that this progression is happening in slow-motion: "The traditional signs that a young person has entered adulthood—a spouse, a family, completed education, a steady job, and financial independence—now occur five or more years later" (ch. 3). Both an earlier start-line, and a later finish-line, have contributed to this slowness. On the one hand, the start-line has started sooner because of earlier biological maturity, cultural pressures to succeed, and access to information via technology. On the other hand, the finish line has moved later, for several reasons. First, more and more young adults are attending college and often take longer to complete their degrees because of increased tuition fees and the need to work while in school, resulting in smaller course loads per semester. Also, more emerging adults are pursuing graduate degrees than ever before. Because of these factors, emerging adults take longer to become financially independent. Marriage and family are also occurring much later. The end result is a longer race toward adulthood for today's young adults (ch. 3).

This slowness has obvious implications for ministry. Rick Hiemstra, Lorianne Dueck, and Matthew Blackaby explore the consequences of this delay in identity formation when young adults are in their twenties. The report is based on data from a multi-phase research project, which began in 2015, known as the Young Adult Transition Research (YATR) study (15). This study focused specifically on "a young adult population whose teenage religious engagement was more than nominal" (15). In other words, it looked at factors that determined why emerging adults maintained an active

religious faith in Christ. The report affirmed that young adults are attaining adult-status

markers (leaving school; leaving the parental home; full-time work; marriage and

common-law unions; and family formation) as much as five to seven years later than

thirty-years ago (30). This delay has implications for strategic ministry planning:

> [M]uch of youth and young adult ministry has been organized on the assumption
>
> that identity formation was taking place in high school while young adults were
>
> still part of the Christian community that they belonged to because they were part
>
> of their family of origin. Today, most young adults are forming their identities
>
> after they have left these Christian communities. This means they are forming
>
> their identities within the communities that are available to them, often in a new
>
> school or work setting. (30)

In short, programmatic ministries can sometimes be mismatched with the actual

psychosocial development of those they are trying to minister to because they determine

insiders and outsiders based on age-ranges rather than life stage.

The present-day reality for this study is that not all Millennials are emerging

adults, but almost all emerging adults are Millennials. This reality will change in five

years as Millennials age and Generation Z move beyond adolescence. Understanding this

distinction will be critical as we examine the various studies that have been conducted

about this age cohort. As it turns out, some of the early studies about Millennials only

included Millennials who were emerging adults. Fewer studies, focused on discipleship

or spiritual formation, have been conducted for the entire millennial age cohort. This is

perhaps why this project has a unique contribution to make since it includes Millennials

who are both adults and emerging adults.

Millennials in a Canadian Context

Crosspoint Church is in northeast Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Canadian culture

is commonly described as post-modern, post-Christian, multi-cultural, pluralistic – and

more secularized than its neighbor, the United States. The two countries have

commonalities and differences. The United States also has much more research available

pertaining to Millennials and discipleship. This shortage of Canadian content poses some

challenges, especially if the cultural differences between both nations are significant. The

American-based information may have limited relevance or application in a Canadian

context. One cannot assume that what works in one nation can be fully adopted in

another. Given Crosspoint's context, it is more helpful to examine the religious lives of

Millennials from a Canadian vantage point, through two lenses. First, the macro lens

focuses on the religious values of Canadians in general. Canada has a unique religious

history and cultural values, and one can assume that these still have bearing in the

religious values of Canadian Millennials. Second, the micro lens looks into studies that

examine the religious lives of Canadian Millennials. While Canadian religious,

sociological studies are few, some recent studies are invaluable for this dissertation

project.

The Canadian Macro Lens

In many ways, Canadians share much in common with Americans. Erin Meyer

developed an assessment tool called *The Culture Map*, which is an eight-scale model that

shows how cultures differ along a spectrum. The scale is helpful for managers and

intended to help them lead in a global environment as they work through the nuances of

cultural differences. The eight scales include communicating, evaluating, persuading,

leading, deciding, trusting, disagreeing, and scheduling. The mapping values were first designed by Meyer and then later adjusted based on feedback from hundreds of international executives (19). Through paid subscription (erinmeyer.com), one can access her country mapping tool and compare Canada and the United States along these scales. For the most part, both nations are closely matched for each scale. Only two noticeable differences are represented. First, when it comes to the "deciding" scale, Americans are slightly more top-down and Canadians more consensual. Second, for the "disagreeing" scale, Canadians are slightly less confrontational than Americans. Overall, the tool demonstrates that Canadians and Americans do have much in common.

Still, there are differences between the two nations. The religious landscape in Canada diverges from the United States in part because of each nation's unique history. Mark A. Noll, while attempting to interpret why theological education is more prevalent in the US than in Canada, and why different religious institutions are more prominent in either nation, contrasts the difference between the religious life of Canadians and those in the United States. He explains how religious life in Canada has changed significantly over the past six decades. Canadian religious adherence and attendance were much higher than the US at around 1950, yet by 2001 they were much lower (35–36). He posits four historical circumstances that have contributed to these separate outcomes: (1) Quebec and the rest of Canada; (2) Canadian lack of concern for the separation of church and state; (3) the prominence of proprietary denominations in Canadian religious life; and (4) the enduring importance in Canada of liberal evangelical theology. Each of these historical circumstances is worth exploring in greater detail.

First, Quebec's Quiet Revolution of the 1960s emptied churches, and "loyalty to

French language nationalism supplanted ecclesiastical loyalty, and the most religiously

observant region of North America became the least religiously observant" (Noll 44).

This event ultimately led to a rapid de-confessionalization of the educational system in

Quebec, which plausibly assisted toward the secularization and erosion of a confessional

element that previously existed throughout Canada (44). Second, throughout their history,

Canadians have not invested the same energy into church-state separation as their

southern counterparts. For example, allowances for public funding of Christian

institutions continue in some provinces with enough public support. While opposition to

this is growing, in keeping with a rapidly secularizing society, the separation of church

and state is not as strong in Canada as in the United States. Third, "proprietary Christian

churches (Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist and United) are more influential in

Canada than their mainline counterparts in the United States." The more influential

churches in the US tend to be more sectarian church denominations with conservative

evangelical convictions. Finally, liberal evangelical theology has had greater enduring

importance in Canada. Since these proprietary denominations have been "the

overwhelmingly most important Christian actors in Canadian society" (47), they have

played a more significant role in their universities and have "looked more propitious for

promoting Christian values in Canadian society" (48). These four elements demonstrate

key differences between the religious landscapes of both nations.

Another vital distinction between Canada and the United States is how each

responds to ethnic diversity. Rainer and Rainer describe the millennial generation as "the

most racially and ethnically diverse nation in America's history" (79). This openness to

racial and ethnic diversity is even more prominent among Canadians. Unlike their

American counterparts, Canadians do not experience the same racial tensions or conflicts. It is a longstanding belief that Canada maintains a "mosaic" response to ethnic groups, while the United States has a "melting pot" response. This difference is one of not only public sentiment but public policy, as Canadians emphasize assimilation more strongly than their southern neighbors. Some argue that the resulting patterns between the two nations are not significantly different, particularly when one examines the respective differences in levels of segregation (Peach 22). Elke Winter observes that there has recently been within the Canadian government, "a move away from multiculturalism as an essential marker of Canadian national identity," and a move toward "a culturally circumscribed meaning of Canadianness" (143). While there has been some shifting of the ground beneath the "mosaic versus melting pot" metaphor, the differing posture toward ethnic groups remains.

Canada is culturally pluralistic, which has created a positive social response for dealing with its diversity of cultures and religions (Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey 8). *Cultural pluralism* invites people to accept their differences and live peaceably with each other. Moreover, Donald C. Posterski argues that in Canada, cultural pluralism has been given a promotion, and has evolved into *ideological pluralism* (61–63). In this milieu, not only are alternate religious truth claims permissible, they are equally valid. As a result, any religion that contends for absolute truth is deemed intolerant and very un-Canadian because Canadians commonly pride themselves as being both accepting and tolerant. Ideological pluralism is antithetical to the Christian faith – or any religious faith - that contends for absolute truth and presents challenges for discipleship of all generations. This is especially true for Millennials, who are more open to diversity than any previous

age cohort. Comparatively, Canadian Millennials are more pluralistic, more favorable to immigration, and more apt to see racial and cultural diversity as a good thing for Canada (Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey 83).

While many have feared the secularization of Canada, Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey believe that religion is not going away, as it has in Europe. One significant reason for this is because religion is experiencing a global resurgence, and this has affected Canada through immigration: "the extent to which we will discard or embrace religion obviously will be influenced by what is happening globally, and how those broader developments impact Canada through immigration" (Bibby 14). Immigrants to Canada have significantly impacted the number of religious participants. Since 1980, the dominant countries of origin have come from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The level of participation for immigrants is much higher than for native-born Canadians, which has affected the "religion, no-religion" continuum (15). This immigration fact, in addition to other demonstrations of interest from both teenagers and the ambivalent middle, shows that religion has not yet seen its demise in Canada. Between 1931 and 2008, mainline Protestant churches experienced significant declines in adherents, Roman Catholicism remained steady, and the "no religion" category jumped from 1 percent to 25 percent. Evangelicals have risen from 8 percent to 11 percent, while other world faiths have increased from 3 percent to 8 percent. Much of this is related to the effect of immigration. Bibby states that three religious groups will make the most considerable difference going forward: "Roman Catholics and evangelicals are emerging as the foremost religious group players, with Islam in particular finding a growing market niche" (31). With the Roman Catholic Church being the dominant player in Canada's religious landscape, this

religious continuum "will be largely determined by the performance of the Catholic Church" (42). While more people have moved to the ambivalent middle of religious adherence and participation, secularization is not an inevitable conclusion for Canadians in general.

The Canadian Micro Lens

Both Canada and the United States have experienced the "nones on the rise," particularly among emerging generations. This trend identifies an increase in the number of religiously non-affiliated individuals, meaning those who indicate "none" when asked with which religion they identify. In the United States, 32 percent of adults under the age of thirty, and 21 percent between the ages of thirty and forty-nine, are religiously unaffiliated ("'Nones' on the Rise"). These numbers are like those in Canada. In the past few decades, Reginald Bibby has written multiple books about religious, social trends among adolescents. His more recent book, *The Millennial Mosaic*, co-authored by Joel Thiessen and Monetta Bailey, assesses the data compiled from two national surveys of more than 6,000 Canadians. It included over 1,000 emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 29. Since Bibby has been studying youth for decades, this data allowed him to compare his results against four decades of research (4). In Canada, the percentage of "nones" was under one percent in 1960 but blossomed to 20 percent by 2000. Regular worship service attendance also decreased to 20 percent from 50 percent in 1950 (175). However, the decrease is more significant for Millennials, as 3 in 10 indicate they have no religion. As far as the religious "dones" are concerned (those who have stopped participating in religious attendance), only 4 in 10 Millennials indicated they never attend services. In contrast, 3 in 10 do so occasionally, and 3 in 10 attend at least once a month

(179). By comparison, a 2018 Pew Research study revealed that 29 percent of Canadians indicated they are unaffiliated, 55 percent Christian, and 14 percent other. Only 29 percent stated that religion was very important in their life (Lipka).

James Penner et al. confirm the preceding in a 2011 Canadian-based report focused on Millennials and the decline of their religious participation in Christian churches. James Penner and his co-authors affirm what most have suspected that young adults are leaving the church, especially in Catholic and Mainline traditions. They compared the changes in respondent's religious affiliation and attendance, from childhood to teenage years, to young adulthood. Performing a cluster analysis, they divided young adults into four groups, or spiritual types: Engagers (23 percent), Fence Sitters (36 percent), Wanderers (26 percent), and Rejecters (15 percent). "Engagers" include those who still affiliate with a Christian tradition, while "Fence Sitters" still have a Christian religious affiliation but are not identified with a religious organization. "Wanderers" do not have a religious identity and self-describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic, or none. "Rejecters" identify as atheists and tend to feel driven out of their churches (28–29). They identify three common justifications for withdrawal from church participation: "I'm too busy to attend," "I can do faith alone," and "Going to church is pointless and not worth the effort" (40). The study reveals common faith drivers that correlate with higher engagement and suggests strategies for increased young adult participation in faith communities. These are explored in later sections.

In summary, Canadians are generally less religious, more pluralistic, less sectarian, and more tolerant of diversity than Americans. Canadians also have a unique religious heritage, which has led to greater religious tolerance and less activism. Like

Americans, religious affiliation among Canadian Millennials is diminishing, with a

polarizing effect taking place in church participation.

The Five Marks and Millennials

The FMD describe Crosspoint Church's aspirational goals for every maturing

disciple. What does the literature reveal about discipleship within these five

characteristics? This section explores discipleship opportunities and challenges for each

of these categories.

Millennials and Growth

The mark "growth" results in the production of Christ-like character, which is the

fruit of the Spirit. As a disciple surrenders to Christ in glad submission because of the

gospel, the Holy Spirit does his transformative work. A common challenge to growth is

the parasitic problem known as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" (MTD). This problem is

so pervasive that it adversely can affect the development of each of the FMD. The term

was first coined by Christian Smith, the lead researcher for the National Study on Youth

and Religion (NSYR), a longitudinal, multi-wave study that focused on the religious and

spiritual lives of American adolescents. His and Melina Lundquist Denton's book, *Soul

Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers,* is based on the first

wave of his study, from 2001 to 2005. Smith and Denton summarize their observations

by describing the emergence of this new kind of faith (MTD), and codifies it in five

creeds:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life, except when God

      is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die. (ch. 5)

They further describe the three core components of this new faith. First, it has a

moralistic approach to life: "It teaches that central to living a good and happy life is to be

a good, moral person" (ch. 5). Next, it provides therapeutic benefits to its adherents. The

focus is not on repentance, obedience, faithfulness, or rituals: "Rather, what appears to be

the actual dominant religion among U.S. teenagers is centrally about feeling good, happy,

secure, at peace" (ch. 5). Lastly, it embraces a particular kind of God, who created

everything, but who is distantly removed, demands little, and seldom interferes, except

when one needs him. "In this sense, the Deism here is revised from its classical

eighteenth-century version by the therapeutic qualifier, making the distant God

selectively available for taking care of needs" (ch. 5). Smith and Denton observe that

MTD is parasitic – it survives only by attaching itself to other established religious

traditions, including not only Christianity, but Mormonism, Judaism, and other faiths.

Within these faith traditions, MTD becomes nuanced: appropriating, abstracting, and

revising doctrinal statements toward its own ends. MTD presents an enormous challenge

for the task of discipling Millennials, since it radically alters the meaning of the gospel.

      One might wonder if MTD is an isolated phenomenon, limited only to

adolescence, which might be outgrown in adulthood. Christian Smith and Patricia Snell's

next book, *Souls in Transition,* analyzes data from the third wave of the NSYR. This

study focuses on emerging adults ages 18-23. Most notably, Smith and Snell explore

many facets of emerging adult lives: macro-social changes, their cultural world, and

religious and spiritual life. They observe that MTD has not lost traction and "is still alive

and well…Not simply a religion to be embraced during the teenage years, MTD

continues to be the faith of very many emerging adults" (154). They add that what has changed in the conversation about MTD is it has become more diluted, "within a wider range of alternative ways that emerging adults think and talk about and practice religious faith" (155). They surmise that this might be attributed to emerging adults' exposure to real-life experience, which has put MTD to the test. Giving no assurances of the future of MTD, he adds, "But for some, at least, the consistency and coherence of MTD seems to be breaking down into either less or more assurance about faith in general, and into either looser or tighter connections to more traditional religious faiths specifically" (155). Smith's observations seem to indicate that MTD cannot be ignored or discounted as a phase that adult Millennials will "grow out of."

MTD has not produced a hostility to faith, but rather ambivalence and apathy. Kenda Creasy Dean was a member of the research team for the National Study of Youth and Religion. She argues that the solution to the problem of MTD has little to do with "beefing up congregational youth programs or making worship more 'cool' and attractive" (4). It has more to do with the church correcting and living faithfully to its theology. "For most of the twentieth century, we studied the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents in order to answer the question, 'How can we keep young people in church?' Today, our question is more pressing: 'Does the church matter?'" (9). What gives the church its enduring relevance is not more chic programming, or simply hiring a new youth worker, but a faithful return to living out the gospel: "So here is a reckless claim. If churches practice Moralistic Therapeutic Deism in the name of Christianity, then getting teenagers to come to church more often is not the solution (conceivably, it could make things worse). A more faithful church is the solution to Moralistic

Therapeutic Deism" (23). To the degree that the church continues to teach and embody the values of MTD, it loses its relevance.

David Kinnaman also contributes to the discussion as he attempts to summarize why young adult Christians are leaving the church. His findings are based on qualitative research interviews conducted with 18- to 29-year-olds. He points to discipleship as the central problem for the massive evacuation rate: "The drop-out problem is, at its core, a faith-development problem; to use religious language, it's a disciple-making problem. The church is not adequately preparing the next generation to follow Christ faithfully in a rapidly changing culture" (21). He identifies six broad reasons that interviewees shared, which explain their exodus: 1) Overprotective; 2) Shallow; 3) Anti-science; 4) Repressive; 5) Exclusive; and 6) Doubtless. While Kinnaman focuses his attention on the church's inability to make disciples, it is difficult to agree, based on his portrayals, that the finger can be pointed exclusively at the church. Setran and Kiesling explain that the church's response to the emerging generation's criticisms should encompass both humility and challenge:

> The church must attend to emerging adults' critiques, reconsidering the thematic
> and structural issues that alienate and marginalize the younger generation. At the
> same time, mentors must also challenge emerging adults to recognize their need
> for church involvement, looking beyond the self to submit to a local body of
> believers. (94)

Even with the best discipleship efforts, one cannot expect guaranteed positive results, given that people have free wills, and that there are spiritual adversaries – the world, the devil, the flesh – that are in opposition to Christ's kingdom. Nevertheless, the results of

Kinnaman's research can inform a contextualized discipleship strategy.

One might wonder if MTD has crossed the border and infiltrated Canadian religious groups. According to Bibby, Russell, and Rolheiser, results from the 2008 survey are not in support of Smith's findings in Canada. "'Up here,' teens who are involved in religious groups at most lean toward a kind of *Moralistic Therapeutic Theism*, those who are not toward a kind of *Moralistic Therapeutic Atheism*. Those most likely to be into 'MT Deism'? "Occasional attenders" (183). This argument relies heavily on the polarizing effect that is occurring in religious participation among Canadian Millennials. What they may not understand is that Smith's understanding and use of Deism is essentially a nuanced version of Theism, which sees God as selectively available. In this sense, a theistic God becomes functionally deistic, and those heavily involved in religious groups, though purported theists, often function as deists. The data collected from Bibby, Russell, and Rolheiser's study does demonstrate this polarizing effect, but it cannot substantiate whether Canadian Millennials are either actual theists or functional deists. One can presume that, given the cultural influences of post-modernism, individualism, and moralistic relativism, that Canadian Millennials are also affected by MTD.

Several authors posit solutions to the MTD problem. Setran and Kiesling contend that despite the difficulties presented by MTD, "emerging adulthood actually provides exciting opportunities to engage twentysomethings in a journey that will kindle and sustain their adult faith development" (30). They posit that a move beyond MTD is possible for emerging adults and suggest confronting it at each of its three levels: by reshaping their loves (to combat moralism); urging them to costly sacrifice (to combat

therapy); and calling them to a daily life of spiritual engagement with Christ, in which they are transformed by the Holy Spirit (30). Chad Lakies looks to the church as the root of the problem. He suggests that the first step to overcoming MTD is to recover the church's biblical narrative, which means resisting the false image of Christ as the quintessential "nice guy" (25). He then proposes fostering intergenerational relationships within the church as "the only way we can perpetuate a healthy and faithful Christian faith for the future" (26); he further contends for patience in this work as the MTD cultural shift "crept up upon us and it happened over a period of generations" (27). Rainer and Rainer surveyed nearly twelve hundred respondents, born between 1980 and 1991. The study revealed that "Millennial Christians are not content with business-as-usual churches. On the contrary, they will connect with churches only if those churches are willing to sell out for the sake of the gospel" (254). Millennials are seeking to radically reorient their lives to the gospel, which may look like greater missional and incarnational commitment to the community, going deeper in biblical teaching, loving the nations, directing revenue beyond the church, and demonstrating greater transparency, humility, and integrity (258-69).

Powell, Mulder, and Griffin argue that MTD has not gone away and continues to distract young people from Christ (ch. 4). The book is based on a study of churches that are "growing young," which means "they are engaging young people ages 15 to 29; and that they are growing - spiritually, emotionally, missionally and sometimes also numerically" (ch. 1). It focuses on what is working and defines six core commitments of churches that are growing young. They discovered that one of these core commitments is to take the message of Jesus seriously. "When we asked all 535 interview participants

from churches growing young to describe their faith, we found a much more robust

gospel. Among 19- to 23-year-olds in particular (as we will see shortly), the message of

Jesus trumps the MTD gospel" (ch. 4). Powell, Mulder, and Griffin identify three critical

shifts in how emerging adults describe the message of Jesus. First, they talk less about

abstract beliefs and more about Jesus. Second, they are more focused on a redemptive

narrative than on formulas. Finally, they emphasize life here and now more than heaven

later. The study revealed that content was not the only contributing factor. How the

content was conveyed also mattered. In particular, challenging emerging adults played a

critical role in a church's effectiveness in reaching and maturing them. They explain:

> During interviews 40 percent of young people specifically mentioned "challenge"
>
> when they talked about why their church is so effective with their age group.
>
> They appreciate challenging teaching in their church, even when it makes them
>
> feel uncomfortable and invites them to make changes based on Scripture's
>
> teachings. Contrary to popular thinking that young people today want it easy,
>
> many told us they love their church *because* their church inspires them to act. (ch.
>
> 4)

Hiemstra, Dueck, and Blackaby state that MTD may not be the only competing

religious framework for young adults. They explain that many young adults in the study

adhered to a perspective which they call the UGRE (Universal Gnostic Religious Ethic).

Many participants in the study believed in a deeper reality behind all religions. The

UGRE is not a religion but rather an ethic and a posture toward religious difference.

"This ethic is a-theological in that it does not need God or gods. God or gods are

epiphenomenal . . . In this sense, the particulars of religions are mere barriers to

understanding, or worse, they become a source of intolerance when people insist on them" (107). Unlike MTD, the UGRE does not require religion or a higher power. It provides a functional understanding of religion and values them based on their psychosocial functions. "Indeed, as long as the functions are served, then one religion, or no religion, could be substituted for another" (107). This framework appeals to many young adults as if their beliefs "were a new spiritual discovery" and, like Gnosticism, bring a sense that members have been enlightened with a secret knowledge (108). In many ways, UGRE provides an answer to religious differences in a culture of plurality. At the end of the day, "those who insist on the truth of their religion are at best unenlightened and at worst disruptive of social harmony" (109). Like MTD, the UGRE's assumptions about religion cannot go unaddressed. While MTD and the UGRE present competing religious narratives, Millennials will remain and mature as disciples when they participate in a church that is faithful in proclaiming and living out the gospel, in all facets of life.

<div align="center">Millennials and Pursuit</div>

Helping Millennials pursue Christ, both personally and corporately, requires being sensitive to the unique realities of their context. Pursuing spiritual disciplines can be difficult for Millennials, given the amount of distraction in their day-to-day lives. Arnett states that emerging adulthood is a recent North American phenomenon and does not exist in all cultures but occurs primarily in the developing world, where adulthood can be postponed into the mid- to late- 20s (12-13). He presents five characteristics of emerging adulthood that distinguish it from other age periods: (1) the age of identity explorations; (2) the age of instability; (3) the self-focused age; (4) the age of feeling in-

between; and (5) the age of possibilities. The second of these characteristics, the age of instability, holds that emerging adulthood is a period of tremendous change, with new jobs, changing residences, and academic transitions. This constant state of flux works against developing consistent rhythms of prayer, Bible reading, and solitude. "Perhaps the most pervasive, consistent theme in the lives of emerging adults is the fact of their frequent and varied major life transitions. To an extent matched by no other time in the life course, emerging adults enjoy and endure multiple, layered, big, and often unanticipated life transitions" (Smith and Snell 34). Setran and Kiesling add, "The sheer scope of change in emerging adulthood often serves to disrupt the spiritual rhythms and continuity of the high school years" (20). As a church seeks to help Millennials' spiritual habits, it must be sensitive to these mutable realities. This state of flux will likely change for older Millennials, especially for those who complete college, settle into careers, and start families. These responsibilities tend to create more stable life rhythms but come with their own set of challenges and constraints on time.

Churches should be aware that pursuing spiritual disciplines may come easier for some Millennials than others. Penner and his co-authors believe that parental influence plays an important role in reinforcing the practices of spiritual disciplines for Millennials. Regarding the parents who engaged in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, and attending religious services, he categorized them into three clusters: "High," "Medium," and "Low." Millennials with parents in the "High" cluster were five times as likely to attend religious services weekly or more, as those in the "Moderate" or "Low" clusters (77). They were also three times more likely to read their Bibles, at least weekly, and three times more likely to pray daily (78). Churches cannot step back in time and

change what Millennials learned from their families of origin. Still, remembering the impact of parental modeling will help churches understand why some Millennials take to spiritual disciplines more readily than others. This consideration should also reinforce the importance of building these habits in the spiritual lives of Millennials, before they start their own families. This increases the likelihood that Millennials who practice the spiritual disciplines will leave a legacy of spiritual formation for future generations.

One factor that could hinder Millennials from pursuing Christ personally is the strong connection many of them have with their parents. Identity differentiation occurs when adolescents begin to form their own identities, apart from being the children of their parents. This phenomenon is occurring later for Millennials than previous generations (Smith and Snell 77–78). An influence that has contributed to this delayed differentiation is the parenting models of the Boomers, often referred to as "helicopter parents," due to their constant hovering over their children, through every experience of their adult lives (54). Boomers have been more involved in their children's adolescent and adult lives than any previous generation. Eighty-nine percent of Millennials still receive guidance and advice from their parents (55). As it turns out, not only are parents advising, Millennials are also listening. "In fact, it goes beyond listening. The Millennials are seeking. Seventy-seven percent of Millennials agreed that they seek their parent or parents' advice on a regular basis . . . In fact the Millennials are just as responsible for the parents hovering" (58). In addition to giving advice, this involvement could include completing college applications, attending job interviews with their offspring, or even continuing to help them with domestic tasks such as making lunches or doing laundry. This over-parenting has created a safe environment that minimizes failure for Millennials

but has also delayed their ability to develop independence. One of the drawbacks of this over-parenting is that Millennials may not pursue Christ, for themselves and on their own terms. As long as their faith remains the faith of their parents, they may not venture beyond the safety-net of their parental influence. Furthermore, faith is not only grown through the spiritual disciplines, but also through suffering. As Millennials continue to be shielded by their parents, they lose the capacity to form a faith that has been refined through trials and difficulties.

The commotion of life that Millennials experience also disrupts consistent rhythms of corporate worship. As noted previously, Millennials are increasingly dropping out of church participation altogether; there is a growing number who do not identify with any religion. There are reasons for this decrease in participation. First, the negative effect of MTD cannot be overstated. When a religion is deemed irrelevant - or viewed as a resource that is available only as needed - participation becomes optional rather than essential. Second, the value of social connection often trumps the value of religious participation. When religious services do not feel like a place of belonging, Millennials will opt out (Smith and Snell 152). Penner and his co-authors identify four factors that drive positive church participation among Canadian young adults: parents, experiencing God, community, and teaching/ beliefs (42). When parents model a love for church, prayer and Scripture, and demonstrate spiritual transformation, this contributes to their children's faith participation as young adults (43–46). Young adults also want to experience God personally; therefore, answered prayer and personal encounters with God are linked to greater participation (47). Further, young adults are looking for relationship and belonging, and are therefore attracted to a healthy and helpful community that

contributes to their growth in Christ, helps during hardship, leads people through emotional healing, equips them to discover and use their talents, and makes a difference (52). Finally, teaching and beliefs matter: "sermons are less important to young adults than the sense of community in church, but they still have a significant impact on young adults' commitment to church participation" (66). Young adults want teaching that is applicable and challenging, which they will take seriously, and answer the many questions they have about faith and life (66–67). Many want more in-depth, gospel-centered content that probes deeper into theology, which means that tough topics are not taboo. Communicators to this emerging generation face challenges in confronting lifestyle practices, particularly in terms of sexuality, as well as other controversial issues such as gender roles and ultimate truth (69–73).

With these disruptions and distractions, the intimate pursuit of Jesus is an indicator of sticky discipleship for Millennials. Kinnaman and Matlock studied the practices, beliefs, and perspectives of young adults who stayed engaged with church and sustained resilient faith (31). They discovered that the first practice of resilient disciples is a transformational experience of Jesus (40), which they summarized in two key themes: first, they "express a feeling of intimacy with God," and second, they "experience conversational intimacy with Jesus" (43). As Millennials pursue intimacy with Jesus, this anchors them in resilient faith.

<div align="center">Millennials and Community</div>

To say that relationships matter a great deal to Millennials would be an understatement. For Canadian Millennials, "Relationships are supreme, and material comfort and success know a high but secondary level of importance" (Bibby, Thiessen,

and Bailey 19). Churches that want to disciple them effectively cannot underestimate the power of relational connectedness. "The best motivators in the workplace for this generation are relationships. The best connectors in religious institutions are relationships. The best way to get a Millennial involved in a service, activity, or ministry is through relationships. The best way to get political allegiance of this generation is connecting them through relationships" (Rainer and Rainer 105). Kinnaman and Matlock state that Millennials who have a resilient faith most often learn to experience Christ through relational pathways with family, friends, and others (53). Nevertheless, while Millennials value relationships and are the most digitally connected of all the generations, they still struggle to engage in authentic, intentional community. Penner and his co-authors state that there exists "a strange paradox that arises when it comes to young adults and community. The emerging generation is fiercely independent and self-reliant. Yet its members say there is nothing more important to them than friendship" (52). Their high value of individualism tends to work against their high value of relationships. It is further complicated by their inability to define relationships:

> By all accounts, the categories and statuses of different kinds of relationships among emerging adults are more nebulous than in previous generations. Young people relate at diverse levels of intimacy, expectations, and obligations. But what exactly to call different types of relationships and when to know which kind one is in at any given time seems problematic. Old, clear-cut labels, like "just friends," dating, courting, and engaged, for instance, are too black-and-white for the way many emerging adults relate today. (Smith and Snell 58)

In a rapidly changing world, definitions for relationships are amorphous. Millennials may

want relationships, but do not have the language to describe what they want. This lack of clarity, coupled with an intense individualism, works against community development.

While relational ministry programs are helpful for framing community, church culture cannot be ignored. Powell, Mulder, and Griffin identify "warmth" as one of the core commitments of congregations that are growing young (ch.5). Their research demonstrates that authentic community is essential, and "leaders need to stop assuming that programs alone are going to foster close relationships" (ch.5). When college-aged students, ages 19 to 23 who were connected to a church, were asked "why they stay involved, 45 percent pointed to personal relationships (nearly doubling the response rate of adults over age 30), *not programs*" (ch. 5). Interestingly, Powell, Mulder, and Griffin also identified ten qualities of churches not needed to grow young: 1. A precise size; 2. A trendy location or region; 3. An exact age; 4. A popular denomination…or lack of denomination; 5. An off-the-charts cool quotient; 6. A big, modern building; 7. A big budget; 8. A "contemporary" worship service; 9. A watered-down teaching style; and 10. A hyper-entertaining ministry program (ch.1). As Powell, Mulder, and Griffin summarize: "Warm is the new cool" (ch. 5).

Churches must bridge the generation gap if the hope to help Millennials participate in community. Like most, Millennials tend to gravitate to those who are like them – a reality commonly known as the homogenous unit principle. Catering to this gravitational pull leads to two typical results: either new churches emerge, specifically targeting Millennials (which are then filled mostly with Millennials), or Millennials are placed into generational "siloes" within a local church, in ministries or programs

specifically focused on their needs and interests. A generational gap emerges, and Millennials may miss out on a wealth of wisdom, experiences, and robust relationships that older generations can offer.

As it turns out, Millennials gravitate to intergenerational relationships. Penner and his co-authors note that "Many young adults are drawn to churches where they can easily engage in cross-generational relationships" (Penner et al. 57). What is more, young adults desire "the wisdom that comes from the life experiences of the older generation, as well as their seasoned prayers and their meaningful words of encouragement" (58). Kinnaman challenges his readers to view the church as "a partnership of generations, fulfilling God's purposes in their time," rather than an entity that "exists to prepare the next generation to fulfill God's purposes" (203). He claims that the biblical understanding of "a generation" has no segregation among age demographics, which are a modern contrivance. Instead, this broader age demographic sees the church flourishing in intergenerational relationships (202) and sets it apart from other social institutions, enabling it to recapture its sense of historical continuity, by connecting its past to its present (204). Setran and Kiesling argue that for emerging adults, this gap is "one of the most significant factors blunting spiritual formation in these years" (211). As their worldviews are unchallenged and shaped by their peers, and as they are disconnected from wise and experienced role models, they are "left vulnerable to the all-pervasive influence of media, advertising, and consumer culture" (211). They propose mentoring as a means for bridging this gap since emerging adults are in the ideal stage of life for developing their own values and convictions (206). Millennials are more open to developing mentoring relationships with older adults (Rainer and Rainer 91), but they

must be more "dialogical and mutual rather than unidirectional" (Setran and Kiesling 206). Churches that foster warm intergenerational relationships "show higher faith maturity and vibrancy" (Powell, Mulder, and Griffin ch. 5). This factor does not mean that the church should abandon age-specific ministries. Peer-to-peer relationships are fundamental, but so are intergenerational relationships (ch. 5).

Hiemstra, Dueck, and Blackaby also affirm the importance of intergenerational mentors. They explain that differentiation, "the process by which young adults set out identity markers between themselves and their family of origin," is being delayed in young adults (31). Nevertheless, young adults still "need to differentiate themselves from their families of origin" (31). Since other adult markers are unavailable to them, such as marriage, financial independence, children, and completing school, they may instead use religion as a differentiating marker. The result is that they sometimes abandon the religion of their family of origin as a means of expressing differentiation (32). While parent-child religious transmission is possible, especially under the right conditions, it is never a given. As emerging adults seek to negotiate adult roles, mentors within the church community can be a tremendous asset: "then the parents' religion is less apt to be used as a differentiating marker. Moreover, mentors help young adults to understand their giftings and talents and see a path forward toward adulthood" (Hiemstra, Dueck, and Blackabay 54). Mentoring can help emerging adults navigate the difficult challenges of identity formation and differentiation.

<center>Millennials and Service</center>

Engaging in a life of service - sacrificially giving of one's time, energy and resources to the church or others – can be a challenge for Millennials. This statement

could describe any generation, but Millennials are exceptional because they face unique

obstacles. The Pew Research Center reports that while Millennials are better educated

than previous generation cohorts – especially women – the remnants of the Great

Recession have created a challenging job market for them. They are making slightly less

than previous generational cohorts made, but are faced with the challenges of higher

student loan debt and increased housing costs (Bialik and Fry). Not only do they tend to

have fewer resources, but they are also in the beginning stages of learning to manage

their time and money. The top concerns of Canada's Millennials are "the *future*, *lack of*

money, *lack of time*, and the feeling that they *should be getting more out of life*" (Bibby,

Thiessen, and Bailey 44). Smith and Snell's research reveals that emerging adults are not

opposed to materialistic consumerism (66) and that what most want out of life is to live

out the middle-class dream. This vision might include a good education, well-paying job,

marriage, and family, owning a house, financial security, and other perks, including

family vacations (69). Millennials are following the natural path of a consumerist and

materialist culture, which means that sacrificial giving will need to be both taught and

modeled. Helping them to develop the discipline of generosity will require both diligence

and patience.

When it comes to serving in the local church, there are additional obstacles. Most

of the emerging adults in Smith and Snell's research reported they had no "natural or

general responsibility or obligation to help people" (68). They were surprised by this

finding, since much of the public commentary paints the emerging generation as highly

engaged, both civically and politically (ch. 5), and yet their research revealed that

emerging adults tend to be less involved in civic engagement and public investment. This

tendency is mirrored in Canadian Millennials as well (Coletto 4). Two factors contribute

to this disengagement. First, while many of them believe that giving and serving are good

things, they assume they do not have the time or money to contribute. This assumption

has some validity, and yet the problem is more than pragmatic. Smith further argues that

a key issue is that most emerging adults are "individual relativists" at heart, and this

worldview undercuts the value of civic responsibility:

> It is hardly surprising, in light of much of what we have seen, that according to
>
> emerging adults, the absolute authority underwriting every person's beliefs or
>
> actions is simply his or her own sovereign self. Anybody can think or do whatever
>
> he or she wants. Of course, what a person chooses to think or do may have bad
>
> consequences for that person. But *everything is ultimately up to each individual to*
>
> *decide for himself or herself.* The most one should ever do toward influencing
>
> another person is to ask him or her to consider what one thinks. Nobody is bound
>
> to any course of action by virtue of belonging to a group or because of a common
>
> good. (*Lost in Transition* ch. 5)

With this mindset, there is little sense of duty, obligation, or responsibility. It is not

difficult to imagine how this can work against a biblical worldview that esteems self-

sacrifice, generosity, and servanthood.

Even with this tendency toward disengagement, churches have discovered the

importance of having young adults contribute. Penner et al.'s research demonstrates that

when young adults believed their abilities were unacknowledged in church, they seldom

attended. However, when they were given opportunities to lead, they were actively

engaged in church life (87). In short, fewer opportunities meant less engagement.

Interestingly, those raised in evangelical traditions reported a higher likelihood of having leadership opportunities (Penner et al. 87). Setran and Kiesling propose that churches find ways for emerging adults to discover and develop their gifts. Churches can be hesitant to provide these opportunities to emerging adults, "viewing them as too young, too inexperienced, or too transient to make a contribution" (106). Also, churches must create ways for them to work alongside more experienced workers. This "mutual ministry" will help combat "the pervasive language of independence that attends the move into emerging adulthood" (107). Churches that are effectively engaging young adults will unlock what Powell, Mulder, and Griffin refer to as "keychain leadership" (ch. 2). They believe that of the six core commitments essential to a church that is "growing young," this is the most important. Keychain leadership means being willing to give young adults "the keys to the kingdom"; it means entrusting and empowering them to serve and lead. Powell, Mulder, and Griffin elaborate:

> No matter your role, here is what we want you to know: if you are willing to entrust your keys to young people, they will trust you with their hearts, their energy, their creativity, and even their friends. Yes, it can sometimes seem like more work than it's worth—but if you give them your access, you have the opportunity to touch a whole generation. (ch. 2)

When churches are willing to empower Millennials to contribute, serve, lead, and use their spiritual gifts, they will be more engaged and more likely to continue growing as disciples.

<div align="center">Millennials and Mission</div>

The task of engaging Millennials in the mission of the church will be difficult.

One reason is that there seem to be mixed results about whether Millennials are poised to make a difference in the world. Penner et al. assume that young adults "are more likely to stay engaged in the church if they are directly involved in the missional activities of the church" (112). Setran and Kiesling claim that emerging adults both need and want a missional church; therefore, churches should provide opportunities for service beyond typical church programs (108). This is supported by Rainer and Rainer, who report that 3 out of 4 Millennials agree their role in life is to serve others, and 9 out of 10 state it is their responsibility to make a difference in the world (35–36). These results come up against Smith and Snell's findings: "Most emerging adults in America have extremely modest to no expectations for ways society or the world can be changed for the better. Very few are idealistic or activist when it comes to their making a mark on the world" (72). What Millennials believe they should do, and what Millennials believe they can do are two different matters. As noted in the previous section, Millennials are "individual relativists," and this works against any civic or political participation. In addition, Millennials tend to lack optimism and can even be fatalistic at times, which withdraws them from public engagement and submerges them into their own private worlds and personal relationships (73). It seems Millennials do not have a missional impulse that is automatic.

Another potential barrier, keeping Millennials from engaging fully in the mission of God, is religious illiteracy. Emerging adults will accept that different religions have distinct rituals and beliefs, and may even claim to be unique, but fail to recognize that these faith systems have incompatible, or even contradictory beliefs about God and reality. "But ultimately, most emerging adults say, all religions actually share the same

core principles, at least those that are important" (Smith and Snell 145). When

Millennials default to the claim, "All religions are basically the same," they reveal that

they do not understand the exclusive truth claims of Christianity and the other major

world religions. Much of this stems from the rise of religious illiteracy. Stephen Prothero

demonstrates the dearth in religious knowledge among Americans, particularly the

Millennial generation. They lack not only biblical knowledge but knowledge of other

religions (21–38). He provides a paradox: "Americans are both deeply religious and

profoundly ignorant about religion . . . One of the most religious countries on earth is also

a nation of religious illiterates" (1). He argues that a person needs religious literacy in

order to be an effective citizen (8), and that religious illiteracy is more dangerous than the

contrary, "because religion is the most volatile constituent of culture, because religion has

been, in addition to one of the greatest forces for good in world history, one of the

greatest forces for evil" (4). Presumably, Millennials will have difficulty propagating

their faith if they do not understand their faith. Contextualizing the gospel will be

continually troublesome when they fail to understand the distinctives of their own faith,

juxtaposed against other world views that they may come up against. Moreover, to carry

Prothero's argument one step further, this shortage of religious knowledge could hinder

Millennials from contributing toward their own culture's flourishing. The task of

maturing disciples includes "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded"

(Matt. 28:20), which requires having at least a basic understanding of the teachings of

Christ. Hence, one cannot reproduce mature disciples if one is biblically illiterate.

A final factor working against this missional impulse for Millennials is the high

value they place on diversity. They are the most ethnically diverse generation in

American and Canadian history. They have learned to celebrate both difference and diversity. Most emerging adults are social constructionists, who perceive the social world around them as unfixed, malleable, and contingent upon history (Smith and Snell 50). While Millennials excel at getting along with people of different ethnicities, cultures, values, or points of view – more than any generation before them – this impulse to "get along" with everybody can work against the urgency of proclaiming a gospel that demands a universal response. As noted above, the UGRE (Universal Gnostic Religious Ethic) presents very real challenges to evangelism:

> Unity, or social harmony, is the pre-eminent virtue. Religious literalism works against unity. Religion, then, in its particular manifestations is not the goal. Rather, unity or social harmony is the goal behind these religions, a goal that can be achieved if people do not become "fixated" on their religions as providing the right answers. (Hiemstra, Dueck, and Blackaby 116)

Kinnaman adds that young Christians are more reluctant to persuade a peer to become a Christian and that this is "an unfortunate response to the chasm between their beliefs and those of the broader culture, which says that it's offensive or even hateful to argue for a specific religion or truth claim" (177). Gospel proclamation is counter-intuitive for Millennials whose ingrained response to diversity is inclusivity and acceptance.

As it turns out, non-affiliated or de-churched Millennials may be more open to religious participation and dialogue than often believed. Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey challenge the widely held assumption that emerging generations want nothing to do with organized religion. He acknowledges that the statistics demonstrate that the future of religion in Canada looks bleak. Below are the percentage of Millennials who answered

"Yes, I definitely do" or "Yes, I think that God or a higher power exists," to the following belief statements:

66%   God or a higher power exists

53%   God or a higher power cares about them personally

50%   that Jesus was the divine Son of God

44%   they have experienced God's presence

61%   that miraculous healings sometimes occur

As for spiritual practices, 33 percent of Millennials said they practice private prayer, while 18 percent practice Scripture reading (Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey 175–80). Sixty percent of Millennials also admit that they have spiritual needs. "But just when we conclude that large numbers of Millennials don't want much to do with God or religious groups, no less than 42 percent tell us that they *would be open to more involvement with religious groups if I found it worthwhile*. That 42 percent includes no less than 1 in 3 of those who just indicated that they prefer to take a pass on *God or congregation*" (193). While Millennials seem to be all over the map in terms of religious beliefs and practices, Bibby, Thiessen, and Bailey are optimistic about the resilience of religion (195). Richardson affirms this and presses for a more optimistic view of the church's future as opposed to what he describes as the more prevalent narrative of failure and decline. He exposes four dominant and misleading myths that reinforce this narrative and recommends building a new narrative that will envision the church "reaching new people, developing reproducers who advocate for faith and invite others into congregations, and the influencing communities for good . . . " (49). Richardson is more hopeful about reaching the unchurched: "In approaching many conversations with Millennials, nones,

and nominals, I have become convinced that if we change our approach, we will find people generally receptive to our spiritual influence. Of course, they also expect our openness to their ideas and insights as well" (95).

Growing disciples want to participate in God's mission. One of the noticeable shifts in young people who are part of churches that are growing young is they are more concerned about the here and now, rather than heaven later. "Young people don't just want to be saved from something later; they want to be saved for something now. They want to get to work. They want to be significant. They want lives filled with action, not just restriction" (Powell, Mulder, and Griffin. ch. 4). Interestingly, an active faith often ignores sharing one's faith: "evangelism and its derivatives were hardly mentioned by young people in our study. Talking about faith with non-Christians was the least common practice among a list of variables related to faith maturity" (ch. 4). As a result, the emerging evangelism model has become less confrontational; rather than trying to convert someone, evangelism has become more about seeking understanding and honest faith dialogue (ch. 4).

Conversely, Kinnaman and Matlock observe that engaging in God's countercultural mission is an essential practice for resilient disciples who are emerging adults (177). It means "living as a faithful presence by trusting God's power and living differently from cultural norms" (178). More specifically, it looks like living with a sense of mission: 90 percent want others to see Jesus reflected in their words and actions, and 76 percent believe they have a personal responsibility to tell others about their religious beliefs (180–81). While the results of these two studies seem contradictory, the differences must be considered. The results of the first study were with 15- to 29-year-

olds from vibrant churches that were "growing young" (Powell, Mulder, and Griffin ch.

1). The latter results came from interviews of 18- to 29-year-olds, who grew up as

Christians, but were resilient disciples (Kinnaman and Matlock 222). The faith criteria

were different for the participants in each study. Those in the first study may or may not

have been resilient disciples; they were simply from churches that met the criteria of

growing young. God's mission is important to emerging adults, and for those who are

resilient disciples, this includes living counterculturally and sharing the gospel.

Research Design Literature

The purpose of this research project was to identify best practices for developing

a discipleship strategy for Millennials through Crosspoint Church. This study was pre-

interventive and was grounded in qualitative research. It was determined that this kind of

research would produce the best results for ascertaining the depth and quality of data

needed to answer the research questions. "Qualitative research produces culturally

specific and contextually rich data critical for the design, evaluation, and ongoing health

of institutions like churches" (Sensing ch. 3). The research used methodological

triangulation to capture various perspectives on the spiritual formation of Millennials. It

combined the perspectives of outsiders (ministry leaders), insiders (Crosspoint

Millennials), and the researcher (curated literature review). This mixed-methods

approach tested for consistency in the findings but also illuminated new perspectives.

Wherever inconsistencies emerged, they did not call into question the credibility of the

results. Instead, they offered "opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship

between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study" (Patton 248). The project

utilized two qualitative research instruments: semi-structured interviews and focus

groups, as well as one small, quantitative research instrument that was part of a demographic survey.

Semi-structured interviews provided the outsider lens of the subject matter. Tim Sensing explains the value of interviews:

Interviews allow people to describe their situations and put words to their interior lives, personal feelings, opinions, and experiences that otherwise are not available to the researcher by observation. A researcher might arrive at certain conclusions through observation that will be confirmed, modified, or even corrected through interviews. Interviews not only provide a record of interviewees' particular views and perspectives, but also recognize the legitimacy of their views. (ch. 4)

The semi-structured interviews allowed for both structure and flexibility. As Bruce L. Berg explains, "these questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress . . . " (95). This approach enabled the researcher to probe for more information as needed. "A purposeful sample can provide information-rich cases which allow for greater depth in study" (Patton 230). This macro-lens provided the big picture of what effective churches were learning about discipling Millennials.

The insider lens gathered information from focus groups with Millennials from Crosspoint Church. Michael Quinn Patton defines a focus group as "an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Groups are typically 6 to 10 people with similar backgrounds who participate in the interview for one to two hours" (385). Focus groups are effective as "either a standalone data-gathering strategy or as a line of action in a triangulated project" (Berg 144). They generate synergy, which can "often provide richer

data than if each person in the group had been interviewed separately" (Sensing ch. 4).

The focus groups captured insider information about discipleship practices from the local

context.

Summary of Literature

This chapter blended two central themes: discipleship and Millennials. It began

with the end in mind by framing a biblical definition of a disciple. From there, it surveyed

the theological characteristics of a disciple by unpacking Crosspoint's *Five Marks of a*

Disciple (FMD). Next, it investigated the topic of discipleship, with an emphasis on both

historical developments and contemporary discipleship strategies. Having laid this

foundation, it then provided a basic understanding of Millennials, which included

exploring some of the distinctives of Millennials in a Canadian context. Finally, it

examined potential challenges and opportunities for discipling Millennials for each of the

FMD.

Perhaps the most essential principle for the formation of disciples is that every

believer is a disciple, and every disciple is a believer. From a biblical and theological

vantage point, Wilkins' *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship*, as

well as his article "Disciples and Discipleship" from the *Dictionary of Jesus and the*

Gospels, proved to be most helpful in understanding this principle. Emerging from

Wilkins' original doctoral work and later scholarship, the book is a comprehensive and

exhaustive scholarly treatment of the subject matter. This extraordinary biblical theology

of discipleship is cited and quoted by many others in the literature. His contribution to the

dictionary is additionally helpful, providing more excellent illumination on some subjects

or more succinct summaries of others. Wilkins points out, convincingly, that there is no

"two-tier" system within the church, separating believers from disciples. Instead, every believer is a disciple, and every disciple is a believer. Honest treatment of the biblical data leads to this conclusion. "One of the most significant features for us to recognize is that the word disciples is used in the book of Acts to describe the post-Easter believers intimately associated together as the new community of faith, the church" (*Following the Master* 242). This principle was congruent with most of the other discipleship literature.

What also became apparent was the importance of having a working definition of a disciple as a starting point toward making disciples. It was self-evident in much of the discipleship literature because each book attempted to have a working definition right from the beginning. This working definition was essential for formulating a discipleship strategy (Malphurs ch. 7). Crosspoint's working definition, the *Five Marks of a Disciple*, therefore became crucial to this study. Any discipleship strategy for Crosspoint should be congruent with these five marks.

The distinction between Millennials and emerging adults cannot be overlooked. The former describes a specific age cohort (born between 1980 and 2000 for this study) while the latter describes a life stage. Many of the early studies on Millennials occurred while they were still emerging adults. A difficulty emerges as to whether their attitudes and behaviors are the results of their life stage, age cohort, or a combination of both. This project assesses Millennials as a whole age cohort. Some of these are categorized as emerging adults, while others will have differentiated from their parents and taken on adult roles and responsibilities. This broader range of ages hopefully brings this project closer toward discipleship best practices for Millennials of all ages.

Finally, some resources are more valuable to this study of Millennial spiritual formation than others. There are numerous studies focused on why Millennials (or young adults) have left or are leaving the church. Only recently, more studies have concentrated on why Millennials are staying in the church, growing as disciples, or remaining resilient. These resources are worth noting here as they will be invaluable in the final analysis in Chapter 5. They include *Growing Young* (Powell, Mulder, and Griffin), *Renegotiating Faith* (Hiemstra, Dueck, and Blackaby), and *Faith for Exiles* (Kinnaman and Matlock).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter explains the qualitative, pre-interventive, research methodology for the project. It begins by restating the nature and purpose of the project, and continues by exploring the three research questions, linking them to the specific instruments that will be used for each question. Next, it explores the ministry context in more detail, providing a relevant picture of the setting and identifying conditions that will impact the study. It is followed by a description of the participants in the study, including criteria about how these were selected. The instrumentation for the project is then spelled out explicitly, which includes an explanation of how the expert review was conducted. It further provides a rationale for both validity and reliability. The next section describes the process of data collection, outlining the methodology, and describing the protocols involved. The chapter ends with data analysis, explaining the kinds of analyses that were used, in keeping with the instrumentation for the project.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

Since there is less exploration into current discipleship strategies for Millennials in a Canadian context, there is a demonstrable gap in the research. Moreover, every ministry context is unique, and there is, therefore, a need for a localized understanding of effective and ineffective discipleship practices within Crosspoint. The purpose of this project was to identify best practices for developing a discipleship strategy for Millennials through Crosspoint Church.

Research Questions

RQ #1. What are churches doing to disciple Millennials?

The purpose of this question was to capture what other churches had discovered about discipling Millennials both generally and in keeping with Crosspoint's *Five Marks of a Disciple* (FMD). This question was answered by conducting semi-structured interviews with ministry leaders (MLs) whose church ministries had a reputation for reaching Millennials and had at least fifty Millennials in regular worship attendance. An interview protocol, the *Ministry Leader Survey* (MLS), guided the structure of the interviews (Appendix B). This protocol included a researcher-designed list of eleven questions devised to discover what the respective ministries were doing to disciple Millennials. Question 1 set the stage for the interview, while Questions 2-3 helped frame the ministry context's understanding and strategy, and Question 4 looked at positive factors influencing spiritual maturation. Questions 5-9 focused on factors specific to the FMD. Question 10 examined discipleship challenges, and Question 11 was an open-ended invitation to explore undiscussed matters.

RQ #2. How is Crosspoint Church helping and hindering Millennials to grow as disciples?

The purpose of this question was to gain a localized perspective on the discipleship experiences and practices of Crosspoint Millennials. Focus group interviews were used to discover how Crosspoint may have contributed toward the spiritual formation of the participants. Four separate focus groups met for one meeting each. Each group consisted of a diverse selection of 6-8 Millennials from Crosspoint Church. Each meeting was conducted by a moderator, who guided the proceedings in keeping with the

Focus Group Protocol (FGP), which can be found in Appendix E. An assistant moderator was also present during each of the meetings, to take notes and capture a more comprehensive description of the event. Question 1 created an environment of ease. Question 2 brought clarity to the subject matter. Questions 3-5 examined personal factors of discipleship, while Questions 6-7 examined organizational factors of discipleship. Question 8 helped reinforce some of the matters discussed. Participants in the focus groups were also given a *Demographic Survey* (DS) to complete before participating in the Focus Group.

RQ #3. What are the best practices for making disciples of Millennials?

This final question was resolved by consolidating and comparing the responses and emergent themes resulting from the first two research questions.

Ministry Context(s)

The project combines key learnings from churches that are discipling Millennials, with further discoveries from Millennials who are adherents of Crosspoint Church. Since its inception in 2010, Crosspoint has attracted people from diverse backgrounds. While it has a diversity of ages, a large percentage of those who call Crosspoint home are Millennials. Most of these Millennials joined the church in their adult years for various reasons. Some came from other churches, some relocated to northeast Edmonton, and still, others came to faith in Christ through the church community.

Over the years, Crosspoint has used different methods and ministries for discipleship, some intentional and others accidental. These have included small groups, training workshops, courses, as well as more intensive discipleship groups. An overall cohesive discipleship strategy has been missing, that is informed by what is working in

other ministry contexts, as well as in the lives of Crosspointers. Crosspoint has developed a definition of a disciple, called the *Five Marks of a Disciple* (FMD) which are made explicit in its membership manual as well as other literature.

Crosspoint is an organized church of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Canada (C&MA) denomination. It is evangelical and theologically conservative. Over three-hundred people worship weekly with Crosspoint at its northeast campus in Edmonton, Alberta.

At its inception in 2010, Crosspoint was a portable church that met in a rented facility. When a local church in northeast Edmonton closed its doors in April 2018, the C&MA gave the property to Crosspoint Church. The property includes a worship auditorium that seats over three-hundred people, children's space for ninety children, a gymnasium, offices, as well as classroom space. It also came with almost four acres of undeveloped land adjacent to the building. This new building has created opportunities for discipleship since Crosspoint no longer must find rented facilities to host events. It has also presented new challenges as Crosspoint seeks to maintain its missional, externally focused, incarnational identity.

Participants

Two separate groups of participants were selected for each of the protocols. "Population 1" included those who would be interviewed using the MLS protocol, and "Population 2" included participants who would be surveyed in focus groups, in keeping with the FGP, and who would complete the DS.

POPULATION 1

Criteria for Selection

The participants for the semi-structured interviews were selected based on a criterion sampling framework. It involved MLs whose church ministries have a reputation for reaching Millennials and have at least fifty Millennials in regular worship attendance. The researcher was aware of multiple ministries that met the criteria through participation in conferences, networks, denominational meetings, books, articles, and podcasts. Recommendations from other trusted church leaders were also taken into consideration. From this pool of potential candidates, participants were personally invited to take part in the study by the researcher via email or phone.

Description of Participants

Twelve participants were chosen for the semi-structured interviews. The participants included MLs from a variety of genders, ages, ethnicities, levels of education, and years of ministry experience. These included senior pastors in churches, as well as assistant pastors. Participants were selected from Canada and the United States, and from different geographical regions in each country, to provide some variation in the sampling. The goal of this increased variation was to provide a broader range of perspectives, which would make the project more accessible. This purposive sample would provide relevant information to the study, since the participants' ministries shared the same demographic, and because they demonstrated practical expertise in discipling Millennials. While no rules exist for sample size (Patton 244), the number of participants provided a large enough sample for acquiring rich data but was not so large as to cause over-saturation of information (Sensing ch. 4).

Ethical Considerations

Potential participants were made aware of the purpose of the study through an *Invitation and Consent Letter* (Appendix A). It was emailed to each participant, which they then signed and submitted either electronically or as a hardcopy, prior to the interview. The participation of the interviewees was voluntary, and they could choose not to answer any of the questions without needing to provide a rationale.

The privacy of the participants was protected, and their participation remained confidential. The researcher made every effort to protect their identity and the identity of their ministries. No references were made to individuals or ministries within the study, and all references to individuals were made using pseudonyms. None of the raw data was disseminated or shared.

The data for these interviews were stored electronically, on a password-protected computer that could only be accessed by the researcher. All recorded audio files were saved to the researcher's computer and then immediately deleted from the recording device. Any hardcopy data was stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office, and only the researcher had a key to the cabinet. In order to transcribe the interviews into a document format, the transcription services of a professional, third-party institution, with strict confidentiality protocols was enlisted. Six to twelve months after the conclusion of the project, all hardcopy data was shredded, and electronic data was deleted.

<div align="center">POPULATION 2</div>

Criteria for Selection

The participants for this population included adherents of Crosspoint Church who met the age qualifications for Millennials and had confessed Christ as Lord. The

researcher identified a pool of potential candidates from Crosspoint's member database as well as from personal contacts within the church. This sample population was selected purposively, not randomly, to ensure a maximum variation of participants, and provide a broader range of perspectives. Participants were asked to take part in the study in-person, over the phone, or by email. The study used four separate focus groups of 6-8 participants to increase this variation in perspectives.

Description of Participants

The participants included both male and female Millennials, born between the years 1980 to 2000. Since a homogenous group would not be ideal, each group included a variety of life stages (e.g., single, married, parents, et al.), as well as employment statuses and education levels. Because Crosspoint is a mid-sized church, some of the participants were either acquaintances or friends of the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

Before contributing to the focus group, participants were required to complete a *Focus Group Consent and Confidentiality* form (Appendix C) as well as a *Demographic Survey* (Appendix D). The consent form indicated that their participation in the study was of their own free volition and that participants were required to respect the privacy and anonymity of other members, asking them not to reveal their identities or reference any comments they made. Both forms were emailed to each participant prior to the focus group, which they signed and submitted, either electronically or as a hardcopy.

The privacy of the focus groups was protected, and every effort was taken to protect their identity. Any references made by individuals in the final study were referenced using pseudonyms. None of the raw data was disseminated or shared.

The data for these interviews were stored electronically, on a password-protected computer that could only be accessed by the researcher. All recorded audio files were saved to the researcher's computer and then immediately deleted from the recording device. Any hardcopy data was stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office, and only the researcher had a key to the cabinet. In order to transcribe the interviews into a document format, the transcription services of a professional, third-party institution, with strict confidentiality protocols was enlisted. All hardcopy data was shredded 6-12 months after the conclusion of the project, and electronic data was deleted.

Instrumentation

Two qualitative instruments were used in the project, and both were designed by the researcher. These included the *Ministry Leaders Survey* (MLS), and the *Focus Group Protocol* (FGP). In addition, a *Demographic Survey* (DS) was used with the focus group participants.

The MLS was a semi-structured interview instrument that contained eleven predetermined questions. The questions served as a guide, and the interviewer could probe for more information. The interviews with MLs were conducted either in-person or over the phone. The researcher sought to discover how ministries were discipling Millennials regarding rhythms, practices, programs, and approaches. Question 1 was a grand-tour question which provided an understanding of the ministry context. Questions 2-3 helped frame the ministry's definition of a disciple and how its strategy corresponded with this understanding. Question 4 considered general factors that were positively influencing the spiritual maturation of Millennials, both inside and outside of the ministry context. Questions 5-9 addressed specific ways that churches were contributing to the

development of each FMD with their Millennials. Question 10 allowed for discussion

about challenges faced in discipleship; Question 11 was an open-ended opportunity for

the interviewee to discuss anything that may not have been addressed.

The FGP was a focus group protocol that contained eight predetermined

questions. The researcher moderated the meetings using the FGP and was helped by an

assistant moderator who took notes and ensured that the recording device was working.

The goal was to discover what factors influenced how Millennials within Crosspoint

Church were being formed as disciples, both personally and organizationally. Question 1

was used to familiarize the participants with each other and to create a sense of trust and

ease. Question 2 helped bring cohesion to the participants' definition of a disciple and

helped generate thinking around the subject matter. Question 3-5 examined personal

factors influencing discipleship. Questions 6-7 surveyed organizational factors that were

influencing discipleship. Question 8 provided an opportunity for participants to reinforce

what they deemed to be the most critical elements of the interview.

The DS provided additional information by examining the backgrounds and

discipleship values of participants in the focus group interviews. Questions 1-6 were used

to discover personal demographic information. Question 7 examined the length of time

that the participant had been part of Crosspoint Church while Question 8 asked how long

they had been a follower of Christ. Questions 9-14 asked questions specific to the FMD.

Question 9 looked at baptism, while Questions 10-11 focused on service and community,

respectively. Questions 12-14 used a LIKERT scale to focus on spiritual disciplines

(Question 12), evangelism (Question 13), and the personal importance of discipleship

(Question 14).

Once both the semi-structured interviews and focus groups concluded, the

recordings were transcribed using a third-party agency. The written results were studied

to identify commonalities (themes, phrases, words, ideas, practices, etc.), which produced

summary findings. These findings were then synthesized with discoveries from the

literature review in the final analysis.

Expert Review

Once each instrument was designed by the researcher, it was submitted for expert

review. This additional step was crucial for ensuring the reliability of each instrument.

The MLS, FGP, and DS were submitted to three experts who either had doctoral-level

education or were experienced practitioners in discipleship. Each expert received a letter

that contained an overview of the study, the research questions, an abstract, the

instruments, and a protocol that allowed them to provide feedback for the improvement

of each instrument. The reviewers provided feedback that was gathered and consolidated.

All the necessary changes were made to each instrument.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

The use of standardized and carefully worded questions in both the MLS and FGP

helped ensure consistency of results. Standardized questions compensate for

inexperienced and non-researcher interviewers and make data analysis easier (Patton

346). The instruments used were submitted for expert review and then modified before

the research was conducted. This thoughtful approach to development reinforced the

validity of each instrument.

The first research question investigated the behaviors and practices of churches

that were discipling Millennials. This macroscopic view leveraged semi-structured

interviews that were conducted with MLs, who were experienced practitioners and

understood their own ministry contexts. The data-gathering format made it possible to

gather a variety of perspectives from different geographical regions, which allowed for

maximum variation in the sample. Using the researcher-designed MLS as a protocol

increased consistency in the findings.

The second research question was answered by interviewing Millennials from the

Crosspoint community via focus groups. This microscopic lens provided rich information

from the local ministry context. The focus groups brought together multiple perspectives

from a diverse group of Millennials, which increased data variation. Clear instructions

and guidelines were provided for each focus group, which helped ensure the consistency

of data collection. The DS narrowed the lens even further with a look at individual

discipleship values and practices.

Data Collection

This pre-interventive study was grounded in qualitative research and used

methodological triangulation to capture perspectives on the spiritual formation of

Millennials. The perspectives of outsiders (ministry leaders), insiders (Crosspoint

Millennials), and the researcher (literature review) were combined to obtain the final

results. The project utilized two qualitative research instruments, semi-structured

interviews, and focus groups, as well as one quantitative research instrument, a

demographic survey.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to answer the first research

question. To set up the interviews, the researcher created a pool of possible ML

candidates and then prioritized the pool into a short-list of twelve potential participants. A

back-up list was also generated. He then contacted the short-list of participants by phone or email to discover if they met the criteria and would be interested in participating in the study. If interested, they were sent an invitation and consent form (Appendix A), and a date was set for the interview. If the potential participant was not willing to participate, another candidate was selected from the back-up list. Ultimately, twelve candidates were interviewed.

The interviews were conducted either in-person or by telephone using the MLS protocol (Appendix B). Face-to-face interviews took place in a private room that was free from distraction. For telephone interviews, the researcher made every effort to ensure that both he and the participant were in locations where they would be free from distraction. While telephone interviews lack non-verbal cues, which aid the interviewing process, they were necessary in order to reach the geographically diverse sample population (Berg 108). No interview was conducted without a signed consent form. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The interview was audio-recorded, and the researcher also took notes. The interview was then transcribed using a third-party agency. The results were manually examined, and common themes were identified.

The focus group interviews constituted the second instrument used by the researcher. Four focus groups were hosted, each with a total of 6-8 participants, which meant a total of 24-32 participants. A pool of potential participants who met the criteria for the study was first created. A back-up list was also created. This pool of potential participants was contacted in-person, by telephone, or by email to inquire if they would be interested in participating in the study. If they were interested, they were sent electronic copies of the demographic survey and consent and confidentiality form. They

were then scheduled for a focus group. If they were not willing to participate, another potential participant was selected from the back-up list. The participants were scheduled into groups in a way that would ensure a diverse population of participants. This practice avoided "group think" and maximize the variation in the sample – resulting in information-rich data.

The researcher acted as the moderator and led each focus group using the FGP. Demographic surveys and consent forms were required for all participants. Each group met on a separate date and time, in a private room on the Crosspoint Church campus. The room was set up to maximize group interaction. Participants sat in a semi-circle, and the moderator stood at the front of the room. The assistant moderator sat at the side of the room to avoid distraction but to still be able to identify non-verbal cues from the participants. Participants were provided with snacks and refreshments to ensure that they were not hungry. They were given instructions regarding mobile devices in order to minimize distractions.

The interview was audio-recorded, and the assistant moderator also took notes. After each focus group, the moderator and assistant moderator met to discuss the results of the interview. The audio recording was then transcribed using a third-party agency. The results were manually examined, and as with the semi-structured interviews, common themes were identified. The results of the DS were also manually examined, identifying correlations with each specific focus group, as well as overall common themes from all participants in the study.

An accurate and expansive literature review facilitated the final synthesis of the data. Since part of the MLS, the DS, as well as the literature review, were framed around the FMD, this helped with the consolidation and correlation of the gathered information.

Data Analysis

The researcher studied the written transcripts of the semi-structured interviews to identify common themes. The researcher was attentive to the literal meaning, but also the implied meaning of the participants. These data points were tracked and coded into a classification system (CSSI) that identified common themes related to the discipleship of Millennials.

The focus group transcripts were examined through the same methodology as the semi-structured interviews. The data points were tracked using the same coding, and additional categories were added. A second classification system (CSFG) was generated that captured common themes related to the discipleship of Millennials.

The two classification systems were then compared and contrasted for convergence and divergence. The data collected from the DS helped inform this process. What emerged was a consolidated list of best practices. This list of best practices was then synthesized with the results from the literature review in the final analysis.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Crosspoint Church consists of a large population of Millennials. Since its mission is to help people become fully devoted followers of Jesus, it is necessary to consider how best to disciple this age cohort. The purpose of this research is to identify best practices for developing a discipleship strategy for Millennials through Crosspoint Church.

This chapter begins with the profiles of those who participated in the study, subdivided into two population groups. The demographic makeup of the second group of participants is included in this section. The chapter then presents the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interviews. It concludes by providing a major list of findings from the research.

Participants

The study focused on two separate populations of participants, one for each of the protocols. "Population 1" included those who participated in semi-structured interviews, using the MLS protocol. "Population 2" included those surveyed in focus groups, using the FGP. These latter participants also completed a demographic survey (DS).

Twelve participants (Population1) contributed through semi-structured interviews. These were MLs who served in churches ranging in size from one-hundred-and-fifty to over three-thousand attendees for worship attendance. Nine churches were Canadian, and three American, and each was in a large city or metropolitan area. The Canadian churches geographically represented both eastern and western Canada. The American cities represented different geographical and cultural regions. All the MLs in the study were

male, demonstrated practical expertise in discipling Millennials, and gave oversight to ministries contributing to the spiritual formation of Millennials. The selection criteria for participants required that church leaders must be leading ministries that have at least fifty Millennials in regular worship attendance. Each of the churches in the study surpassed this baseline metric. Two of the participants led millennial-focused ministries that were within a much larger church, while one of the participants led a significant campus ministry spanning several university campuses.

Population 2 included thirty participants who were adherents of Crosspoint Church, met the age qualifications for Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000), and confessed Christ as Lord. Each of the participants was required to complete a demographic survey (DG) prior to participating in the focus group. These surveys were sent out to the participants in advance. Those who were not able to return the survey electronically arrived thirty minutes prior to the group meeting, and completed a hard copy of the survey. The demographics of these participants are represented in Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

Figure 4.1. Focus Group Demographics - Part 1
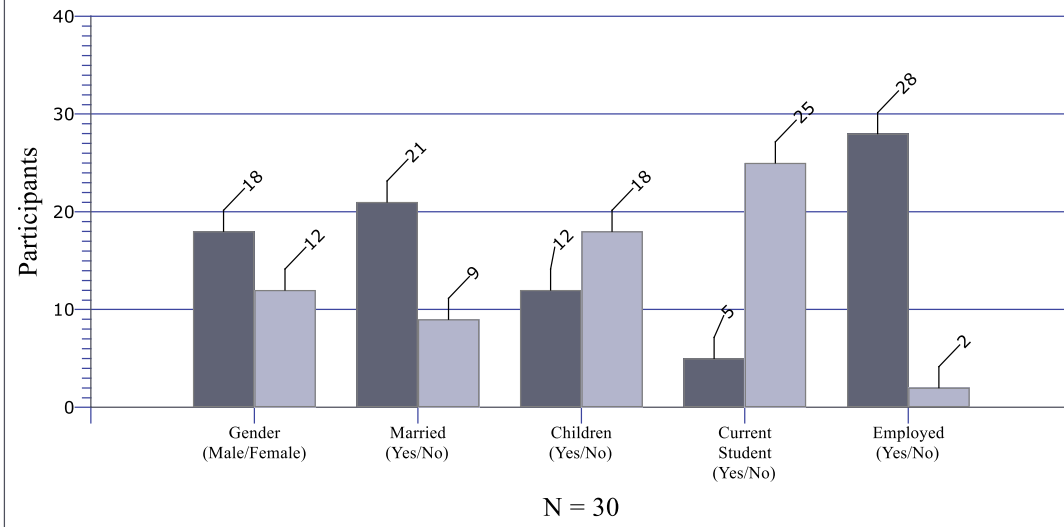
Figure 4.1. Focus Group Demographics - Part 1. Vertical axis: Participants (0 to 40). Categories: Gender (Male/Female) 18, 12; Married (Yes/No) 21, 9; Children (Yes/No) 12, 18; Current Student (Yes/No) 5, 25; Employed (Yes/No) 28, 2. N = 30

Figure 4.2. Focus Group Demographics - Part 2

Figure 4.2. Focus Group Demographics - Part 2. Vertical axis: Participants (0 to 30). Age: A: 19 to 25 = 8, B: 26 to 29 = 6, C: 30 to 39 = 16. Years Attending: A: < 2 = 12, B: 2 to 5 = 11, C: 6 to 10 = 9. Years Following Christ: A: 1 to 5 = 2, B: 6 to 10 = 4, C: > 10 Years = 24. N = 30
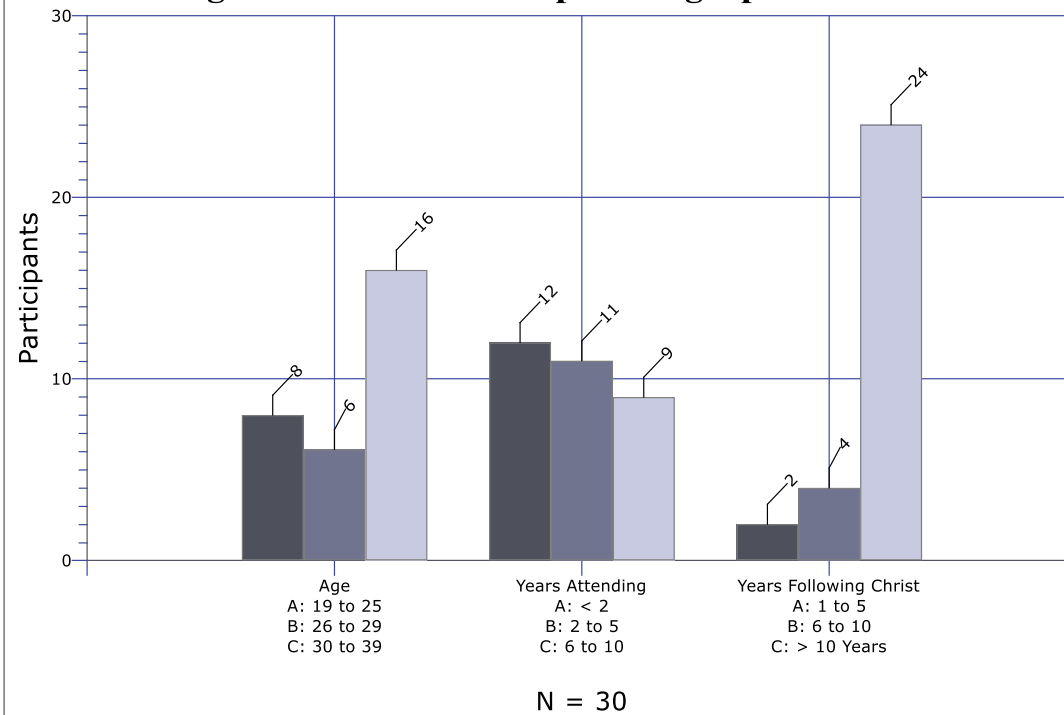
Research Question #1

What are churches doing to disciple Millennials?

Population 1 participated in semi-structured interviews using the MLS protocol as

a guide. This protocol contained eleven predetermined questions. The goal was to

discover how their ministries were discipling Millennials, with an emphasis on rhythms,

practices, programs, and approaches. Question 1 was a grand-tour question that framed

an understanding of the ministry context. Questions 2-3 provided insight regarding the

ministry's definition of a disciple and overall discipleship strategy. Question 4 explored

factors that could positively influence the spiritual maturation of Millennials, both inside

and outside the ministry. Questions 5-9 addressed specific ways that churches contributed

to each of the FMD. Question 10 explored challenges to discipleship. Question 11

provided an open-ended opportunity to examine relevant topics that had not been

discussed. The following recurring themes emerged from these interviews.

Theme SI1: A challenging discipleship culture. Eight of the twelve MLs were

able to express an explicit, clear definition of a disciple that was being used by their

ministry. The other MLs, though their ministries did not have a definitive definition, still

articulated a working definition. Many of the definitions included the ideas of growth into

Christlikeness, submission to Jesus, obeying Jesus, sanctification, becoming like Jesus,

loving God, and the surrender of "time, treasure, and talents." Some definitions were

elaborate and broken down into three, four, five, and eight subpoints. Two of the

definitions focused on the overarching theme of making disciples who make disciples –

the reproducing mandate. Two of the respondents reported that their church provided

congregants with annual assessment tools so that they could measure their spiritual

growth trajectory based on their church's definition of a disciple. It was clear from every interviewee that discipleship was not an optional or two-tier reality in the life of a believer; rather, discipleship or spiritual formation should be the principal focus of every believer.

The primacy of discipleship became more apparent when MLs were asked if their ministry had developed a discipleship pathway. Only three of the respondents reported that they had an intentional, explicit discipleship pathway. Yet, the remainder of the respondents reported that they were "tweaking," "adjusting," or "developing" different parts of their pathway. Interviewee I12 remarked how his church hired a consultant to help develop their pathway. Since every represented church had or was developing a discipleship pathway, this demonstrated that discipleship was a primary function of each church.

Central to this theme of discipleship was the call to surrender, often expressed through repentance and faith. Each of the MLs stated that they frequently called people to faith and repentance during their public worship services. I3 said: "It's a large component of our preaching and our teaching, communication across every level," while I6 stated, "We use our teaching time to aim towards repentance, meaning you're going to do something right now." I9 added: "We spend a disproportionate amount of energy calling people to be formed by Scripture . . . The goal is to open the word and try to lead the group towards a place of repentance and confession." The ways that they called for a response were varied and sometimes included praying where they were seated, coming forward for prayer, filling in a connecting card, or taking a critical next step. "In my preaching I'll often ask the question. God doesn't necessarily always change all of your

life. He's just asking one more piece of your life. And so, what is God's next for you?"

(I10). For each of the respondents, this call to surrender extended beyond public worship

and was an integral part of their other ministries, especially their small groups. The

recurrence of this call to surrender demonstrates the primacy of discipleship.

Ten of the MLs described their churches as having cultures of high challenge or

accountability. This finding is crucial since several of the respondents indicated that one

of the challenges of working with Millennials is their inability to make or keep

commitments. "I think commitment is a huge issue in all areas of their lives, and it

certainly presents a challenge to the church" (I2). Most agreed that the solution did not

mean pandering to their weakness; instead, it meant having high standards of

accountability. I8's comments reflected this:

> Now, when I say community of belonging, acceptance, what can come to mind,
>
> especially how the culture we frame that is that, whatever you are, whatever you
>
> want to do, we're okay with that. But that's not what they're looking for. What is
>
> interesting is that Millennials really want someone to hold them to a higher
>
> standard, and to kind of live that standard out for them . . .

I4 explained that helping Millennials keep their commitments was an integral part of

discipleship: "Man, they're so indecisive, noncommittal. They are flakey, and they back

out on things. I would say that would be a big one that you've just got to shepherd. 'Make

a commitment, keep it, show up on time.' It's reparenting." I9 reported that "every person

that's a part of our church is expected to be engaged in service, evangelism, disciple-

making to their peers, and they're held accountable to it." I7 stated that he was willing to

hold Millennials accountable even if that meant them leaving their church:

We always kind of take the approach if you're a Christian, and you've been here

for three or four weeks and you're not serving, and giving, and being part of

church life, what are you doing here? Go. Go to another church, because you're

just weighing it down. You're being a non-contributing zero. You need to actually

step up and do stuff. I find that is what's going to disciple them often more than

anything else.

Interestingly, challenge or accountability was not a hindrance to spiritual formation or

church growth. Respondents who were leading larger ministries or churches maintained

that they had high-challenge cultures.

Theme SI2: A culture of empowerment. Every ML understood that

empowering Millennials to serve others was an integral part of their discipleship strategy

– it was never viewed as an add-on feature. I5 made this explicit: "Volunteer teams is

probably the biggest way that we encourage people to get into a discipleship pathway –

it's by joining one of our teams." Similarly, I1 stated: "We do believe that it is our job to

create opportunities for them to serve and use their giftings. So, the more ministry that we

can give away, the better. We try to, as much as we can, give and create opportunities for

them to engage." It was clear from each of the MLs that service was an essential part of

spiritual formation.

For some, empowering Millennials to serve included helping them discover and

use their spiritual gifts. I1 remarked, "We believe in gifts-based ministry. So, when it

comes to share the work, your fits come into play where we feel you would fit best in

volunteering." Several of the interviewees stated that their church taught about spiritual

gifts through a weekend teaching series, courses, or small group curriculum. Some also provided workbooks or online assessment tools.

Several of the MLs explained how a sense of purposelessness is a growing problem among Millennials. They articulated how empowering Millennials could be an answer to this problem. I9 provided an illuminating synopsis:

> A worldview without purpose is a worldview that's going to generate into fear and anxiety. So again, the primary thing we're calling people to is a life of service for the community of Jesus, a radical, turn-your-life around, give everything you have to the kingdom of Jesus. And not everybody wants to do that, because it's hard, and the way of Jesus is not easy, but what we're really giving people is purpose. We're giving people a reason to be alive. And with a big enough why, you can survive any what and any how. And so, from a spiritual formation standpoint, we're kind of always going back to that learning to live a life of service to other people, which has the benefit of community, and learning to live a life of purpose, again through service.

I5, a millennial, agreed with this synopsis: "That is I find the cry of our generation, this generation, is we want to know that my life is having an impact in some way, shape, or form. So, we've contextualized that, and that's why teams have become so important." I4 added, "we try to empower them because of that old adage . . . you buy into what you speak into and what you help build, you feel like an owner . . . We really believe in that and we want to empower young adults, and they want to give their lives to something."

This practice of empowerment meant more than merely giving Millennials something to do. For most, it meant equipping and training them for ministry and giving

them increasing levels of leadership responsibility in the church. Every interviewee's

ministry provided some form of volunteer training and mentorship. Interestingly, several

of the ministries that were significantly larger and multiplying more rapidly emphasized

not only leadership training and mentorship but spiritual formation through training and

mentorship. I3 described his church's training environment as having 50-100 weekly one-

on-one meetings between point leaders and the leaders they were leading: "Those are

seen as leadership development opportunities and disciple-making opportunities."

Theme SI3: A willingness to engage in challenging or controversial teaching

topics. Each of the MLs expressed – either explicitly or implicitly - that their ministries

were willing to engage in challenging or even controversial teaching topics. Some of the

explicit comments included:

- I12: "Yeah, I think one of the ways, probably, or one of the reasons that
  Millennials gravitate towards our church is, I think, we've done a pretty good
  job of creating space for conversations around, maybe, controversial topics, or
  topics going on in the culture, or especially issues of sexuality."

- I10: "We go into the very messy parts of our lives, so we talk very deeply
  about sexuality. We talk very deeply about relationships. We talk very deeply
  about doubts, questions. Nothing is really off the table for us."

- I7: "We wanted to go after skeptics, which means talking about the
  philosophical, cultural issues of the day, but also on the other hand, be an
  expository ministry, a church that literally preached through Bible books, verse
  by verse, while speaking to the cultural issues and specifically philosophical
  issues around atheism and agnosticism week in and week out."

- I8: "But what I find with Millennials, they just want to know why? Why Jesus

  and not Buddha or Muhammad? Why do I have to abstain from sexual

  intercourse? Why not LGBT, why can't it be fully affirmed within the church

  in whatever aspect? Why is it? And so, the first level we want to do is we want

  to answer the why."

- I11: "But I do think there's something about the hitting topics that are maybe

  controversial."

- I1: "Our pastor has an apologetic approach to how he preaches and teaches the

  Bible, and he doesn't shy away from hard subjects or just to tell it as is. So, I

  think that's probably the biggest attraction."

- I4: "We don't shy away from more difficult topics that others may be afraid to

  cover."

Much of the teaching occurred in the context of the public worship gathering. The

teaching styles of each church varied and included both topical and expository preaching.

Other teaching outlets included small groups, classes, and online video-based training,

including YouTube live streams. Some of the topics expressed were mental health,

human sexuality, loneliness, commitment, exclusivity of religion, existentialism,

consumerism, same-sex marriage, social media, and emotions.

Several of the MLs stressed how teaching was a challenge in the current cultural

milieu because of the growing deconstructionist posture that is endemic in the

postmodern worldview, which is common among Millennials. I9 framed it this way:

But what we've observed basically is that most millennials that we've worked

with appear to have adopted, I think largely without doing it consciously, a fairly

deconstructionist view of life. They're so postmodern in their thinking that any

framework for truth really doesn't fit. And I think what's slid in is what we call a

feeling-based epistemology, where whatever feels to be true must be true.

I3 added that the access to information creates even more confusion for Millennials: "I

think we live in an age where it's really hard for people to have 100 percent assurance on

anything. It seems to be what people want, but it's hard to get because you can just get

another point of view from another source somewhere else." This view was shared by

I10: "They do not take easy answers. I find a lot of my job is deconstructing everything,

just because knowledge is so much more accessible, it's such a high rate of speed that

easy answers don't work anymore." Despite these challenges, respondents believed that

engaging in challenging or controversial topics was the best way forward. I3 summarized

this belief:

> I honestly think that the Bible's still relevant. I do think that in an age where so
>
> much is up to the subjective view of the individual, for there to be some sort of
>
> objective truth. I think it actually is more attractive than we give it credit for. As
>
> much as I'd like to say there's so many of the other things that we do that attract
>
> millennials, the Bible stands for itself. I think it always has.

Communicating biblical truth to postmodernists in a post-truth culture is difficult but not

impossible.

Theme SI4: The necessity of small transforming communities. Every ML in

the study said that small groups were an integral part of their discipleship strategy.

"Small groups has [sic] a huge piece to it because with an age group that is very transient,

keeping these sustainable things helps them anchor themselves to God. That's part of the

discipleship process" (I10). For most respondents, their small groups resembled common small group structures and practices (Bible study, prayer, encouragement, accountability, et al.). However, they used different names such as "small group," "connect group," "community group," or "semester group." Two of the churches reported having mid-sized missional communities (20-50 people) combined with micro-groups (3-4 people). In these contexts, the larger mid-sized community would meet weekly for an hour-long Bible study, and then members would break off into smaller micro-groups for accountability and prayer.

MLs reported that the groups played an important role in the lives of Millennials. They said that small groups were the primary vehicle for care as well as a place of connection and community. More importantly, they were environments where spiritual transformation happened: "The people that have grown the most, the Millennials that have grown the most in our church, are the Millennials that have been actively engaged in community in some form" (I12).

Several of the MLs further explained that small groups were vital because they provided an answer to two common social challenges for Millennials: loneliness and isolation.

- I4: "So many of them just live in isolation, so many Christians just live in isolation, because they don't have anybody who knows what's going on in their life. They're struggling and dying in isolation."

- I8: "I think they might be the loneliest of the five demographics that we have currently in the world."

- I11: "[M]ost of them are really lonely. But loneliness is a thing. And I think

    not needing to interact with people is a thing. And that makes it hard . . . the

    ability to build communities is going to be the most important skill you have."

Ironically, as much as Millennials are a digitally connected cohort, several respondents

reported that they are not competent in building relationships.

In addition to small groups, MLs said they look for other ways to connect

Millennials socially through potlucks, after-parties, mid-worship breakout groups, and

communal spaces. Three of the interviewees also reported that serving teams played an

integral role in fostering community for Millennials. "The best way to combat loneliness

from our perspective in the generation isn't by building community. It's by inviting

people to serve. And as they serve, the beautiful byproduct they get is community" (I9).

Theme SI5: An emphasis on a personal encounter with Jesus. Some of the

MLs acknowledged that the Millennials they work with are often driven by a desire for

new experiences:

- I11: "It's just, I think they measure the world through experience."

- I6: "Millennials seem far more interested in experience than theology."

- I1: "I believe young adults are all looking for a transcendent experience of

    some sort."

- I7: "We live in the experience economy, and then we live in the

    transformation economy where they want to see transformation, and

    experience happen. And the question is what will the church start to look like

    in the next 20-30 years?"

Three of the respondents remarked that "playing the entertainment game" or "competing with the world" would be a losing battle, as far as experiences go. I9 argued, "The world is better at it. They have more money, more time, more energy. And we need to do a good job. I think that does not say we just therefore do a poor job, but I don't think that we can entertain people into the kingdom of God." Given this reality, several respondents highlighted the importance of Millennials having a personal encounter or relationship with God.

- I6: "We're pretty strong on our theology but we actually provide an opportunity for experience."

- I1: "I would say convincing and battling that idea of the only transcendent experience that is going to satisfy is a relationship with God is both an obstacle but also I would say an opportunity of sorts."

- I2: "We've said that we exist to lead people to encounter Jesus . . . because in an encounter, we define [it] as something that engages the whole person, mind, emotions, thoughts, their bodies.

- I5: "And it has to come from our personal relationship with Jesus first and foremost. Ultimately, we as a church, our Sunday structure and our connect groups, our teams, everything is pointed to people's personal relationship with Jesus."

Engaging public worship was a significant element in each of the respondents' churches. Corporate prayer was also described by MLs as an important way to help Millennials encounter Jesus. Two of the interviewees stated that their church hosts an early morning mid-week prayer meeting. One of the respondents described how his church held twenty-

one days of prayer and fasting at the beginning of each year which included public teaching as well as supplemental literature. Four of the respondents' churches practiced responsive prayer at the end of public worship. I1 reported on the effectiveness of this practice: "[W]e just wait on the Holy Spirit, and we allow him to work and move and speak to individuals, and the response time comes out in those moments, really silence [sic], and it can be anywhere from three to five minutes and just sitting there, no music, no lights or no fancy fog machine. We just honestly sit there in silence. But I've seen God work in incredible ways . . . "

Each ML agreed that spiritual disciplines were necessary for helping Millennials experience Jesus and grow toward spiritual maturity. "We want to create self-feeders," stated I3, while I1 remarked, "We talk about it and try to convince them that they're only going to find that satisfaction, that true contentment, when you find yourself in a relationship with Jesus, and that's why we are called to pursue it each and every day." Many of the interviewees said their churches teach about spiritual disciplines publicly, and two stated that they even do it annually. Spiritual disciplines were also being taught within small groups, as part of courses, through online training, or through supplemental literature. I4 explained why his church emphasized teaching the spiritual disciplines: "[T]here's just so many young adults who have no sneaking idea how to read their Bible, what translations even are, and that's confusing to them. They don't know Old testament from the New Testament . . . We just walk through all of that and try to do so in a really, really simple, onboarding way. Then hopefully, they get to the point where they know enough really in community with others, studying and reading the Bible."

Theme SI6: Active personal and corporate mission. Every ML strongly

endorsed the belief that mission is the personal responsibility of every disciple.

- I1: "We do relate it to how you live your life as being part of your witness. So

  probably the biggest part of your witness over evangelizing in the historical

  sense of sharing your faith every day personally, one-on-one, whatever."

- I4: "I'd say next to community being a high value and authenticity,

  evangelism is a really high value."

- I5: "We'd describe it as putting mission in people's hands . . . Build people

  and release them to change the world."

- I10: "I make it a priority, even in our preaching and communications, we have

  this concept of the one. Who is the one that you're living for? Who's that one

  person in your life who doesn't know Jesus, and how do you view your life in

  the midst of their life and that God has placed you there in that place."

- I12: "It's part of our vision, of our church; our vision is seeking the renewal of

  our city through the gospel, and equipping disciples to love God, love one

  another, and love the city."

MLs described how their churches were practicing mission corporately. All said

that their churches frequently, if not weekly, make an appeal for people to respond to the

gospel, during their public worship. Two of the respondents said that their church was

hosting the Alpha Course, designed to create a space for spiritual conversations with

seekers. "It takes away that anxiety and that nervousness that they have with sharing their

faith, and it's easier for them to bring a friend out where they're going to discuss in an

open sense who Jesus is" (I1). Missional communities, "people who live on mission

together" (I11), were a strategy for three of the churches. These communities were

outward-focused and oriented toward serving local community needs or building

relationships with non-believers. Several interviewees said that their small groups were

required or encouraged to serve the community. Evangelistic or mission training was also

reported as a practice in most of the churches. Three of the respondents said their

churches were equipping people to connect their vocation with their faith, to see their

work as worship and their workplace as a mission field.

MLs further described how their churches were helping members engage in

mission both locally and globally. Nine interviewees reported that church partnerships

with local agencies were a key strategy to help engage people in local mission. I3 was

one among others who explained that they would prefer partnership over creating their

own externally focused ministries:

> That's just been really interesting to us because we'd rather come alongside the
>
> youth homeless shelter. We'd rather come alongside the retirement, old age home.
>
> We'd rather come alongside the organizations that already exist, but now we're
>
> trying to figure out ways that can maybe be a conduit between people just
>
> attending church, something we run, and getting people involved in things that are
>
> already running in our city as the end goal.

Global (international) mission was also reported as a strategic mission focus for nine of

the respondents. This included financially supporting global missions, praying for

missionary partners, sending people as missionaries, or hosting missions trips.

Research Question #2

RQ #2. How is Crosspoint Church helping and hindering Millennials to grow as disciples?

Participants from Population 2 each took part in one of four separate focus groups, which were structured using the FGP as a guide. Participants also completed a DS before participating.

The DS gathered necessary demographic information as well as basic data related to the FMD. Question 9 inquired about baptism and was connected to the "Growth" mark. Question 10 was connected to the "Serve" mark and sought to discover if the participant was currently serving in a ministry role. Question 11 examined group participation and was connected to the "Community" mark. Question 12 was connected to the "Pursuit" mark and sought to discover the degree to which participants practiced spiritual disciplines. Question 13 explored the practice of sharing one's faith and was connected to the "Mission" mark. Finally, Question 14 was attitudinal in nature and focused on the importance of growing as a disciple, which was also connected to the "Growth" mark.

The FGP contained eight predetermined questions that sought to discover what factors influenced how Millennials within Crosspoint Church were being formed as disciples, both personally and organizationally. Question 1 opened each group meeting with the intent of familiarizing the participants with each other and creating a sense of trust and ease. Question 2 helped introduce the topic of discussion, helped generate thinking, and brought collective cohesion to the definition of a disciple. Questions 3-5 explored personal factors influencing participants' discipleship. Questions 6-7 looked at

organizational factors influencing discipleship. Question 8 created space for participants

to once again emphasize the most critical topics of the session.

The following recurring themes emerged from the focus groups and DS data.

Theme FG1: The opportunity to serve others. The DS revealed that the

majority (73 percent) of respondents were currently serving in a ministry role at

Crosspoint.

Figure 4.3. Demographic Survey Results: Serving
Question 10 - Are you currently serving in a ministry role at Crosspoint?

YES: 22 (73%)

NO: 8 (27%)
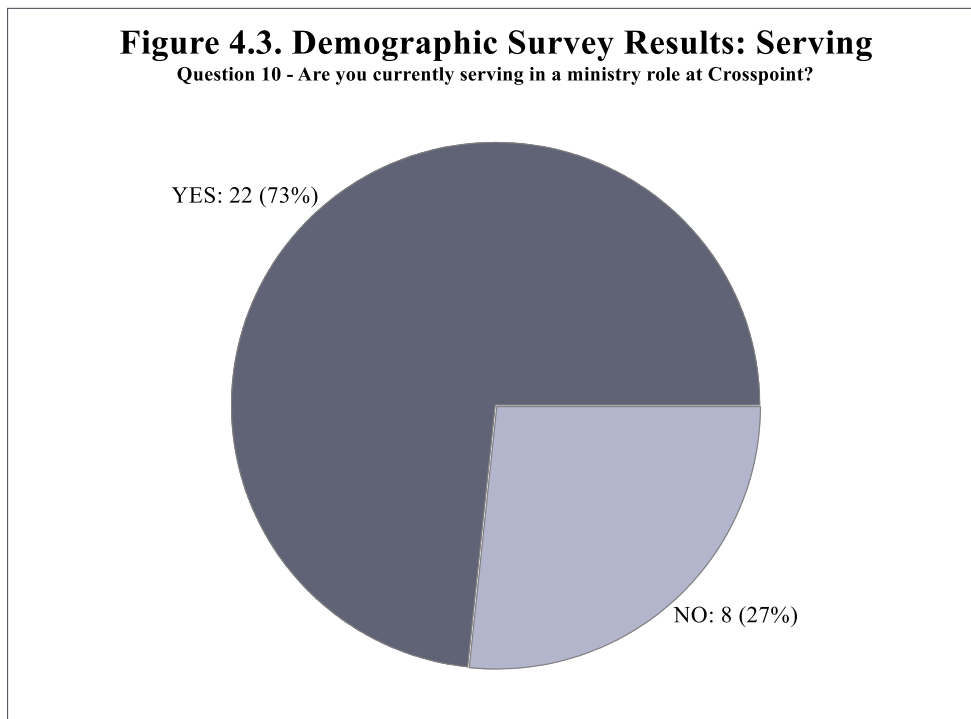
When participants were asked what influenced their spiritual growth or their

decision to surrender their life to Christ, the opportunity to serve was expressed in each of

the focus groups by at least one participant. Some of the responses of participants are telling of this influence:

- Focus Group 1: "Over the years, I'd say it continued to be being involved in the church in various ways, and the people you're now surrounded with when you're serving all the time, I feel like that's probably the most influential."

- Focus Group 2: "I would say I stepped up at Crosspoint more . . . so I felt like I needed to get my life together . . . I was like, 'I need to do better, I need to be better.' So that made me step up in a huge way."

- Focus Group 3: "Serving in kids ministry and talking to junior high kids and answering their questions. They pose simple questions, but they're not actually simple questions to answer . . . So, you're also learning as you're doing that as well."

- Focus Group 4: "And just being involved in that as a leader, it was the first year . . . It was just an opportunity to engage with the next generation. And you kind of have to own your s**t. Yeah, I think moments like that and opportunities like that, where you're serving others. Especially others that are younger, less mature, more vulnerable."

Several respondents mentioned that serving enabled them to get connected in community and build relationships with others. Others mentioned that serving allowed them to use their gifts, to learn, and to contribute. One respondent said they appreciated Crosspoint's higher standards for volunteers, and another appreciated that Crosspoint explains the benefits of service. Several participants remarked how easy it was to get involved in a serving role. One mentioned that a large number of the serving roles were with children

and youth ministries, which could create limitations for those who are not passionate about those areas.

Participants demonstrated confidence in Crosspoint's ability to care for and develop its volunteers. One participant commented, "if God calls me to step up into something, that there'll be people there to walk with me as to whether or not that's right or wrong." At the same time, another remarked about how "energized" his spouse was after volunteer training events. Others described being "pushed to serve" as a positive experience. This sentiment is captured in the words of a participant from Focus Group 3:

> But for me, it felt like I was pushed a step furth . . . Because I was like, "Oh, I'll just be a helper." And then, "Do you think you could lead the room?" I was like, "Oh well, I don't know," and so I think just that extra push and that vote of confidence was great. You're willing to serve – let's see how far, let's see what else you can do.

Theme FG2: Small groups and transforming community. A strong theme that emerged overwhelmingly in each of the focus groups was the decisive role that small groups played in spiritual formation. Participants shared the benefits of their small group experience:

- "Not only was it a study, but was people just kind of keeping you accountable on a week to week basis which . . . I don't know, just kept that influence, that you kept having to push forward and you weren't walking your path alone."

- "[B]eing in a small group with the women that I'm in, it's always influencing change."

- "Having a tight-knit group of people that you can really rely on to keep you accountable. And you share your heart with no judgment."

- "[O]nly a few guys just all with the same goal of coming closer to Jesus and walking together. It's been really, really good for me."

- "The way it's influenced the most for me is being able to hear what other people are saying, but also having the opportunity to share and allowing God to speak through me."

- "It all just kind of challenged me, and I got to challenge others. We found I guess, a fire being able to sharpen each other."

The DS revealed that 57 percent of the participants were attending a small group (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 - Demographic Survey Results: Groups
Question 11 - Are you in a Home Group or Discipleship Group?

YES: 17 (57%)

NO: 13 (43%)
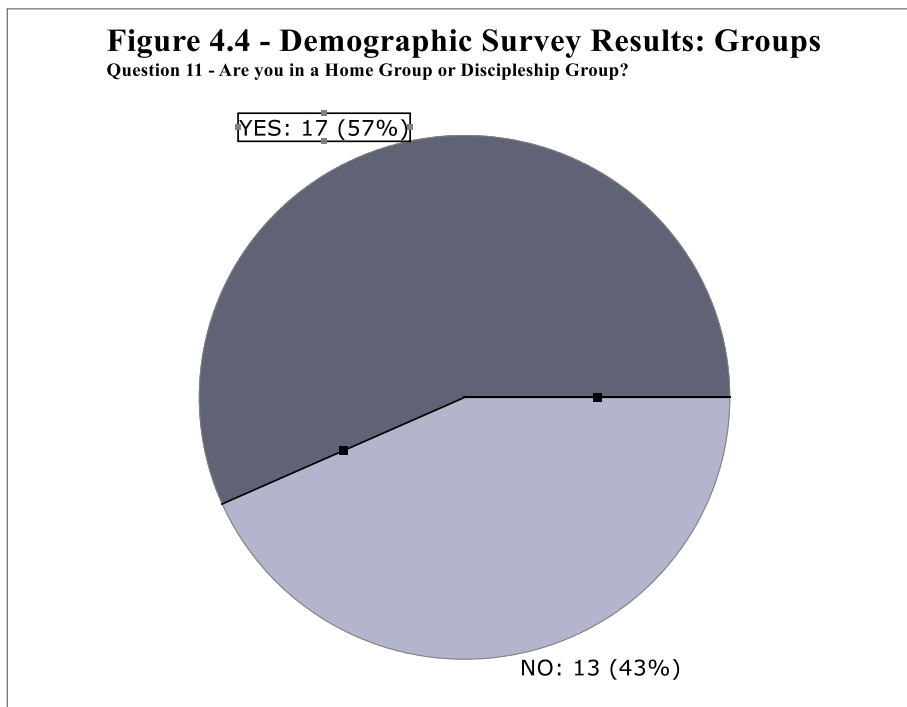
While this number was low, it was clear that most of the participants, including those not attending, affirmed the importance of being in a group. For some, life circumstances did not give them the opportunity. One participant mentioned that personal anxiety was a barrier to joining a group.

Another sub-theme that emerged, which complements the above, was the value of community and relationships in general. Many participants shared how relationships with Christian friends, roommates, volunteer teams, and mentors had positively affected their spiritual formation. Different events that Crosspoint provided in the past helped foster this community. Participants expressed how important it will be to create future events – besides home groups - that will help foster relationships and build community in the church.

Theme FG3: An atmosphere of warmth and welcome. This theme emerged in every focus group conversation. Participants used words—like, "caring," "hospitable," "personal," "home," "very loving," and "community-focused"—to describe the Crosspoint culture. One participant remarked, "It just seems like people go out of their way just to say, 'Hey, I haven't seen you before.'" Another stated, "I think there's a culture of people being really caring. So that allows people to be weaker, fragile, to love each other." One person described an experience they had when they realized the effect this atmosphere was having on them:

> I never really understood that until, like, about three months into Crosspoint where I'm, like, it is home, isn't it? It is, like, this is what familial love looks like . . . and, therefore, helps me grow as a disciple. This is what my hospitality and my own life for other people should look like. It sees no color. It sees no agenda.

It sees no, like, nothing. It's like . . . we love you no matter who you are, no

matter what you are, no matter what you've done, and no matter what you will do.

We'll correct you, but also we still love you.

Other participants agreed they had experienced this transformative effect and shared

similar experiences. "I've even seen people come through here who are not people-

people, and they become lovers of people just by the environment that Crosspoint has,

and it's infectious almost." One participant shared how one experience dramatically

affected him. When he first began attending Crosspoint, he needed assistance after a

worship service. An older member of the congregation initiated a conversation with him.

"He just walks up to me and just asks me what I'm doing there and if I needed to talk to

someone. He just came up out of nowhere. And he's embedded in me a desire to be the

same way, right? I think you foster this love for people, and it's that genuine feeling of

walking in and being like, 'Yeah, this could be my church.'"

Participants said they appreciated that Crosspoint's leadership modeled the

culture of welcome and that intentional efforts were made to produce this culture. In

reference to a practice that Crosspoint continues after every worship gathering, one

participant celebrated, "Also, you give permission to people to, 'High-five somebody

who doesn't look like you.'"

Theme FG4: The challenge of needed spiritual disciplines in a distracted

world. There was unanimous consent in each of the focus groups that spiritual disciplines

were an essential component in their spiritual growth. The DS reveals that participants

are very favorable to the practice of spiritual disciplines, as shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 - Demographic Survey Results: Spiritual Disciplines

Question 12 - I regularly practice spiritual disciplines (prayer, bible study, worship).

Agree: 19 (63%)

Strongly Agree: 11 (37%)
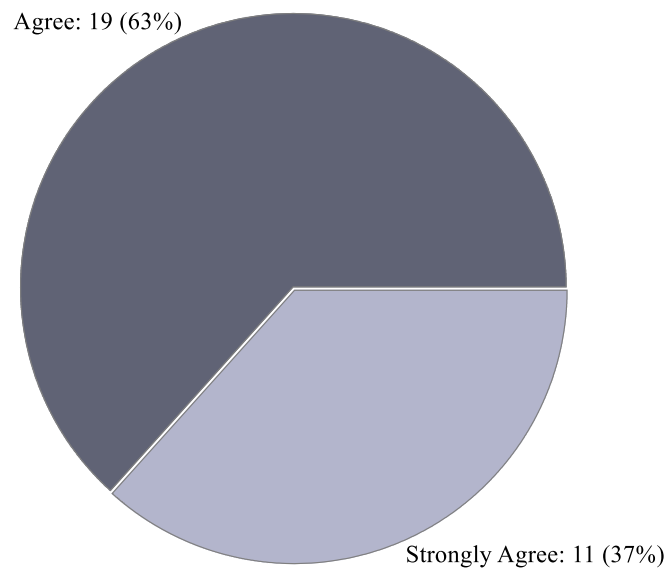
Sixty-three percent of respondents agreed with the statement, "I regularly practice spiritual disciplines (prayer, bible study, worship)," while 37 percent strongly agreed. This became even more clear from the qualitative data. For example, one participant said that the daily practice of prayer was fundamental for their growth: "Just remembering to pray . . . something that simple. Praying every night or getting into that habit, even just once a day." For the most part, these disciplines included Bible reading and prayer, but other disciplines were mentioned, including daily gratitude, silent retreats, journaling, meditation on Scripture through art, and Advent devotionals.

While most agreed that spiritual disciplines were important, many expressed disappointments with their ability to practice them consistently. These disappointments emerged in each of the focus groups, sometimes in lengthy discussions.

- Focus Group 1: "I think growing up when I was young, I had this base level assumption that every single year I would obviously be growing. Growing deeper in my relationship with God, growing deeper in my knowledge of the Bible, and then over the years, I don't always feel like I'm growing. Some years, I feel like, sometimes, I look back to where I was in junior high, and I'm like, why am I not where I was in junior high, right?"

- Focus Group 2: "I think a big one for me is expectations. I think I expect myself to be at this point of being like, 'Yeah, I want to read my Bible every day,' and I get a plan on it, and you go for two or three weeks, and then it falls off. So, you just . . . I have all these expectations on myself, and then they just don't always work out."

- Focus Group 3: "You'll wake up in the morning and read your Bible three days in a row, and then you won't do it for five days, and it's like 'Why can't I just do it every day?'"

- Focus Group 4: "Some days, you feel like you're making really good progress. And then the next day, it feels like anyway, it all comes apart. It doesn't, but it feels that way . . .You go through the day not thinking about God or what he's done for you. One day can be so full of prayer, and then the next seems almost prayerless. It does, it reminds me of the Israelites and how they seem to forget God like that."

Participants explained that these disappointments would result in guilt, anger, or frustration. They pinpointed a number of causes for their inconsistency, including an inability to prioritize, busyness, or a lack of knowledge: "I think my frustration comes from not knowing the best way to grow."

The most common cause that emerged was distraction, which was connected to digital and social media. One respondent provided a good summary of this struggle: "I'd say the ease of settling for noise. Just like YouTube, watching a video here, watching Netflix, how that can just become part of, 'I have some free time, I'm just going to chill and do that,' as opposed to actually investing it in actually building your relationship." While digital and social media were viewed as distracting, they were also touted for their positive use. Participants described using them for online studies, listening to sermons or podcasts, staying connected to church events, and watching church live streams. Two participants said they wished that Crosspoint would provide curated lists of content for them to listen to or watch since there was so much content available online, and not all of it necessarily good content.

Theme FG5: The desire for mentors and intergenerational relationships.
Many shared the positive impact that older adults had on their spiritual growth. Some of these were members of a small group, informal mentors, pastors, missionaries, youth leaders, camp leaders, parents, and grandparents. One person shared about the impact she experienced in an inter-generational small group: "In my group, there are three older ladies, and it's great to hear where they're at with their faith and the struggles that they're having, but . . . it's similar to peer to peer, but we're not all peers, right?" Another

participant expressed that, "having somebody that's a solid role model to verbalize back and kind of bounce things back and forth really helped."

The desire for mentorship was expressed in each of the focus groups. Several people lamented the difficulty of finding mentors:

- "One of the most disappointing parts has been not having a mentor and seeking one, honestly seeking one for over a decade, and no one has time."

- "I think I've heard from tonight . . . a not so quiet cry for mentors. No matter how old you are, I guess. Yeah, we want mentors, but who is available?"

- "My only question, just in listening, is how much do Millennials in Crosspoint interact with other generations?"

- "There's a deep cry I think from the millennial heart to be mentored and to have the push and the challenge to be more, and there's a lack of it not just in our church but in our society, largely because our society exists online and the mentors do not. And if they do, we don't want them there because they don't know how to use it."

Several of the participants said they believed they would benefit from a mentoring relationship. One participant commented, "I think it's really important. I don't know if everybody wants to ask for it, but I think it would be beneficial overall." Another said they thought having a mentor would be very important, "because they're somebody who's just there, and then when I want to talk…then I know I can talk to them. And the other thing is, sometimes even . . . whoever the mentor is, there's just going to be some things that you want to talk to them about."

Some commented that finding mentors is a challenge. "Yeah, because I'd be like, 'Oh, can you be my mentor?' I would never say that," quipped one participant. Another explained that setting up a formal structure for mentorship might not be easy: "I think that mentorship's something that's always struggled. It's always a…it's very necessary, but it's . . . I've never seen a good formal structure for mentorship. It just doesn't exist."

In addition to mentorship, participants also expressed a desire to pursue intergenerational relationships with older Crosspointers. One particular comment summarizes the perceived value of these kinds of relationships:

Just on the intergenerational thing. There are as many godly men and women who are older at Crosspoint. There's a real wealth. But I wonder for people who are new as disciples, or just new to Crosspoint, if they might not realize that or it might not even occur to them, how much of a blessing that is that's at their disposal. So, I think a good question to ask in Crosspoint is, in what we do and how we do what we do, will it ever occur to people that people with white and gray hair have a lot of value to offer them? Because I think it's possible. That's actually a really counter-cultural message in our culture. So, unless we kind of intentionally run against that, it's easy for any group, church or otherwise, to kind of miss out on that.

The need and desire for mentors and intergenerational relationships were evident.

Theme FG6: A need for more teaching about challenging and confrontational topics. Generally, respondents had a positive view of the preaching at Crosspoint. Two participants said they appreciated that the messages were biblically-based. One person appreciated the transparency of the communicators: "I really

appreciate the honesty where it's like you can admit in front of a crowd of people that you're human and you make mistakes, and that goes to all the speakers, right?" Two other participants said they appreciated how practical the messages were and mentioned that this made the messages accessible to new believers or non-believers. One participant described how this was helpful for his friend whom he brings to Sunday worship: "and then typically on the drive home, we kind of discuss and kind of get where his viewpoints are. Because I don't fully know where he's at in his Christian walk yet. So being able to just challenge myself to answer his questions as well." Another participant explained that these "basic sermons" were extremely important to his friend, who was "in the early steps of her faith."

While there was an appreciation for Crosspoint's preaching, there was a clear and strong push for content that was more challenging and applicable for a maturing disciple. One person commented that it seemed like "lots of things are targeted more towards new believers," while another requested, "have less sermons for beginner Christians." Two participants had reservations that completely changing the content of preaching in this way could have a detrimental effect on evangelism. "But those who don't know Christ might not feel so inclined. Those topical sermons are more pointed for them." Even with these reservations, participants in each of the focus groups strongly requested more challenging preaching, which included an emphasis on confrontational topics. Many of these requests are captured below:

- Focus Group 1: "If I could phrase it in one word . . . one change, it would be to up the ante . . . a bigger challenge. A higher calling of what Christ calls us to do, a bigger sacrifice."

- Focus Group 1: "I think for me the most important thing is . . . pushing us forward to go deeper and challenging us in a relationship with Christ."

- Focus Group 2: "One of my favorite sermons you did was when you were just talking about different religions and just tackling that head on . . . in a church, a lot of people don't do that."

- Focus Group 2: "I think it just gives us talking points even when someone may confront you. There's that other sermon, I can't remember the name of it, but when you talked about hell and just other different . . . tough questions that skeptics welcome . . . That was bar none, one of my favorites."

- Focus Group 3: "These more challenging topics that in this culture we don't want to swim around, and we want to avoid. I think is important for Christians in the church to maybe understand and hear what the Bible says about certain things. Yeah, like not be afraid of backlash you might get."

- Focus Group 3: "The divide in culture between how Christians don't agree with [the] LGBTQ community and transgender people and all that stuff. I would like to know what the church teaches and what's their take on that."

- Focus Group 3: "When you do that, I know there was a skeptics series, it was probably a while back, but stuff like that. Apologetics style almost. I'd find intriguing, but I feel like it plays into the how to disciple more mature Christians into, now you know about God, how do you talk about it?"

- Focus Group 3: "I personally like getting yelled at, a little bit. Like no, this is how it is kind of, and so that resonates well with me. So, apologetics, this and

that I personally enjoy that . . . So not shying away from very contentious

issues because that's what people actually care about."

- Focus Group 4: "I think having an understanding of the pedagogy of what

  Sunday's supposed to be. Whether the intent is more . . . There's an aspect of

  it where you want to be inviting and open for people who are seeking or new

  believers. But I feel sometimes that there's a lack of depth in some of the

  messages."

- Focus Group 4: "I'm trying to think back when you preach. But it's like

  expository preaching. When we take apart Scripture, we just go through it or

  through it. I feel like I really take a lot from that."

Theme FG7: A missional mindset and practice. Multiple respondents stated

that having friendships with non-believers had a positive effect on their spiritual growth.

Some stated that the added pressure caused them to take their faith more seriously:

- "I had to really fight to be able to pursue my faith."

- "But then outside of class, they ask you questions about your life and things

  like that. Anyway, they would ask questions and ask me, as a Christian, what

  my stance was on those things."

- "So, all of a sudden I feel this pressure to now actually have to be a kind of a

  Christian leader in a sense."

- "I do more research about this kind of stuff after having conversations with

  non-Christian friends. Because it challenges me to be more knowledgeable
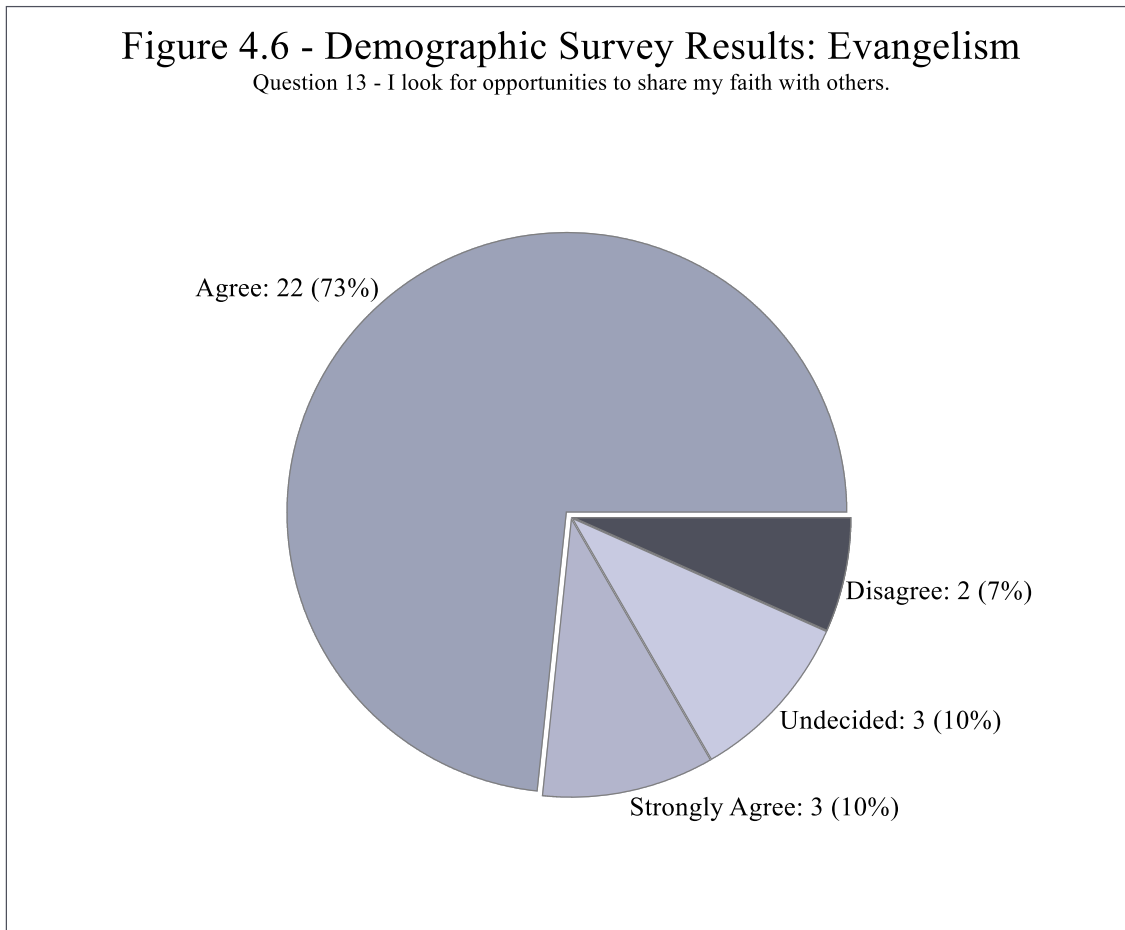
  and stuff."

- "Having non-Christian friends in your life. Knowing that you're a Christian and observing you and you check yourself all the time and be like, 'What am I saying? What am I doing?'"

- "Viewing where I live, the neighborhood, and the people around me, as not just my neighborhood, but as a mission field."

For some, having relationships with non-Christians and having challenging faith conversations were significant spiritual growth contributors.

There were several indicators that mission was important for participants. Some respondents expressed appreciation for Crosspoint's emphasis and practical teaching about mission. They also affirmed efforts toward neighbors, local community outreach, and using the building for serving the community. One respondent stated that she would like to see more community engagement. "I like it, it's good. I think we're slowly getting there. But I want more. I see what it could be. And there's a lot of places that we can partner with and there's a huge community. And I want to be more present in the community. I think that would be awesome." Three participants, from three different focus groups, demonstrated appreciation for Crosspoint's benediction that is shared at the conclusion of each worship service: "Let me remind you of who you are. You are the people of God, called by God, into his redemptive mission in the world. So be who you are." One person commented, "That reminder every Sunday is nice because it's like, 'Okay, yeah. I do have a mission. I have something to do.' So, I would see that as a form of discipleship, even just going out and talking to people.'" Still, another explained the impact of the benediction: "It's like a commissioning, but it's also this simple truth. That

was awesome. And you got to go…you leave Crosspoint, you leave the church building,

of that mindset. It's one of the most effective teaching moments, I think, for me."

While many agreed that mission played a positive role, several expressed their

personal challenges with evangelism. This was not surprising given the results of the DS

(Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 - Demographic Survey Results: Evangelism
Question 13 - I look for opportunities to share my faith with others.

Agree: 22 (73%)

Disagree: 2 (7%)

Undecided: 3 (10%)

Strongly Agree: 3 (10%)

In response to the statement, "I look for opportunities to share my faith with others," 73

percent agreed, while 10 percent strongly agreed. Ten percent were undecided, and 7

percent disagreed. These were the lowest score results in the DS. Several participants

hoped to learn more about how to share their faith. One said his "gospel presentation

ability" was low. At the same time, another posited a possible solution to this knowledge-

gap: "I had my friend over yesterday, and he's my non-Christian friend, and he's talking

about purpose in life. I'm trying to find a way to tell him about Jesus and how that could

be his purpose. I think we can communicate with the congregation, a better way to

present the gospel, to show them how to do a gospel presentation."

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Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

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RQ #3. What are the best practices for making disciples of Millennials?

The researcher studied the written transcripts of the semi-structured interviews with the

goal of identifying common themes. The researcher was attentive to the literal meaning,

but also the implied meaning of the participants. These data points were tracked and

coded into a classification system (CSSI) that identified common themes related to the

discipleship of Millennials.

The focus group transcripts were examined through the same methodology as the

semi-structured interviews. The data points were tracked using the same coding, and

additional categories were added. A second classification system (CSFG) was generated

that captured common themes related to the discipleship of Millennials.

The two classification systems were then compared and contrasted for

convergence and divergence. The data collected from the DS helped inform this process.

What emerged was a consolidated list of best practices. This list of best practices will be synthesized with the results from the literature review in the final analysis.

Common Themes

By comparing the data from RQ1 and RQ2, the following common themes were identified.

Teaching challenging and confrontational topics. In RQ1, each of the MLs stated that their churches engaged challenging and difficult topics (Theme SI3). They also had challenging discipleship cultures that called their people to surrender their lives to Christ and valued accountability (Theme SI1). In RQ2, respondents identified that they wanted to be challenged more and wanted content that emphasized controversial topics (Theme FG6). While this juxtaposition identifies a common theme, it also exposes a need at Crosspoint. FG participants were not receiving something that they valued and believed would contribute to their spiritual formation. This result does not mean that Crosspoint undervalues discipleship since it has both a clear definition of a disciple as well as a discipleship pathway. Furthermore, respondents placed a high value on discipleship. In response to the statement, "Growing as a disciple is very important to me," 70 percent strongly agreed, 23 percent agreed, and only 7 percent were undecided.

Empowering Millennials to serve. This theme was evident in both RQ1 and RQ2. MLs in the semi-structured interviews placed a high emphasis on empowering people to serve, helping them discover their gifts, and equipping them for ministry (Theme SI2). Participants in the focus groups also emphasized the positive effect that a culture of empowerment had on their discipleship (Theme FG1). Examples of leadership and training opportunities were also identified by focus group participants.

Having small transforming communities. Small groups were an integral part of the discipleship strategy for each of the representative churches in RQ1 (Theme SI4). Similarly, in RQ2, participants identified the positive role that Home Groups and Discipleship Groups had in their discipleship (Theme FG2). Both groups also highlighted the importance of hosting other community events as a means of connecting Millennials.

Practicing spiritual disciplines. In RQ1, Theme SI5 identified spiritual disciplines as a necessary part of helping Millennials experience Jesus and grow toward spiritual maturity. The essential role of spiritual disciplines in spiritual formation also surfaced in FG4. The practice of prayer, both personal and corporate, emerged in both groups of participants, as a fundamental way to help Millennials encounter Christ.

Emphasizing mission. Both participant groups agreed that mission is the personal responsibility of every disciple and that participating in Christ's mission was essential for discipleship (Theme SI6, Theme FG7). The church also has a role to play in helping Millennials engage in mission, both locally and globally. As crucial as mission is, focus group participants identified that they struggled with sharing their faith (Theme FG7).

Uncommon Themes

No conflicting or contradictory themes emerged from both research questions. However, some themes surfaced that were not emphasized in both participant groups.

An atmosphere of warmth and welcome. Under RQ2, this theme was strongly emphasized (Theme FG3). While it was not stressed under RQ2, this does not mean that it did not exist. The emphasis on building community by most churches implied that they were attempting to create attractional environments, which likely would have included an

emphasis on warmth and hospitality. Still, Millennials at Crosspoint emphasized this theme much more than leaders of other churches.

The desire for mentors and intergenerational relationships. Participants in the focus groups voiced a need for positive role models from the older generation (Theme FG5). They also expressed challenges with finding mentors. While this was not a significant theme under RQ1, several church leaders said that their ministries needed older mentors and intergenerational relationships. Presumably, others would have agreed if asked whether this was a need or desire they had.

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Summary of Major Findings

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Consolidation of the data from each of the two research questions led to two sets of themes; comparison of these themes resulted in multiple findings:

1) Millennials want challenging messages that include difficult and controversial topics.

2) Millennials thrive spiritually in a culture of empowerment that invites them to serve and gives them increasing levels of responsibility.

3) Small groups that are spiritually challenging and accountable are productive environments of transformation and connection for Millennials.

4) Millennials want to encounter Christ personally but must learn to practice spiritual disciplines as an essential component of their spiritual growth.

5) Mission is essential for spiritual formation of Millennials, as it challenges their faith and encourages their dependence on God.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Since its launch in 2010, Crosspoint Church has attracted a large population of

Millennials who now consider it their church home. Discipleship is the foundation of

Crosspoint's mission, so it is prudent to discover how to best disciple this age cohort,

particularly in ways most effective for this local context. The purpose of this research is

to identify best practices for developing a discipleship strategy for Millennials through

Crosspoint Church.

This chapter first highlights five major findings that draw upon personal

considerations, the literature review, as well as biblical and theological perspectives. It

continues by exploring some of the ministry implications of the project, followed by an

explanation of the study's limitations and unexpected observations. The chapter

concludes with future recommendations and a postscript reflection on the researcher's

journey. Since this chapter involves personal reflections, some of its sections will be

written in the first person.

Major Findings

Millennials want challenging messages that include difficult and controversial

topics.

As the founding church planter and pastor of Crosspoint, the design of

Crosspoint's culture was initially my prerogative, in keeping with our early governance

structure. I scripted Crosspoint's mission and values, and helped inculcate this missional

DNA through preaching, training, modeling, and practices. We declared very early in our

history that our Sunday worship gathering was not an attractional environment for

seekers but a maturing environment for believers. Sunday was a place of preparation so

that disciples could live "on mission" in the world. So, rather than being attractional, we

designed our Sunday gatherings as extractional, or incarnational (McNeal 50–53). We did

not jettison the attractional environment entirely. We endeavored to make our gatherings

both intelligible and accessible to seekers or dechurched people, which sometimes

included focused teaching series. The research made me aware that I may have falsely

assumed that if we challenged our people too much, we might turn away those

investigating faith. The desire for accessibility sometimes diminished the call to faith and

repentance, holiness, and pursuit of Christ.

When Crosspoint launched, it had a clear set of guiding values. One of these

values was *cultural relevance.* The goal was to address more relevant topics, not to

become a cool, trendy, and hip church. We wanted to practice good gospel

contextualization in order to reach people and help them grow as disciples. Over the

years, we covered topics such as sex, dating, social media, work, busyness, apologetics,

and world religions. The response we received to these was always very positive. The

messages helped people find answers to questions they or their friends had been asking.

Implicitly, they helped demonstrate that the Christian faith is reasonable and that an

intelligible faith is possible. However, we tended to avoid more controversial or divisive

topics; more particularly, the more politically sensitive or ethical topics such as LGBTQ

issues, environmentalism, self-identity, and abortion, to name a few. I believe we did this

for two reasons. First, we faced the difficulty of covering very challenging topics in under

forty-minutes, and in a way that was compassionate, sensitive, nuanced, and biblically

faithful. Admittedly, we may also have wanted to avoid losing people or experiencing cultural backlash. We had a clear stance on many of the issues, but we were not teaching them in our most public setting. This project's research has shown that our silence may have been more harmful than helpful, creating confusion for our people, or abdicating our teaching responsibility to their social media algorithms.

Crosspoint does challenge its people in its other ministries and environments. *The Journey* discipleship course is based on the FMD, and challenges participants to deeper levels of commitment, helping them to navigate their next steps in their discipleship journey. Home Groups and Discipleship Groups are both focused on spiritual transformation with elements of transparency and accountability. Those serving in leadership or teaching positions at Crosspoint are required to be growing disciples.

The research clearly supports that a high-challenge environment does not need to be a cold environment. Breen and Cockram argue that an empowered, discipling community is one of high-challenge, and high-invitation (ch. 2). True discipleship should be high-challenge, calling people to surrender their entire lives to Christ (Wilkins, Bonhoeffer, Willard, Hull, Coleman, Breen and Cockram, Ogden). This call has resonated throughout the centuries, from the church fathers to the monastics, from the Reformation to Wesley, and into the present day. Millennials respond to an environment that challenges them to be dedicated to the gospel (Rainer and Rainer ch. 11). Powell, Mulder, and Griffin posit that emerging adults want their churches to challenge them, even when it makes them uncomfortable (ch. 4). Several other authors (Smith, Rainer and Rainer, Kinnaman, Dean) affirmed this. Millennials want to be challenged.

The literature also supports helping Millennials navigate difficult and controversial cultural topics. This practice embodies gospel contextualization, "translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essence and particulars of the gospel" (Keller 89). Sometimes the culture needs to be challenged or confronted to expose its idols or communicate the gospel (124–30). Kinnaman and Matlock identify one of the fundamental practices of "resilient disciples" as the ability to develop cultural discernment, "the ability to compare the beliefs, values, customs, and creations of the world we live in (digital Babylon) to those of the world we belong to (the kingdom of God)" (74-74).

Addressing controversial topics is potentially risky. The UGRE (Universal Gnostic Religious Ethic) does present challenges as it is "the dominant way of managing public spaces now, but it permits people to hold private, contrary beliefs as long as they are not manifested in public spaces" (Hiemstra, Dueck, and Blackaby 110). While a worship gathering is not a public space, per se, it might be perceived as one by some. Because of this, controversial topics may be treated as taboo when preached from the pulpit. The downside is that "moral disagreement gets reframed as political disagreement" (111). When churches, like Crosspoint, provide live-streaming or video-sharing of their messages, they blur the line between public and private spaces. Itcould set them up for scrutiny or even backlash from the general public - sometimes even their own members.

This double-edged finding is at the heart of biblical discipleship. On the one hand, Jesus was the most radically *inclusive* rabbi of his day. He invited men and women, from

every walk of life, to come and follow him as disciples. His mission was not limited by

ethnic, religious, or geographic boundaries (Luke 10:25-37). His post-resurrection

disciples would eventually include non-Jewish peoples (Acts 11:18). On the other hand,

Jesus' call to discipleship was radically *exclusive*. Each disciple was personally called to

deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him, exchanging their life in order to

gain his (Luke 9:23-25). His was not a low-challenge invitation – it was a radical call that

required a radical conversion and reorientation to follow Jesus with everything.

Biblical discipleship also includes addressing difficult or controversial topics. The

church often faced false teachers who could lead it astray (1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:16-

19; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-6). Jesus addressed difficult topics, even when it was

costly. The Sermon on the Mount, one of the foundational discipleship discourses, is

replete with examples, covering topics such as murder and anger, lust and adultery,

divorce, oaths, revenge, and hatred (Matt. 5:21-48). Most of the NT epistles were

grounded in real-life situations that needed to be addressed in light of the new covenant.

Paul addressed cultural topics such as marriage, singleness, and sexuality (1 Cor. 7),

eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8), submitting to the government (Rom. 13:1-7),

and household instructions (Eph. 5:21-6:9), to name a few.

**Millennials thrive spiritually in a culture of empowerment that invites them to serve
and gives them increasing levels of responsibility.**

Millennials connect in community and grow spiritually when they are given

opportunities to serve. In Crosspoint's early years as a church plant, recruiting, training,

and empowering volunteers was a necessity for survival. Every week, for eight years,

Crosspoint was a portable church that met in a rented facility. We needed multiple teams

of volunteers to help with set-up and tear-down, in addition to all our other ministries. Not surprisingly, empowerment is a high value in our church's culture. We believed in the "priesthood of all believers" and frequently taught that every person has a gift, every member is a minister, and everyone should serve. Our ministry staff were required to develop systems for recruiting volunteers, which included training and coaching. We strove to give away as much ministry as we could by delegating it to volunteers. From the beginning, we determined that we wanted to give volunteers the freedom to take risks and make mistakes. While this sometimes diminished the quality of excellence in some of our programming, it encouraged younger leaders to try out their spiritual gifts in an environment that permitted them to fail. Most of our staff are Millennials who had never worked in a church. They, too, were trained and coached and given the freedom to take risks. When Millennials are given grace-filled opportunities to serve, it catalyzes their spiritual maturity.

The focus group findings were not a surprise; however, I was surprised by the findings from the semi-structured interviews. I had assumed that most of the churches would have a culture of serving. I did not anticipate the extent to which some of them viewed serving as one of their primary means of discipling Millennials. Not only did they see serving as an entry point into community, but they also utilized their serving teams as places of discipleship. They provided on-board training, and team leaders acted as mentors and disciple-makers. This was not accidental but highly systematized and structured.

As the literature review demonstrates, Millennials who are given more opportunities to lead will become more engaged (Penner et al. 87), and those with a

resilient faith want to serve others (Kinnaman and Matlock 181). Further, when one

entrusts Millennials with the "keys to the kingdom," they will entrust themselves to that

person (Powell, Mulder, and Griffin ch. 2).

This finding is congruent with one of the biblical marks of a disciple: service.

Every disciple is a member of God's royal priesthood who declares his praises (1 Pet.

2:9). Each has been given spiritual gifts and should use them to build up Christ's body

(Rom. 12:6-8). The responsibility of leadership within the church is to prepare God's

people for works of service so that the body might reach maturity (Eph. 4:11-14). The

work of ministry is not the responsibility of a few paid clergy, but every disciple. Jesus

exemplified this in his ministry by choosing the Twelve from among his disciples and

appointing them to do ministry (Matt. 10:1; Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13). He sent them out on

mission (Matt. 10:1-42), as well as the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1). Jesus further

modeled sacrificial service for his disciples as an example for them to follow (John 13:5,

14-17). Service and discipleship are inseparable.

Small groups that are spiritually challenging and accountable are productive

environments of transformation and connection for Millennials.

Generally, small groups have been an effective means of helping people grow

spiritually. Crosspoint declared from the beginning that small groups – what we call

Home Groups - would be a core ministry for discipleship. The church has been built

around Home Groups so that we are not just a church *with* groups, but a church *of* groups.

The expectation has been that every believer who considers Crosspoint their home church

should eventually join a Home Group. Each group meets weekly or bi-weekly for

Scripture study, edification, prayer, and fellowship. Groups are also required to have a

missional output, although, in the past two years, this mandate has weakened.

The primary purpose of Home Groups is the spiritual transformation of its

members (*Home Group Leaders Training Manual*). Home Group meetings include

prayer, Bible study, meal sharing, encouragement, and some accountability. These

elements are not viewed as ends in themselves; they are intended to support the primary

purpose of Home Groups, which is discipleship. New leaders are required to participate

in a four-hour training workshop before launch. Leaders are also coached by a staff

member and must participate in leadership huddles throughout the year. These huddles

focus on spiritual formation, leadership skill development, vision-casting, and prayer.

I have observed that it has been challenging getting Millennials to participate in

Home Groups. Many of the older Millennials are married and have young children,

which creates scheduling complications, particularly with coordinating mealtimes and

bedtimes for children. As a result, they simply opt-out of Home Groups for a season. For

the younger Millennials (emerging adults), some of the challenges have included a

shortage of mature leaders, distractions, and busyness. Some of our Home Groups are

intergenerational, and those Millennials who have participated have had positive

transformative experiences.

For the past three years, Crosspoint has been beta-testing Discipleship Groups

(DG). These groups are based on Greg Ogden's model. The groups are much smaller (3-4

members), single-gender, and have a higher degree of accountability and transparency

than a Home Group. Each group cycle is intended to last about one year, after which each

member launches their own group. Two members who graduated from the first cycle

participated in the FG studies and reported that their experience was transformational. Two other members who are currently in a DG reported the same.

The literature certainly supports the importance of relationships in helping Millennials to connect and mature (Rainer and Rainer 105; Kinnaman and Matlock 53). Authentic community is vital for emerging adults (Powell, Mulder, and Griffin ch. 5). In other words, relationships trump programs every time. More generally, many maintain the transformational effectiveness of smaller, interdependent, accountable, and Christ-centred communities (Ogden; Geiger, Kelley, and Nation 157–74; Breen and Cockram ch. 4; Barna 158; Stetzer and Rainer 111–22).

Biblical spiritual formation does not happen in isolation. An intimate biblical community was modeled by Jesus himself, who chose the Twelve disciples that he might "be with them" (Mark 3:14). From among the Twelve, Jesus had a more trusting relationship with Peter, James, and John (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28; Matt. 17:1). His closest disciple was likely John (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20). Disciples are to be image-bearers of the Trinity, who *is* perfect unity – they cannot do this while choosing to live independently of other disciples. Further, the "one-anothers" of Scripture (Rom. 12:10, 15:7; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:32; 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Cor. 12:25; et al.) are mandated for all believers. As is often taught at Crosspoint, "You need another to one-another. You cannot one-another yourself."

Millennials want to encounter Christ personally but must learn to practice spiritual disciplines as an essential component of their spiritual growth.

Many of the Millennials in our church community are busy, distracted, and tired. With work, school, and family schedules, they find it very difficult to carve out time for

personal spiritual disciplines such as prayer or Bible study. At the same time, many of them are quick to talk about the latest series they binge-watched on Netflix, or the latest news they have uncovered from their social media algorithm. They are busy, but they are also distracted.

Many Millennials, especially before they have children, look for experiences through travel, epic dinners, and other memorable moments that are worthy of being posted on their social media streams. Experiences and emotions are paramount. Some Millennials are guided by a feelings-based epistemology, allowing their mood to color their perceptions of truth and reality. When asked, the Millennials I converse with say they believe that a relationship with Christ is possible and highly crucial. Others say that they want a personal encounter with God. Several even share stories of dynamic life-changing spiritual encounters they have had. They agree that the spiritual disciplines are important, but do not know how to practice them, or struggle with consistency.

The literature strongly supports the critical role that spiritual disciplines play in spiritual formation (Breen and Cockram ch.7; Willard, *The Great Omission* 150–57; Geiger, Kelley, and Nation 113–22; Thompson ch. 1). The spiritual disciplines have been practiced throughout the church's history, with the early church fathers, monastics, reformers, and even Wesley (Hull, *The Complete Book* 80–103). One factor that contributes to continued church involvement for Canadian young adults is a personal experience of God (Penner et al. 47–49). As Millennials experience conversational intimacy with Jesus, this strengthens them in resilient faith (Kinnaman and Matlock 40).

Scripture also supports this finding. Christ is knowable (Phil. 3:10), and nothing compares to the "surpassing worth of knowing Christ" (Phil. 3:8). The spiritual practices

are an integral means of knowing Christ. The disciples of Jesus prayed and asked Jesus to

teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). He also taught them the Scripture (Luke 24:27).

Jesus assumed his disciples would fast (Matt. 6:16), and they did fast (Acts 13:2). The

first community of disciples devoted themselves to prayer, the apostles' teaching,

fellowship, and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42). Spiritual disciplines were practiced

corporately and not just personally (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:17; Acts 4:24; 13:2).

Mission is essential for spiritual formation of Millennials, as it challenges their faith

and encourages their dependence on God.

Millennials are very cause-oriented, especially younger Millennials (emerging

adults) who have fewer family or career constraints. Many want to "make a difference" in

the world and lean toward social justice endeavors. Millennials are more likely to

demonstrate the gospel than to declare the gospel. The influence of pluralism (the UGRE)

confronts any absolute truth claims and has hindered evangelism for Millennials. To their

peers, Jesus is one option among many gods. Crosspoint has a strong missional DNA

and, since its launch, we have sought to inculcate a "sending" culture in our people. We

have done this through preaching, resourcing, and corporate missional projects.

Some focus group participants unsurprisingly expected more from Crosspoint in

terms of corporate mission endeavors. Two years ago, Crosspoint acquired a building,

and this affected how we do local mission in our community. We have been recalibrating

our vision of how we can be the church, on mission, in the world. It was reassuring to

hear Millennials express that sharing their faith put them in a state of dependence on God

and created a desire to learn how to minister more effectively. I have undervalued the

impact that missional engagement can play in catalyzing spiritual growth.

I had assumed that evangelism and mission would be high priorities for most of

the churches being interviewed. I was also intrigued that most of the churches expected

their small groups to participate in mission together. Overall, the churches recognized the

importance of creating opportunities for mission, but also placing the responsibility for

mission in the hands of every believer.

Mission and maturation are inseparable. When the people of God participate in

God's redemptive mission in the world, they reflect the image of the sending God, who is

both sent and sender (Seamands ch. 8). Spiritual formation means being transformed into

the image of Christ (the restoration of the *imago Dei*), which means that mission is a key

aspect of reflecting God's image. Emerging adults who are resilient disciples live with a

sense of mission, which means wanting others to see Jesus reflected in their lives and

having a personal sense of responsibility to share their faith (Kinnaman and Matlock

178–81).

Mission is the responsibility of every believer in Christ, which is undeniable from

Scripture (1 Pet. 2:12; Rom. 10:14-15; 2 Cor. 5:20-21). This personal mission is

grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity. Just as the Father sends the Son (John 1:14; 3:17)

and the Father and Son send the Spirit (John 14:26; 15:6), so the Triune God sends the

church out on mission in the world (John 17:18; 20:21).

Ministry Implications of the Findings

This research project illuminated several strategic implications for Crosspoint

Church. First, Crosspoint Millennials must be challenged more. Participants in the focus

group gave a resounding call for messages that were directed toward maturing disciples.

They also wanted to be called to higher levels of surrender and sacrifice. This should

begin with a thoughtful review of the pedagogy of Crosspoint's preaching, as well as the liturgy of the worship gatherings. Many of the churches in this study used expository preaching more than topical preaching. Most of them called people to surrender each week. Crosspoint should also regularly call people to deeper surrender, faith, and repentance. This rhythm will require consistently challenging the assumptions of MTD as well as the UGRE by proclaiming a Christ-centered biblical gospel. Also, Crosspoint's ministries need to be analyzed with consideration toward challenging and maturing disciples, children and youth, leadership pathway, discipleship training, and Home Groups.

The second implication is related to the first. Millennials are looking for biblical answers to difficult and controversial topics that they face in the culture. These include topics such as sexuality, self-identity, mental health, emotions (feelings-based epistemology), LGBTQ issues, and climate change, to name a few. Crosspoint has done this with some effectiveness in the past but needs to engage more in cultural conversations about topics that it has avoided. Some of these can be accomplished through preaching at the worship gatherings, but there are other means and venues where some of these topics could be addressed with greater sensitivity and effort. The ministry team needs to further explore options for addressing these difficult topics. As for weekend preaching, many of these topics can be delivered within an expository preaching framework. Cultural conversations can occur as part of the application of the text or by comparing current cultural realities to ancient ones. Crosspoint needs to wade fearlessly into the midst of the cultural dialogue in order to help Millennials navigate their spiritual lives in a sea of change.

The third implication has to do with Home Groups and Discipleship Groups. The data demonstrate that even though Crosspoint Millennials see the importance of groups, only 57 percent of those surveyed currently participate in a group. Discovery of why participation is so low warrants further investigation. In addition, strategies should be implemented to launch more groups, train more leaders, make groups more accessible, make joining groups more manageable, and provide flexible group options for parents. In keeping with the first implication, efforts should be made to ensure that all groups maintain a high-challenge, high-invitation culture. This can be done through the current coaching and leadership huddle framework.

Fourth, Crosspoint needs to invest time into helping Millennials develop personal spiritual rhythms that include, but are not limited to, prayer, Bible study, and worship. Millennials need to be challenged and equipped to radically reorient their lives in a culture of busyness and distraction. Crosspoint's ministry staff must spend focused time together, creating future strategic solutions for this problem. Since Crosspoint's launch, we have presented two teaching series that were focused on the spiritual disciplines. We also provided very practical tools and examples for congregants. Both series were well received and helped people practice the disciplines. There needs to be a regular corporate emphasis on the spiritual disciplines, which includes teaching as well as practical tools. One of the respondents from the focus group commented that Crosspoint's materials are challenging to find on the website and recommended that we have them on hand on Sunday mornings.

Finally, Crosspoint Millennials need help with living as God's sent people, on mission, in the world. This first means providing motivation, encouragement, and

assistance with personal evangelism. Crosspoint needs to consider how it can help Millennials know what they believe and why they believe. Consistent, practical training on how to share one's faith will also be helpful. Crosspoint has offered some training workshops in the past, but the opportunities are few and far between. Also, now that Crosspoint has been in its new building for two years, it needs to spend time investigating what local mission might look like, either corporately or through small groups. It should look into potential local partnerships as well as consider what new initiatives it might launch. Finally, Crosspoint needs to continue to inculcate its missional DNA in the hearts and minds of the church community through its preaching and its liturgy. As Crosspoint continues to grow, newcomers will need help understanding what it means to be part of a church that is on mission in the world.

Limitations of the Study

This study included Millennials born between 1980 and 2000. It also included semi-structured interviews from ministry leaders. The study may have been strengthened by speaking with Millennials from each of the churches included in the study. However, this would have been beyond the scope of the dissertation project.

For the focus groups, arrangements were made to interview thirty-two participants, but two people canceled at the last minute, bringing the total down to thirty participants. This did not change the overall results of the study.

For one of the MLs in RQ1, the phone conversation was corrupted by the recording software application. As a result, only half of the conversation could be transcribed. Fortunately, detailed notes were taken during the interview. Although half of

the interview could not be quoted, the responses were still usable. This lost information was not significant enough to change the overall results of the study.

In terms of generalizability for this study, it is worthwhile noting that Crosspoint's FMD were used as the framework for the project. It is a distinct discipleship framework; however, it is the opinion of this researcher, based on the literature review and semi-structured interviews, that the FMDs are similar to many discipleship frameworks. Two of the MLs' frameworks were almost mirror-images of Crosspoint's FMD.

Another consideration is that most of the churches in the study were Canadian, except for four. All the Millennials in the study were also Canadian and from one church. Interestingly, there were no noticeable differences in the results of the interviews between the Canadian and American MLs. It is believed that the results of RQ1 are generalizable for both countries. The results of RQ2, because they are localized, will be more difficult to generalize, even though their responses are consistent with the results of other studies from the literature review.

Unexpected Observations

Three unexpected results emerged from this study. **First, mentors and intergenerational relationships matter.** This theme came up a few times in the semi-structured interviews. A few respondents said they wished that they had more older members in their ministry settings who could provide mentorship and leadership for their participants. One participant said his church was attempting to pair interested young adults with older adults in a semi-formal mentoring relationship. This theme was far more pronounced in the Crosspoint focus groups, and it came up in each of the interviews.

There are many reasons why this theme emerged more in the focus groups: different questions were asked; different kinds of participants responded (MLs versus Millennials), or the local context was different. Whatever the reason, Crosspoint Millennials clearly value mentoring/intergenerational relationships and believe that they would benefit from them. The spiritual benefit of intergenerational relationships is supported in the literature (Hiemstra, Dueck, and Blackaby 32; Setran and Kiesling 206–07; Rainer and Rainer ch.2; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin ch.5). As Crosspoint seeks to launch more groups, empower volunteers, or create missional opportunities, it should consider how to include the older generations as potential mentors.

Second, do not underestimate the impact of warmth. The second serendipitous result was how Crosspoint Millennials described their local church culture as very loving, personal, hospitable, caring, and community-focused. This atmosphere was not only inviting but infectious. Since the launch of Crosspoint in 2010, we have endeavored to create a church culture that was welcoming, accepting, and accessible for all people, including de-churched and unchurched people. Powell, Mulder, and Griffin state that warmth is an essential cultural component in churches that wish to grow and reach young adults. She writes, "In our analyses of the terms young people and adults use to describe their own churches or parishes, we noticed repeated words such as welcoming, accepting, belonging, authentic, hospitable, and caring. We began to call this the warmth cluster. Across the board in statistical analyses, the warmth cluster emerged as a stronger variable than any one program" (Powell, Mulder, and Griffin ch.5). Millennials need to feel like they belong and that they matter.

Finally, embrace the surprise of suffering. This study focused on best practices for discipling Millennials. One of the factors promoting spiritual growth that emerged in the focus groups had little to do with church plans or strategies. It was the reality of suffering. When asked to identify the things that influenced their spiritual growth in positive ways in the past year, many pointed to difficult or painful experiences. These included losing loved ones, losing a beloved ministry leader, difficult situations at work, answering tough faith questions, interpersonal conflicts, losing a job, and having children. This result should not be surprising given Paul's words in Romans 5:3-4: "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." Hardship inevitably produces character, the fruit of the Spirit, in the life of a believer. It is one of God's great catalyzers of spiritual formation. It has been said that suffering can make one better or bitter, depending on how one responds to it. Churches cannot control whether believers will experience suffering. They can help them prepare for suffering, and they can walk with them through suffering. What this means is that much of spiritual formation is beyond the control of ministry leaders.

Recommendations

For the most part, the results of this study supported the research from the literature review. No generalizable new discoveries emerged. However, the study did provide specific ministry implications for Crosspoint church, which will be extremely helpful as Crosspoint plots a new discipleship strategy for the future.

In a future study of Crosspoint Millennials, I would recommend gathering more quantitative data with more specific or nuanced questions about discipleship behaviors

and beliefs. This might paint a more complete picture of the strengths and deficiencies of participants.

Postscript

My high school drama teacher used to tell his students, "You should always clap at the end of every performance. There are always two possible reasons to clap. Number one, it was good. Number two, it is over." As I write these final paragraphs, I am clapping.

I am thankful for my DMin journey. My thinking has been sharpened, and I have learned longsuffering and endurance. Along the way, I made some new ministry friends and gained new insights about my local ministry context. I have a more profound compassion for the Millennials I serve. Moreover, I have been spiritually formed while I have studied spiritual formation.

APPENDIX A

INVITATION AND CONSENT LETTER FOR PASTOR/MINISTER

October 1, 2019

Dear XXXXX,

RE: Research Interview for Church Leaders Discipling Millennials

Thanks for taking a moment to consider this invitation to participate in an important study related to your ministry. My name is Rob Chartrand and I am a student in the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, US.

I am presently working on my dissertation, which is focused on the spiritual formation of Millennials. As part of this project, I will be conducting semi-structured interviews with pastors and ministry leaders of ministries that have a reputation of reaching Millennials and that have fifty or more Millennials who regularly attend their ministries. My hope is to discover the best practices of churches that are discipling Millennials, both in Canada and the United States. I anticipate that this research will be helpful for my local church as well as many churches aspiring to disciple Millennials.

I have heard about your ministry and would appreciate learning more about it. I believe your input would be invaluable for this academic research. Would you consider taking part in this study by participating in an interview, either by phone or in person?

The final dissertation will be in aggregate form which will not identify individual participants. What you say in the interview will be kept in the strictest confidence. Your name, the name of your ministry, or any identifying features will not be referenced in the study. Instead, we will use pseudonyms. Further, the details of your ministry (location, persons) will be altered so that you or your ministry cannot be identified. The interview will be recorded. The data for this interview will be stored electronically, in password-protected folders that only I have access to. Any hard copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet that only I will have access to. In order to transcribe this interview into document format, I may enlist the transcription services of a professional, third-party institution, that has strict confidentiality protocols.

Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You can choose to not answer any of the questions and do not need to provide a reason for not answering.

To indicate your voluntary participation, please sign below. If you have further questions, please contact me. You can scan the attached document and email it to me or send me a digital picture of the signed document.

My e-mail is robert.chartrand@asburyseminary.edu.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Grace and peace,

Rob Chartrand

>>   CONSENT SLIP   <<

I voluntarily choose to participate in the study described above and so indicate by my signature below:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

APPENDIX B

MINISTRY LEADER SURVEY (MLS)

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. I want to take a moment and explain again the purpose of this interview.

I am presently working on my dissertation at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, US. This study is focused on the spiritual formation of Millennials and I hope to discover some of the best practices of churches that are discipling Millennials, both in Canada and the United States. I believe this research will be helpful for my local church as well as many churches aspiring to disciple Millennials.

As indicated in the consent form you signed, your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you and your ministry will not be referenced. So please feel comfortable to be completely open and honest. There are no right or wrong answers. I simply want to hear about your experiences and discoveries. You can choose not to answer any of the questions and you do not need to provide a reason for not answering.

I'm going to be recording this conversation, so please speak loudly and clearly. And let me remind you that all of the data gathered in this interview will be stored securely and then destroyed.

So, let's begin with the first question…

GRAND TOUR QUESTION
1. Tell me about your church/ministry. Why do you think so many Millennials are engaged in your church/ministry?

GUIDED TOUR
2. How does your church/ministry describe a mature Christ-follower (disciple)? Do you have a written definition?

3. Describe your church's strategy for discipling Millennials. How did you come up with this strategy?

4. What have you observed to be the key factors that influence Millennials' spiritual maturation?

THE FIVE MARKS
The next five questions are focused on five specific characteristics of a disciple. I've called them the "Five Marks of a Disciple." These marks are: Growth, Pursuit, Community, Service, and Mission. I'd like to ask you a question about each of these marks and I'll explain them as we go along.

5. The first mark is **Growth**. This mark is characterized by a life that is surrendered to Christ and a heart that is postured to grow. **What activities or practices does your church/ministry do to help Millennials engage in surrender and growth?**

6. The second mark is **Pursuit**. This mark is characterized by a heart that wants to know Christ personally by practicing spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Scripture reading, and corporate worship. **How do you help Millennials partake in personal spiritual disciplines and practices**?

7. The third mark is **Community**. This mark is characterized by a desire to love others and by living in intentional, Christ-centred community with other believers. **What has your church/ministry been doing to help Millennials participate in Christ-centered community?**

8. The fourth mark is **Service**. This mark is characterized by serving others and living generously. It includes the giving of your time, treasure, and talent. **What does your church/ministry do to encourage people toward service or generosity?**

9. The fifth and final mark is **Mission**. This mark is characterized by a desire to participate with Christ in his redemptive mission to save the world. This includes demonstrating and declaring the gospel. **What is your church/ministry doing to help Millennials engage in Christ's mission?**

CONCLUDING

10. What particular challenges have you faced in discipling Millennials?

11. What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Dear Participant,

Thanks for being willing to participate in this very important study. As you are aware, I am a student in the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, US. I am presently working on my dissertation, which is focused on the spiritual formation of Millennials.

As part of this project, I will be conducting focus group interviews with Millennials who are members of our Crosspoint Church community. In conjunction with the focus group, we are asking participants to complete a brief demographic survey. My hope is to discover more about what helps Millennials to grow as disciples. I believe your input will be invaluable for this academic research.

The final dissertation will be in aggregate form which will not identify individual participants. What you submit below or state in the focus group will be kept in the strictest confidence. Your name or any identifying features will not be referenced in the study. Instead, I will use pseudonyms. The focus group will be recorded. The data will be stored electronically, in password-protected folders that only I will have access to. Any hard copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet that only I will have access to. In order to transcribe this interview into document format, I may enlist the transcription services of a professional, third-party institution, that has strict confidentiality protocols.

Your participation in the demographic survey and the focus group is completely voluntary. You can choose to not answer any of the questions and do not need to provide a reason for not answering.

We want to help protect the privacy of other participants in the study. Therefore, we encourage you to keep everything discussed during the focus group **confidential**. While we cannot guarantee confidentiality by other participants, we will encourage it.

To indicate your **consent** and willingness to maintain confidentiality, please sign below:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY (DS)

Dear Participant,

Thanks for being willing to participate in this very important study. You are receiving this demographic survey because you have given written consent to participate in the focus group study, *Spiritual Formation of Millennials: An Exploration of Best Practices for Crosspoint Church.*

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You can choose to not answer any of the questions and do not need to provide a reason for not answering.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me. You can submit a hardcopy of the survey to me in person, or you can send a digital copy to my Asbury Seminary email address:

robert.chartrand@asburyseminary.edu

I look forward to receiving your responses.

Grace and peace,

Rob Chartrand

Full Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

1. What is your current age?   _____

2. Are you a biological male or female?   Male   Female

3. Are you married?   Yes   No

4. Do you have children?   Yes   No

5. Are you a student?   Yes   No

6. Are you employed?   Yes   No

7. How long have you been attending Crosspoint Church?   _____

8. How long have you been a follower of Christ?   _____

9. Have you been baptized?   Yes   No

    If *yes*, how old were you when baptized?   _____

10. Are you currently serving in a ministry role at Crosspoint?   Yes   No

11. Are you in a Home Group or Discipleship Group?   Yes   No

For questions 12-14, respond by checking one box per question:

12. I regularly practice spiritual disciplines (prayer, bible study, worship).

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. I look for opportunities to share my faith with others.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Growing as a disciple is very important for me.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL (FGP)

Thank you for joining us today for this focus group.

My name is Rob Chartrand, and this is my assistant _____. I will be moderating our time together. _____ will be acting as the note-taker and will help create the best environment for this discussion.

Our topic for discussion today is spiritual formation, also known as discipleship. We are receiving your input so that we can discover some of the best practices for helping Millennials grow into spiritual maturity.

You were selected because you consider Crosspoint your home church and because you are Millennials. For the purpose of this study, a Millennial is somebody who was born within the years of 1980 to 2000.

The results of today's interview will be used for my dissertation, which is focused on the spiritual formation of Millennials. My hope is to discover some best practices for discipling Millennials. I hope that this research will be helpful for Crosspoint church as well as other churches aspiring to disciple Millennials.

So, before we begin, I will present some guidelines for our conversation together:

Guidelines

- Let's refer to each other on a first-name basis. While this is a formal academic study, we'd still like to keep things comfortable and relaxed.
- There are no right or wrong answers, only differing points of view. We want to hear about your experiences and opinions.
- You do not need to agree with others' responses, but please listen respectfully as they share their views.
- We will be recording this conversation, so please take turns in speaking.
- Please talk to each other and not to me. My role will be to guide our conversation together.
- All data gathered in this discussion will be stored securely and then destroyed. You will not be identified by name in the final project. I may enlist the transcription services of a professional, third-party institution, that has strict confidentiality protocols in order to convert this interview into printed form.
- Please turn your phones to silent. If you need to respond to a call, quietly slip outside the room and rejoin us as soon as possible.

Let's begin with our opening question…

Questions

1. You might not all know each other. So, why don't we go around the room and have everybody quickly share the following information:
   - Name
   - When you first started coming to Crosspoint
   - Your first job (excluding babysitting and paper-routes)

2. How would you describe a mature Christ-follower? I'd like to capture your thoughts by putting them up on a flip-chart and I'd like to focus on three separate categories.
   - If you had to teach a friend some fundamental truths in order to become a mature disciple, what knowledge would you pass on?
   - If you followed a mature follower around for a week and observed their behavior, what would you notice is different from a non-mature follower or non-follower?
   - What are some of the core convictions and beliefs that drive a mature followers' decisions?

3. Think back over this past year to the things that influenced your spiritual growth in positive ways. What were they?

4. What has disappointed you about your own spiritual growth?

5. Who or what has most influenced your decision to surrender your life to Christ?

6. What is Crosspoint doing (or has done) that has helped you grow as a disciple?

7. Suppose you could make one change in how Crosspoint helps others to grow spiritually. What would you like to see?

8. Of all the things we discussed today, what to you is the most important?

9. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

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