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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Theological Education and Spiritual Formation in the Lives of Engaged, Emerging Adults

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by
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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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This thesis seeks to answer the following question: What is an effective discipleship method for emerging adults who are already engaged in IChurch? The method chosen was multi-layered and utilized corporate discipleship which involved a classroom setting geared toward theological and doctrinal education based on *Bloom-Anderson's* taxonomy of educational objectives, communal discipleship which was concerned with small group activities and peer-to-peer accountability, and personal discipleship geared toward individual spiritual formation given an edited list of Whitney's personal spiritual disciplines.

Participants were asked to take an introductory Theological examination which plotted them from *analyze* level to the *create* level of Bloom's taxonomy, indicating that they could think Biblically at a critical level and were on their way to being able to share their knowledge with others (*create*). Upon passing at least to an *analyze* point, they then underwent a spiritual formation assessment given six of Whitney's disciplines, and then were asked to journal their experience for four weeks. On the fifth week, they turned in their journals and took the theology exam again alongside the spiritual formation assessment. Results then were analyzed to see if this method created leaders who could disciple others.

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Abbreviations

DMIN *Doctor of Ministry*

CCP *Corporate, Communal, and Personal model of Discipleship*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Emerging adulthood in IChurch has been a subject of contention for quite some time now. Some leave the church, while others complain of spiritual stagnation. An intervention must address this situation. Is this truly a case of stagnation or lack of spiritual maturity? Whereas one may believe the former, the latter may ring truer. Mature believers are secure believers. The aim, therefore, was to implement a trackable educational structure that can trace spiritual maturation in the lives of engaged young adults in IChurch.

Ministry Context

IChurch considers itself to be “multicultural” and “multigenerational.” There are over twenty-seven different nationalities represented in its two services on Sunday. There are two primary languages spoken in the church: English and Spanish, and there is a service for each language. The church also has bilingual services at least once an annual quarter to unify the church. When writing this thesis, the church has 750-800 guests and members combined on a given Sunday morning. Statistically, half of the congregation speaks Spanish, while the other half speaks English. Although the church represents many cultures, there is only one English and one Spanish service.

IChurch is in Hickory, North Carolina, approximately fifty miles north of Charlotte. The town is comprised mainly of rural Southern Americans, and the majority is Caucasian. Hmong and Mexicans are among the most prominent minority demographics in the region. IChurch also tends to the needs of other, numerically smaller ethnic groups, among these being Puerto Rican,

Dominican, Haitian, Columbian, African American, German, and Canadian. To account for the vast diversity represented in the church, leadership has responded by having certain worship services be devoted to one specific culture. For example, one Sunday in February (Black History Month), the service was gospel-influenced. The church orchestrates prayer services to have each language spoken represented in the congregation on other occasions.

The church was founded in January 2014 when the senior pastor and a small team of missionaries moved from Larez, Puerto Rico, to Hickory, North Carolina. Although the church began in the fellowship hall of another church in a more agricultural area of the city, IChurch is now near the center of town, on the main road that connects Hickory to other smaller towns around it. The church is approximately five minutes from the downtown area and two away from the commercial district. Whereas most of the church's congregants are local, others travel from either Charlotte or several smaller towns such as Conover, Denver, Newton, Lenoir, or Hudson to attend. Therefore, IChurch gains much of its demographic variety from its convenient and centralized location.

From the point of its conception, the church has been housed in four different buildings. The first is the fellowship hall previously mentioned, the next in the sanctuary of a chapel owned by a local private Christian school, a church in a local strip mall, and finally, the building in which the church currently resides. The church now owns the property, which is a converted furniture factory.

The structure in which the church operates is primarily on a volunteer basis with limited staff. Employees of the church include the senior pastor, the worship leader, the administration leader, and the primary finance officer. Under the staff are volunteers that fall anywhere on the

church structure. To put it succinctly, the staff leads various divisions in the structure (described below). The staff ensures that the volunteers are cared for and manage church resources.

ICChurch's mission statement is: "Inspire people, help people, break bondage for His glory." The *I* in *ICChurch* stands for *inspired*. The lead pastor regularly states that, prior to moving to North Carolina, he understood that Hickory was full of believers who needed awakening to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the church's mission came from Ezekiel 37, where the dry bones came to life when God's Spirit *breathed* on them. Although Protestant, ICChurch is non-denominational. A robust Baptist doctrine pervades the church's doctrine of salvation, the nature and function of baptism, and the role of evangelism in the church. However, ecclesologically the church has more of a Presbyterian influence. There is an administrative board that oversees church funds executively, and there is now a pastoral board to oversee the spiritual direction of the church. Services tend to be more charismatic; the worship ministry alone has more than 100 participants that alternate, including flags, pantomime, dance, and a more traditional worship band. Therefore, the church's doctrine is as diverse as its ethnic makeup.

Alongside the mission statement, ICChurch also has a vision statement: "That the world desires to know about the experience with God in ICChurch." The church adopts an attractional model, focusing most of its efforts on bringing those who are either unchurched or non-Christian into the building. As a missionary founded the church, the church has many events that pour back into the local community, several being youth oriented.

ICChurch, in both English and Spanish, has what are called *divisions* and *departments*. Divisions split into two within the organization: *Experience* and *Flock*. The Experience division deals exclusively with Sunday mornings that involve production, cameras, worship, sound, and

lights. This division also is concerned with any needed production during special events, youth, or Wednesday studies.

The departments within the Flock division serve as leadership structures for *ministries*. In short, departments house multiple ministries. There are five main departments in IChurch: Develop, Equip, Care, Operations, and “Additional,” which include youth and the childrens’ ministry. At least two ministries fall under the structure of each department. Leaders of the departments are *Department Directors*; leaders of individual ministries are *Ministry Directors*.

Develop serves as the primary tool for evangelism at IChurch, finding opportunities to perform outreach to the local community. Any public service opportunity goes through this department and is then promoted to the church to gather volunteers, such as cleaning Hickory’s streets of trash or serving in soup kitchens on Saturdays. Inside the church, the department also serves as a means for new visitors to feel at home, keep records of visitors' information, and give gifts to first-time and second-time visitors.

IChurch has several educational outlets for visitors who want to become members. The outlet that performs these services is the *Equip* department. This section of the church educates new or potential owners of the mission, vision, values, and doctrine the church holds to inform them better before they make the decision to join the church. Baptism classes are also held in this department, ensuring that the baptismal candidate understands their decision to be immersed, including the doctrine that baptism is not salvific, and making sure that the individual's decision is completely voluntary.

At the church, members are called *owners*, indicating that they share responsibility for upholding the building financially through giving or serving under a specific ministry. To further explain the differentiation between an *owner* and a *servant* in the church’s vocabulary, any

owner who volunteers under a ministry is a *servant*. In contrast, an *owner* proper does not volunteer in any ministry but is invited to any church function and participates financially.

If one wishes to become a servant at IChurch, the Equip department is responsible for teaching the church's values. After one goes through the values curriculum, they may serve in any ministry they desire. The values of IChurch spell out the acronym, *P.A.S.T.O.R.A.L.* There are eight distinct classes the owner needs to complete before being considered a servant, representing each of the values. The values are *passion, affection, servanthood, totally-in, orderly, radical, approved, and logistical.*

Therefore, the Care department ensures that the church is taken care of pastorally. On the church structure, there is the *P-Team* or pastoral board. These individuals perform visitations, weddings, funerals, and baby dedications for the congregation. This board works directly with the senior pastor and reports to him anything regarding church discipline and the departments' health and ministries. The P-Team also serves as "co-leaders" to Department Directors, ensuring that the departments are spiritually healthy and caring for any needs the Department or Ministry Director may have biblically. Small groups, or as IChurch calls them, *Family Groups*, also fall under this department. Among Family Groups are special interest groups, such as addiction recovery; Sunday school classes; and small groups held twice per month pertaining to the month's sermon series.

After the Care department is *Operations*, which deals primarily with how the church runs physically, involving ushers, the parking team, the bus ministry, security, and church maintenance during the week. The *Additional* section deals with young adults, youth, and childrens' ministry.

The senior pastor's son began the youth ministry titled *Switch*. At its initial stage, Switch housed fourteen-year-olds to eighteen-year-olds. Those who aged past the eighteen-year-old threshold graduated to serving in the church community on Sundays. However, as the church grew, so did the youth ministry. Throughout the years, Switch became the primary organism for numerical growth in the church, so much so that Switch currently has an entire youth wing dedicated to the ministry.

Switch operates on Fridays to counteract sporting events that occur on the same day. On a given Friday night, Switch houses 120-150 youth. On Friday nights, the youth at 7:00 pm enter a worship service. After roughly three songs, a sermon is given, geared to the high school experience, with an emphasis on living a holy life. After the sermon, the youth then go to the "Switch room," where an entirely youth-run volunteer staff (the "Unit") cooks food and makes drinks for a price. At 10:00 pm, the night ends, and the volunteer staff recap the night's wins and losses and cleans the areas in which they are in charge. The entire structure of the church is mirrored in the leadership of the youth, involving their own worship team, production, ushers, and operations team. Security attends these nights as well, which consists of various parents of the youth.

The youth reflect IChurch's value of multiculturalism, as most of the youth are Hispanic. However, demographically, these youth are at least second-generation Hispanic, meaning that although their parents migrated to the United States, the youth's primary language is English. Although they *appear* Hispanic, many do not speak Spanish, nor do they necessarily hold the same customs their parents or grandparents do.

As the years have passed, the age range has varied within the youth ministry. The current structure of the church ranges from various classes of *IKids*, the church's children's ministry

(ages 0-9), to *Reset*, middle school (ages 10-12), then to Switch (13+). In 2017, the ministry acknowledged a clear gap between the youngest age in Switch to the oldest. At that time, there was no “cap” on the age, leading to confusion and potential issues with older individuals who still attended youth well into their twenties. There was also an age gap. While the oldest in Switch were in their early twenties, there was an absence of twenty-three- to thirty-four-year-olds that were not present in Sunday service. This need led to the creation of *Nomad*; a young adult ministry focused on those at the college-career stage of life. This ministry would not meet on Friday nights as Switch did; they would convene on Saturdays. The date change would allow the adults to still serve in leadership at Switch on Friday and receive the Word on Saturday. The group would meet at a different location within Hickory each month, often “taking over” a social gathering or restaurant whenever they met. In another sense, this ministry was mission-minded, as they were communal religiously yet engaged with the culture.

However, when COVID-19 occurred, the ministry shut down, as there were no longer any social spots open, therefore dissolving *Nomad*. IChurch has recovered all lost numbers from the forced shutdown as it stands today. Switch, however, is now in the process of changing as the founding youth leader went to start his church. In *Nomad*’s absence, the youth ministry again suffers from factions within the age range. Currently, there are several subgroups that exist within Switch: The young teenagers that have grown up in church and recently “graduated” from *Reset*, another group composed of what has become known as “Switch 2.0,” the teenagers that just started attending the ministry before COVID occurred and have now rejoined, most of which serve Friday nights, the now “Switch 1.0” which are the late high school to early college-aged youth now in leadership who were under the previous youth leader, and then what is now called “Switch X,” the college-career age that survived *Nomad*’s dissolving.

Throughout the various subgroups, the least committed would be those from eighteen to thirty-four years old. Although many returned after COVID procedures lessened, this group is the one that is more likely to leave the church unexpectedly. Specifically in this age range, many reasons are given as to why someone would leave the church. Among these reasons are the desire to start a family, a new career focus keeping them from attending on Sunday, or a job that has them relocate. But given the church's statistical information, these explanations for leaving do not appear to be the majority. The most common reason those who left is that they never found a community to call their own, matching the existing demographic of young adults in IChurch that found a sense of community in Nomad where they were taught theology and doctrine alongside social aspects such as the importance of sharing a meal together.

Community and doctrine belong together. One should find a social group in which to belong at a church alongside being taught foundational spiritual doctrines that train them up to maturity. Therefore, if these young adults were introduced to essential Christian teachings to ground them in the faith, no matter what social situation or pandemic arises, they would be able to stand firm and not waiver in staying committed to the Body of Christ.

Indeed, maturity in Christ is an essential characteristic for Christians. The church is responsible for growing young believers into men and women who love the Lord with their minds and emotions. As young adults, being emotionally swayed by a culture that worships emotion is ever-tempting. Still, IChurch is in a unique position to educate young believers in the truth and *inspire* young leaders to pour into their peers. Spiritual maturation must go alongside physical and emotional development, for one growth stunts the other.

Problem Presented

For the past eight years that IChurch has been active, youth retention has never come easily. There has almost always been a “revolving door” of sorts where once the young person leaves the youth program, they most likely will not come back. Those who did not find a home serving in a particular ministry either stayed in the youth program far past their demographic or left the church altogether.

Upon reflecting on why youth tended to leave so often, the question arose: Was there a disconnect between social interaction and sound theological education? When young people left the church, they did so when the church no longer provided for their social needs. They had not found a greater purpose than simply “hanging out” on Friday nights. If the church did not provide the primary outlet to fit this demographic’s social requirements, they turned to others who did not share the same values the church reflects. This influence increased the gap that already existed between what the church provided and the interests the young adult had. Values were “smuggled in” via the community with which the believer surrounded themselves, leaving them prey to worldly influences. Community fosters growth, and therefore, the question persisted: Was IChurch fostering a community that encouraged spiritual growth to prevent foreign doctrine from leading the youth astray?

Typically, two types of youth stayed in the church. Either they genuinely adopted spiritual disciplines for themselves and wanted to discuss things like the Trinity, the nature of God, soteriology, and the like, or they simply came on Sundays with little to no fruit of genuine spiritual growth. The issue was that the youth who grew into emerging adults who were self-disciplined enough to make their faith their own were the exception, not the rule. Many emerging adults sought to grow *outward* socially rather than *inward* spiritually.

Among those who chose to stay in church there were those who tended to be very active, yet somewhat doctrinally shallow. They tended to focus on *outward growth* by calculating numerical growth in the ministry without thoughtful introspection of daily spiritual living. Usually when asked if the more active individuals spent time reading the Bible or praying, common responses were that they did not enjoy reading the Bible or they found it difficult to understand. Others emphasized prayer, as that was how they “communicated” with God. Upon further reflection, there was an obvious issue to this perspective since one’s prayer life ought to reflect the words of Scripture. Furthermore, many of these individuals also confessed that there was a constant frustration that they did not “hear” from God. “Hearing from God” was a common phrase echoed throughout the youth ministry. When pressed for further information, there was often very little understanding among this majority that how one may “hear” from God is discerned through how He speaks through the Word. Without developing the discipline of understanding the Word of God, they would have had an ongoing difficulty discerning the “voice” of God.

Another common issue within the more active young adults in the church was an unhealthy expectation of continual, sensational experiences of God’s manifest presence. Young adults have expressed consistent problems with “connecting” to God. When they used this terminology, they likely meant that they did not feel His presence sensationally during their time of prayer and worship. The issue was connected to a severe lack of consistent prayer, Scripture reading, fasting, and other core disciplines. Those involved in the youth ministry were often discouraged and needed counsel when they did not have an experiential connection with God. As a result, the youth turned away from attempting to develop a continual practice of the disciplines, ultimately stemming from a lack of education concerning spiritual practices.

Following an overall lack of discipline in their personal lives, the more involved young adults often turned to popular internet preachers or “influencers” to better understand their faith and practice. The issue that arose was that there is no way for the church to manage to whom the youth are listening. Those who have the most followers on social media do not by necessity have the most solid doctrinal standpoint on pressing issues. When counselling these individuals, there was a myriad of work in having to undo what internet personalities have indoctrinated. The looming presence of social media has also added to the sensation of isolation from the church. The youth tended to turn to social media influencers before going to trusted sources in the church. Personal “spirituality” had taken the place of communal discipleship, and often the youth leader did not learn of the detrimental effects of this level of isolation before there was severe damage done to the youth’s doctrine and overall mental health.

Those who were less involved turned to occultism or occult-adjacent activities. Youth had often come and explained that they had turned to healing crystals, meditation, “manifesting” things into existence, or other New Spirituality practices to compensate for their lack of spiritual direction and accountability. Many of those individuals stayed in the church but constantly posted on social media the harms of “organized religion” and syncretized their understanding of Christianity with otherwise non-Christian sources.

Whether involved in the church or not, an epidemic among IChurch’s young adults persisted. Those who were more engaged tended to deal more with sensationalistic frustration in their spiritual walk, leading them to turn to those on social media who “have the answers,” harming their faith in such a way that they had trouble discerning truth from falsehood. Those who chose not to get as involved fell prey to occultist practices, syncretizing what they understood of Christianity in the process. Sensationalism, unfounded doctrinal influence, and

New-Spirituality-induced syncretism alike were caused by a lack of information from trusted sources about what Christian spirituality truly is biblically. Thus, the problem in IChurch was that emerging adults lacked a working model for spiritual formation.

Purpose Statement

Although the reality is that many emerging adults in IChurch lack spiritual maturity, one had to ask, was there an educational system that fostered their maturity within the church? Moreover, the church had presented programs that have not encouraged long-lasting results. There was always a missing link between *knowing* and *doing*. After going through introductory courses that explain the basic premise of why the church existed and how the church executed ministry, they either chose to become a member or “owner,” as the church said, or they could take more classes to learn how to serve within the church. Below are outlets in the church’s educational programs for people to grow *outward* in their faith by forming strong connections with those who serve in their ministry, but not necessarily *inward* in their affections toward God in the areas of theology, apologetics, or foundational spiritual disciplines.

IChurch has plenty of educators yet lacked an educational model to take the believer into all the depth of wealth that a steady walk with Christ should exemplify. Emerging adults were the target for this project because they were not only the primary demographic that left IChurch but their stage of life was the perfect opportunity for them to become rooted in the faith.

By incorporating spiritual formation in this transition period of their lives, there was ample opportunity for them to become fortified disciples. Spiritual formation and transformation occur when the believer grows into maturity. Thus, as these young people grow in physical and professional maturity, spiritual growth should be implemented alongside these other factors, strengthening the young believer into who they will be for the rest of their lives. Therefore, this

DMIN project aimed to design and incorporate an educational-theological model to provide a measurable growth track for maturity in IChurch's emerging adults.

Basic Assumptions

Before delving into the specificities of the project, one must address certain presuppositions in this study. Firstly, one must assume that the participants are honest with their answers when asked. One must also assume that the individuals in the survey represent the whole, meaning that the youth leaders sampled live similarly to and would develop likewise to other youth leaders in the church. Their desire to grow would also influence their answers to prompts. Therefore thirdly, the leadership involved should seek to deepen their knowledge of God and put in the work required for growth; ultimately, they persevere through the program to the very end.

Consequently, the leadership should make time to participate in the studies, following the supposition that these emerging adults see the need in the church and wish to join in fortifying their beliefs. Not only is their time needed to participate, but the assumption extends to the notion they will make every effort to be prompt and attend every session. Finally, there is an underlying assumption that participants will want to carry what they will eventually learn to others. If they do not see this project to better disciple others, knowledge for knowledge's sake is not a fruitful venture. Those who make it into this program are assumed to be at the point of teacher and mentor. As this study seeks to solidify believers as disciple-makers better, the desired outcome would be that they will be those disciple-makers with the youth ministry.

Definitions

This project dealt with the discipleship process at IChurch. Specific terms used throughout this project require further explanation within IChurch's specific context. Keywords to be defined include discipleship, emerging adulthood, Generation Z (or *Gen Z* for short), Millennials, spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and theological education. Some terms will overlap in the process of explanation.

Deconstruction. The process by which the individual strips apart core tenants of Christianity to see what is culturally influenced or doctrinally true. This process occurs due to a decentralization between the individual and the cultural context they reside, as the individual is encouraged to go through this process *on their own*, suspicious of all institutions that may influence (or inhibit) this process.¹

Discipleship. Witherington understands the concept as a participatory process in which one becomes more Christlike.² Paul Pettit explicates that discipleship also contains a social aspect. The means of discipleship is mentorship, and the Christian's maturation is the result.³ Finally, there is an act of obedience that accompanies the social aspect of transformation. David Dockery writes that the primary goal of discipleship is to train others to "do all that [Jesus] commanded."⁴ Discipleship for IChurch is not strongly advertised other than introductory classes to become an *Owner* (church member). Leadership is actively attending to the church's overall lack of discipleship culture.

¹ James Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 90.

² Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Westmont, InterVarsity Press, 2016), 158.

³ Paul Pettit, ed., *Foundations of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2016), 105.

⁴ David Dockery, ed., *Theology, Church, and Ministry: A Handbook for Theological Education* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), lxxvii.

Emerging adulthood. A time in a young adult's life from college age to the beginning stages of their career. Seversen defines the term as the age range between eighteen to twenty-nine.⁵ Currently, two generations make up this range: Millennials and Gen Z. Both generations comprise a section of IChurch's youth ministry.

Engaged youth. The demographic measured will be those who are actively involved in church leadership. According to Bergler, this group comprises emerging adults who are apt to evangelize to their peers.⁶ This model will prove effective if taken and promoted by young leaders to others in their sphere of influence who may be less involved in church or ministry.

Generation Z. White informs his readers that this generation was born somewhere between 1995-2010.⁷ In IChurch, these individuals are in youth leadership and currently run "Switch 2.0" mentioned earlier.

Millennials. Otherwise known as *Generation Y*. Townes understands this generation to be born between 1977-1995.⁸ Younger Millennials help lead "Switch X."

New Spirituality. The postmodern syncretism of Eastern religions, occultism, scientism, and Christianity.⁹ This recent phenomenon sprouted from capitalism, American individualism, and philosophy of science.¹⁰ Societal norms are often placed at a higher value than religious

⁵ Beth Seversen, *Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 9.

⁶ Thomas E. Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity," *Christian education journal*. 17.1 (2020): 80.

⁷ James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 29.

⁸ Stephanie Townes, "A Theology of Gratitude for Rising Generations," *Anglican Theological Review* 103, no. 3 (August 2021): 349.

⁹ Matti Kamppinen and J. P. Jakonen, "Systems Thinking, Spirituality and Ken Wilber: Beyond New Age," *Approaching Religion* 5, no. 2 (2015): 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

norms, and modernity is placed above tradition.¹¹ Often what accompanies these practices is the incorporation of pagan material religion, such as wearing crystals.¹² The terms *spirituality*, *New Spirituality*, *New Spirituality*, and *New Age Spirituality* will be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

Spiritual disciplines. External actions, private or public, that lead to edification for the believer. Whitney understands the disciplines as those acts in Scripture that lead to godliness once put in motion.¹³ IChurch as an organization focuses on *active* disciplines such as worship, communal fasting, and the exhortation of the Word. The deficit is found in the lack of attention to the private or interpersonal disciplines, some examples being Scripture devotion, silence, solitude, and community.

Spiritual formation. The deepening of one's walk with God because of the implementation of the disciplines. If the disciplines are *acts* that lead to Christlikeness, then formation is dealt with *attitude*. Whitney understands formation to be how one manifests the *fruit of the Spirit*, attitudes one adopts the more centered in Christ one becomes.¹⁴ Paul, in Galatians 5:22, however, understands that the fruit, like the *works of the flesh*, addressed earlier in the chapter, is the link between attitude and action and a result of saving faith.¹⁵ The fruit, therefore, is actions that result from a formation of affection rather than the affections themselves. Thus, it

¹¹ Mika Vähäkangas, and Fridlund, Patrik, eds. *Philosophical and Theological Responses to Syncretism: Beyond the Mirage of Pure Religion* (Boston: BRILL, 2017), 204.

¹² Tenno Tiedearu, "The Practice of Wearing Crystals in Contemporary New Spirituality in Estonia: Supporting Oneself in Everyday Life," *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 13, no. 1 (2019): 133.

¹³ Donald S. Whitney & J.I. Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2016): 2.

¹⁴ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 6.

¹⁵ P. Adam McClendon, *Paul's Spirituality in Galatians: A Critique of Contemporary Christian Spiritualities* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015), 119.

is vital to keep the two terms above concerning one another but distinct from one another. Formation of character leads to discipline of the body, soul, and spirit. Formation proper is rarely, if ever, discussed in IChurch, indicating a need to secure young believers in their identity in Christ as they seek to be more Christlike. There is, therefore, a natural connection between terms like discipleship, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual formation.

Theological education. The method by which a believer can think about and articulate central themes of Christian doctrine. Dockery explains how having a solid understanding of who God is, how His Spirit operates, and the process of sanctification ought to propel the Christian not only *vertically* toward God but *horizontally* toward others.¹⁶ Theological education is primarily the church's responsibility and is essential to one's understanding of spiritual formation.¹⁷ The aim of this project is not to train young believers in all things of theology but instead to ground them in essential doctrines that anchor them during a stage in life that is constantly in a flux of "planting" and "uprooting," be that at college, career path, or family expansion.

Youth. Individuals who are between eighteen to twenty-nine years old. IChurch has youth programs that run from middle school through college-career. Therefore, the term *youth* is used more liberally in this paper. Namely, *youth* and *emerging adults* and *young adults* will also be interchangeable terms.

Limitations

Many factors presented challenges, or limitations, to the study-at-hand. One such limitation was be the amount of time dedicated to the study. Those involved may have had

¹⁶ Dockery, *Theology, Church, and Ministry*, lxxv.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, lxxiv.

extenuating circumstances like attending other church meetings, work, or family-related obligations that may arrive unexpectedly. Thus, the project must occur promptly.

Another limitation that could have presented itself was the day that everyone could meet to participate. Wednesdays are typically church meetings, and youth service is on Friday. Therefore, the day chosen between these two events may dictate who could participate and who could not.

Not only was the day of the week chosen limiting to who could attend, but also whether the participant had a car or someone with whom they could ride. Many emerging adults on the younger end of the spectrum did not have a car themselves and consistently had to ask for rides from other youth. This could have caused a potential issue, as consistency in attending may have depended on their ride.

Since the project was focused already on small sample size, participant dropouts and those who could participate generally could have been smaller than the sample pool. Even if one participant dropped out, it could have been detrimental to the study, depending on how many emerging adults signed on to the project. A hyper-focused sample would not have been beneficial in attempting to extrapolate findings for others.

Bias was also a limitation. If the observer showcased a leaning toward the thesis, questions could have confirmed the bias. In any study, the goal is to be as unbiased as possible to glean better data. Therefore, the researcher had to be aware that bias could subtly show up unexpectedly.

Finally, the level of honesty that one put forth in the project would be considered a limitation. If participants did not feel that they could be vulnerable in their answers concerning

their experiences, false data could have arisen. Providing a space where honesty is encouraged helped lessen the effects of this limitation.

Delimitations

Since this project exclusively deals with Millennials and Generation Z, this is the first delimitation stated. Only youth ministry members were pulled and asked to participate as the study began.

Specifically, the only ones chosen from a pool of young adults were between eighteen and twenty-nine. Therefore, older Millennials and younger members of Generation Z did not participate. This provided a parameter for emerging adults dealing with the same issues that others in their age range may have had in common.

Alongside only allowing emerging adults to participate, only *engaged* young adults (those who actively volunteer on youth nights) could participate. As this project was concerned with spiritual maturation, those already in progress of maturity were the primary focus of this exercise. One desired outcome of the project was that the participants pass this knowledge to their peers, who may be less concerned with spiritual maturity.

A further delimitation was the chosen amount of time to conduct this study. The project at hand could have been significantly longer than it is. Still, for sake of a desire for consistency of attendance and clear end date, the time frame was significantly yet purposefully constrained.

Another delimitation was the type of questions designed for this type of study. This project was centered around a particular group of people; thus, questions needed to be catered to their experience specifically. A potential issue was that some questions did not resonate with them.

The final delimitation was that this intervention was concerned with the last three levels of the *Bloom-Anderson* Taxonomical model. These tiers are *analysis*, *synthesis*, and *creation*. Potential stakeholders had to pass an initial test to participate in this project.

Thesis Statement

Although one must not feel the need to sacrifice theological soundness for social settings, it is equally valid that community fosters spiritual growth. Maturation comes from communal input. Walking with emerging adults as they go through life's initial challenges reinforces that the church is a place where they can turn for help. College professors, employers, and peers are already forming emerging adults in the community. IChurch has a responsibility to prepare their young adults to be responsible Christ-followers wherever they choose to go in life.

As an increasing number of their age group turned to alternative spirituality and apathetic secularism as a substitute for the faith, the church needed not only to understand that this was the *wrong* trajectory but explain *why* it was so. By grounding the church in sound, historical, biblical truth, the Christian easier discerns truth from falsehood and is empowered to offer a steady defense against the works of the enemy.

There must be a balance between social acceptance in the Body and personal spiritual growth. The current message is to go where one feels they "belong," all the while practicing private spirituality that can neither be accepted by the church nor falsified by the Body. This privation of spiritual practices seeped into the church because she is unable to distinguish truth from lie. The need for further Biblical education in IChurch was paramount.

If the servant body was not equipped to speak out against such claims, what could be said about the average churchgoer? Therefore, those more involved in ministry had a responsibility to

feed the flock with sound doctrine to fortify the Body of Christ. Therefore, volunteers were educated to respond better, guide, and correct their peers as they better understood the Word to respond to the world more appropriately.

Thus, IChurch played the role of teacher and disciple-maker to these emerging adults. Secularism was already teaching them the ways of this world. However, sound theology creates stable Christians. As the emerging adults navigate life in this new stage, a program that teaches them and grows them deeply in the faith was created to anchor them for the arduous road ahead.

The emerging adults that were the focus of this project were those that are involved in church, which included younger church leadership and servant body. They underwent a spiritual formation program built on an already established taxonomical structure, namely, that found in *Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Systems*. The aim, therefore, was that as they grew doctrinally and in their personal spiritual life, they would "climb the ladder" hierarchically within the structure. Eventually, the leadership was able to teach others their age as well. Ultimately, if IChurch disciplined emerging adults with a sound, educational-theological system, they would then grow spiritually into maturity.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

ICChurch is what many consider to be a multicultural church. What one means by the term *multicultural* in postmodernity and the political connotations that ensue are due to further examination. How young adults adapt to a multicultural context is worth noting as well as the emerging adult's tendency to advocate for those who may share a different cultural background. Social activity and religious disaffiliation have correlated more highly than ever over the past two decades. How institutionally skeptical youth interact with the church and its model of discipleship must be addressed to better further the conversation in spiritually maturing emerging adults. How can one disciple a young adult who knows little of the concept and is initially wary of religion in general? This chapter will show that the immediate engagement of young adults in a discipleship model yields greater results of having an active spiritual life and a natural progression into the next generation of church leadership. The entire process begins with enablement and mentorship.

Literature Review

When addressing discipleship among emerging adults, several factors must be considered. In the postmodern age, and especially in ICChurch one must consider the implications of multiculturalism within a globally interactive and socially aware climate, as ICChurch serves many cultures with various backgrounds. How emerging adults have dealt with the globalization of ideals has varied in the United States, but what has arisen within the past two decades is the rise of "Nones" as a response to dissatisfaction with what religion seeks to provide.¹⁸ "Nones" are part of a greater phenomenon of self-identification that has risen in the past decade, underscoring the importance of identity formation concerning emerging adults both within and

¹⁸ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 44.

outside church walls, as emerging adults understand that identity is not only who one *is*, but what one *does*.¹⁹ Finally, a correlation must be considered regarding whether the church can be effective in forming identities within emerging adults as they are introduced to biblical discipleship models and church education.

Multiculturalism in Emerging Adults

Before addressing multiculturalism in the church, it would be best to discuss the concept outright as it relates to American political discourse. Adjunct professor of theology and culture and lead pastor of Mecklenburg Community Church James Emery White refers to 2020 census data, concluding that an estimate of over half of the US population will be part of a minority race.²⁰ Religion sixty years ago was the primary identity of Americans per sociologist William Herberg.²¹ However, Multiculturalism as a construct or discourse places (inter)national identity at the same level of “Americanism” as religion, perhaps even displacing it, whereas religion used to be the primary driving force among Americans, multiculturalism accepts several distinct identities at once.²²

These observations denote a shift in favor of the concept of multiculturalism. Social commentators six years prior saw multiculturalism among youth as a threat, stating that this displacement is not truly in favor of the individual, but is more of preferential consideration of

¹⁹ Kenneth Moser and Malan Nel, "The Connection between Youth ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 40, no. 1 (2019): 5.

²⁰ White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, 33.

²¹ Carolyn Chen and Russell Jeung, *Sustaining Faith Traditions: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion among the Latino and Asian American Second Generation* (New York: NYU Press), 8.

²² *Ibid.*

minority groups, thus is not seeking true equality among citizens.²³ Rather than promoting unity amongst American citizens, it was seen as promoting and perpetuating otherness.²⁴ Rather than diminishing nationhood and patriotism, multiculturalism as political discourse has rather showcased an increased pride in all nationalities represented by the citizen.²⁵

As one examines the status of where emerging adults stand in terms of discipleship and the church, one must also begin to track trends within the culture in which they abide. Professor of sociology and Asian American studies Carolyn Chen and Professor Russell Jeung commentate that many second-generation Asian American emerging adults, from as early as 2012, have been noted to have more intimate relationships with other races within their church congregations.²⁶ The term coined for this group is *ethnic transcendent*.²⁷ White concludes that as emerging adults are more connected to the people that are around them, they are connected to “a world beyond themselves.”²⁸

Another trend seen in the discourse of multiculturalism is the rise of secular pluralism. This is the idea that all worldviews are equally valid and equally true.²⁹ Pluralistic disparagement has reached the doors of the church, segregating Christian denominations not simply over

²³ Richard Lewis, ed., *Multiculturalism Observed: Exploring Identity* (Bruxelles, ASP: 2006), 73.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 75.

²⁶ Chen and Jeung, *Sustaining Faith Traditions: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion among the Latino and Asian American Second Generation*, 26.

²⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁸ White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, 33.

²⁹ Ibid., 23.

doctrinal disputes, but also cultural background.³⁰ As a result, the conversation of religious significance began, and cultural heritage and background started to supersede unifying doctrine in many evangelical Protestant denominations throughout the United States. The outcome being that over the past seventy years, evangelicalism has lost its social authority in the public sector.³¹ These results have led to the postmodern thought that religion should be a privately held belief but culturally has disappeared from the realm of relevance.³² Emerging adults then rightly ask how the Bible's teachings are still relevant when their culture constantly tells them that it is obsolete.³³

As emerging adults live in an ever-increasing multicultural age including the acceptance of many who may not look or act as they do, pluralism has also entered the "marketplace of ideals." Indeed, the implementation of these ideals evolved from an ever-increasing acceptance and promotion of the strong American values of individualism, postmodern self-expression, interreligious syncretism, and Capitalistic free-market enterprise.³⁴ Young people, as they are exposed further to other types of people, are also exposed to various backgrounds that may not align with a biblical Christian worldview. This leads one to conclude that as social interactions become increasingly ambiguous, so follows the emerging adults' own set of beliefs if not Scripturally grounded.

³⁰ Charles H. Lippy, *Pluralism Comes of Age: American Religious Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2000), 4.

³¹ Charles L. Cohen, and Ronald L. Numbers, eds. *Gods in America: Religious Pluralism in the United States* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2013), 105.

³² Seversen, *Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults*, 80.

³³ Witherington, *New Testament Theology and Ethics*, 34.

³⁴ Emily Sigalow, "Towards a Sociological Framework of Religious Syncretism in the United States," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84, no. 4 (December 2016): 1048.

Moreover, the ever-increasing market for competing worldviews increase a lack of psychological grounding in emerging adults. Theology and philosophy professor Bennie J. van der Walt concluded while studying Millennials and Generation Z that multiculturalism, and the various systems of thinking that with which it comes, increase anxiety amongst the demographic.³⁵ In an even more jarring revelation, van der Walt explains that the ISIS's success in recruiting and training emerging adults comes from the youth's desire to stop thinking so much about the truth values of competing ideas and simply accepting, without question, one set of ideals.³⁶ What was once thought to be a paraded philosophy of multiple truths accepted at once has increased the desire for young adults to adopt harmful ideologies to cease additional intellectual and religious dysphoria.

Social Awareness in Emerging Adults

As a brief observation of multiculturalism has shown, global interconnectivity does not end with simply a plurality of ethnicity. Plurality pervades many other moral aspects. Emerging adults, immersed in this world of international and interracial connectivity, have shown to be more socially involved in the plights of others. A recent handbook on higher education even mentions that the scholar must be both educator and activist.³⁷ Missioner for Congregational Vitality Stephanie Townes suggests that social media has opened emerging adults' eyes to social inequality as they seek to right wrongs, utilizing their digital proficiency.³⁸

³⁵ Bennie J. van der Walt, "Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview with a Younger Generation: Why and How Should It Be Done and Received?," *In die Skriflig* 51, no. 1 (2017): 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁷ Laura W. Perna, ed., *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research: Volume 35*, (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 5.

³⁸ Townes, "A Theology of Gratitude for Rising Generations," 349.

However, one must stop and ask, what is the source of right and wrong for the emerging adult? Postmodern secularization prevails in this sector of thought. Secularization is the process in which religious worldviews receive less support to flourish.³⁹ Indeed, the postmodern world does not concur that humanitarian ethics stems from biblical truths. In many cases, the Bible is the object of scrutiny rather than the tool to scrutinize. The current zeitgeist has become the “hermeneutical lens” through which one reads the Bible.⁴⁰ The tension in which postmoderns live is that, while many believe in objective morality, there is no God to provide those values to them. There have been, as apologist Timothy Keller explains, two primary approaches that the secular world has presented to counteract God as the center of objective morality: to deny the existence of objective moral values or to simply state them as fact, independent of any supernatural source.⁴¹

Researcher and religion professor Randal Reed reports statistically on this matter. According to the Pew research he utilized, 56% saw homosexual behavior as morally right in 2016, leading to only a small majority leading the conversation.⁴² However, there was more to be said concerning the minority. Although many millennials (who still are identified as emerging adults at the point of writing) believed that homosexual behavior is morally wrong, they still advocated for the right of homosexuals to marry and adopt.⁴³ White further explicates that this

³⁹ White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, p.23

⁴⁰ Witherington, *New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 34.

⁴¹ Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 188-189.

⁴² Randal Reed, "A Book for None? Teaching Biblical Studies to Millennial Nones," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 19, no. 2 (2016): 160.

⁴³ Reed, "A Book for None? Teaching Biblical Studies to Millennial Nones," 160.

level of acceptance amongst Generation Z extends to transgender rights as well.⁴⁴ Emerging adults are statistically inclined to reduce the power of oppressor groups to provide equity for whom they deem oppressed.⁴⁵ Chen and Jeung comment that among minority groups, second-generation Latinos provide a strong propensity toward social justice.⁴⁶

Secularization has indeed left its mark on how young people view social justice. Secularity, per Keller, seeks to work for the betterment of other humans to better be more socially active and responsible for even “strangers beyond our shores.”⁴⁷ The link between ethnic pluralism and secularization cannot be overlooked. As the world has become more culturally aware, questions arise concerning the objectivity of religious moral values. The world becomes more “tolerant” of the Other, understanding that not everyone sees right and wrong the same way. Unfortunately, secularism results in diminishing the value of its culture to yet another commodity. Emerging adults are, with their social outreach through social media and technology, reduced to a product in the guise of pluralistic ideology.⁴⁸ These individuals live in a culture where they are constantly bombarded with the charge to get the most attention, react, and “follow” as possible, allowing secular pluralization to appear to be the highest moral good in terms of social justice, but devoid of any objectivity or intrinsic value.

⁴⁴ White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, 33.

⁴⁵ Lewis, *Multiculturalism Observed: Exploring Identity*, 73-74.

⁴⁶ Chen and Jeung, *Sustaining Faith Traditions: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion among the Latino and Asian American Second Generation*, 2.

⁴⁷ Keller, *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 42.

⁴⁸ Os Guinness, *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Lost Art of Christian Persuasion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 16.

Racially and ethnically, emerging adults have increased diversity within local ministry contexts, be it directly or indirectly.⁴⁹ Whether or not they agree with homosexual or transgender behavior, studies have clearly shown that young people at the very least support their rights to behave the way they wish. The church is not segregated from its culture. The culture has influenced the church and its demographics underscore this reality.

The Growing Classification of *Nones*

Within the context of an ever-increasing social awareness among emerging adults, societal concern has replaced religious fidelity. *Nones* are typically comprised of the age range, at the point of Dr. Reed's research in 2016, between 18 and 29.⁵⁰ Connectivity to an increasingly pluralistic world has left the rising generation agnostic. This sociological classification does not necessarily dislike religion as many have an affinity for religion, but there is a gap between respect and need regarding faith.⁵¹ This group is "spiritual, but not religious."⁵² As the world becomes more complex for these young people, religious certainty has been replaced with more questions rather than answers.

White notes that when regarding theology, *Nones* typically reject any type of dogma or systematic belief.⁵³ These individuals harbor an overall distrust for systems, institutions, and

⁴⁹ Kara Eckmann Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad M Griffin. *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 41.

⁵⁰ Reed, "A Book for None? Teaching Biblical Studies to Millennial Nones," 154.

⁵¹ Townes, "A Theology of Gratitude for Rising Generations," *Anglican Theological Review* 103, no. 3 (August 2021): 349.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 348.

⁵³ White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, 44.

authorities who hold substantial power, while valuing authenticity and personal expression.⁵⁴ Furthermore, while many find comfort in distancing themselves from religion, they highly respect ethical leaders.⁵⁵ Doctrine and dogma is replaced in dialogue and inclusion of other beliefs.⁵⁶ However, this does not mean that they are necessarily leaving the church. Many *Nones* are also classified as “religious Nones”, insinuating that although some have left religion, others are influencing the church by their presence.⁵⁷ Thus, there is a rejection of theology without deconstructing religion. Interestingly, the *None* does seek the theological implications of religion for their answers regarding morality but sees it as something completely other.⁵⁸

Nones have been known to embrace multiple spiritualities at once. Once religion becomes one of many avenues through which one can find and interpret meaning in life, then multiple religious practices and beliefs can be incorporated into a disjunctive “personal orthodoxy” by which the individual follows. If there is no objective moral truth, per the postmodern directive dictates, then one can incorporate individualistic *truths* to create a catered meaning. The trend that follows is that the more religiously ambiguous a belief system is, the more apt they are at adopting said system and implementing it in their daily lives. Paganism and New Age are some of the more popular religious practices *Nones* have appropriated.

As materialism has progressed throughout American culture, material religion has begun to pervade the emerging adult’s religio-spiritual belief system. The increase of pagan incorporation in American religious circles dates to the 1980s, correlating to the rise of economic

⁵⁴ Van der Walt, *Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview with a Younger Generation*, 10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Townes, “A Theology of Gratitude for Rising Generations,” 349.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

prosperity that Americans enjoyed at the time.⁵⁹ A common type of pagan material religion that persists in *None* spirituality is crystal possession.⁶⁰

An Estonian study concerning emerging adult *Nones* revealed that these individuals do not necessarily believe that the various types of crystals they wear have some inherent meaning. When interviewed, the young adults could not answer basic questions as to *how* the crystals aided their personal lives in any concrete way. Moreover, meanings were reported to have *changed* over time the longer the person had a specific crystal in their possession. The study concluded that as moods changed, the meaning of a specific crystal would change as well.⁶¹ Within this belief system, there is no canonized holy book, but many esoteric works are considered appropriate to read. Holy books may or may not be used to assign meanings to crystals. Crystals are worn or kept in the home for various reasons, and the same crystal could even be kept for various purposes. For example, one crystal could aid the practitioner to cure anxiety, to ward off evil spirits, or even for healing purposes.⁶² Significance is dependently ascribed purely on the feeling of the practitioner.

Moreover, the significance of the crystal could even transfer from those of positive feelings to those that are more negative. In one case, as a participant was sleeping with a crystal necklace, they began to dream that the crystal was choking them rather than healing them.⁶³ This study underscores the problem of postmodernism in that meaning cannot persist beyond the

⁵⁹ Tenno Tiedearu, "The Practice of Wearing Crystals in Contemporary New Spirituality in Estonia: Supporting Oneself in Everyday Life," *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 13, no. 1 (2019): 134.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶¹ Tiedearu, *The Practice of Wearing Crystals in Contemporary New Spirituality in Estonia*, 137.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 138.

individual, the power of ascribed meaning can only exist within the subjective subtext of the practitioner's psyche. New Age spirituality does not satisfy the longings of *Nones*, but rather soothes them, allowing them not to think too deeply or intently on the paralyzing conclusion their society tells them to believe: That the universe is uncaring, unconscious, and meaningless.⁶⁴

The "spiritual but not religious" are only on the rise. Pastor and theologian David Dockery, referencing a 2017 Pew research study, stated that *Nones* have increased from 16% of the US population in 2006 to 23% in just eleven years.⁶⁵ Per Dr. Kara Powell, Director of Fuller Youth Institute and faculty member at Fuller Theological Seminary, *Nonism* is multicultural as well, with an increase of 7% more likely to be identified as such amongst Asian Americans.⁶⁶ *Nones* are typically held responsible for the decline in church attendance throughout the United States.⁶⁷ Thus, even within the church, the certainty of belief that religion has often provided in the past is now being replaced by moral ambiguity and doctrinal agnosticism.⁶⁸

Interestingly coupled with the concept of *Nones*, they are directed by a strong moral compass. Emerging adults operating within this framework are quite apt to social concern. Dr. Reed suggests that millennial *Nones*, although religiously disenfranchised, are quick to help the needy, serve in soup kitchens, and fight for positive change in the world.⁶⁹ *Nones*, therefore, may be skeptical about religious institutions, but are ironically hopeful, filled with a youthful zeal to leave the world in a better place than they left it.

⁶⁴ Keller, *Making Sense of God*, 14.

⁶⁵ Dockery, *Theology, Church, and Ministry: A Handbook for Theological Education*, xliv.

⁶⁶ Powell et al., *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 17.

⁶⁷ Reed, "A Book for None? Teaching Biblical Studies to Millennial *Nones*," 155.

⁶⁸ White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, 44.

⁶⁹ Reed, 160.

However, a present dilemma pervades this line of thinking, namely, that if objective moral values do not exist, then there is no objective reason for positively impacting the world before one dies. Intuitively, moral feelings lead to the belief of moral absolutes. The confliction that ensues, therefore, is a disparagement between cultural norms and moral intuitions. One study showed that emerging adults who claimed to either be religious or simply spiritual could not explain their moral inclinations. These individuals told the surveyor that they had a firm grasp of their faith before the study began, yet only seven percent of emerging adults could adequately identify the source of their moral values.⁷⁰

Perhaps in an even more shocking revelation, as the study continued, the same group that claimed that they had a strong connection to their faith practice admitted that personal gain far outweighed any religious or spiritual affiliation when making an ethical decision.⁷¹ This conclusion provides valuable insight regarding spiritually ambiguous worldviews, namely, that without a strong moral value system anchoring an individual, mutual self-interest will intercept the ethical decision-making process.

The ever-increasing influence of postmodernity further secludes individuals from others, making it significantly easier to consider only the outcomes in which the self benefits rather than the oppressed or downtrodden. Individualistic tendencies that pervade in a culture that promotes the importance of the self further isolates emerging adults from others, making ethical decisions increasingly ambiguous rather than concrete. Multiplicity of ideals and cultures therefore do not necessarily yield interconnectivity, rather, isolation from others is far more common. *Nones* live in a reality where the only absolute that exists is the self, therefore, all ethical decisions return to

⁷⁰ Patricia Snell Herzog, De André T. Beadle, "Emerging Adult Religiosity and Spirituality: Linking beliefs, Values, and Ethical Decision-Making," *Religions* 9, no. 3 (March 2018): 13.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

the benefit of the individual, thus they live in a contradictory space where social justice is heralded at the expense of the only liberating source of justice: The existence of objective moral values. This “religion of the self” therefore decentralizes the individual from their community and makes them their primary source for ethical decision making and meaning making. The attitude that *Nones* have taken underscore that society has moved past what was called *post-Christian* to *post-secular*.⁷² The capitalistic context in which this worldview finds itself “commodified and commercialized,” deifying good and pleasurable experiences over obedience to the truth.⁷³

Nones are increasing in number across the United States. Their influence is seen not only in their absence within churches but in their presence within. Churches are comprised of emerging adults in a pluralistic society, increasingly religiously ambiguous, and do not have a proper theological understanding to guide them through life. There is an ever-increasing need for theology partnered with social awareness among emerging adults, as many of them statistically speaking, if not *None* themselves, are *None* influenced.

Positive Change and Identity Formation

As was disclosed previously, an ever-increasing multicultural environment promotes emerging adults to further push for change, but they do not necessarily see religion as a primary outlet to perform such changes; this is a result of secularization promoting many young people, including the churched, to the identification of *None*. However, as multiculturalist dialogue and *Nonism* rises, a significant observation arises wherein there is an innate need to be *identified* with

⁷² Van der Walt, *Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview with a Younger Generation*, 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

something. Identity formation is paramount in the lives of emerging adults, as this stage of life is where they find who they truly are and begin to exercise it.

Identity theorists argue that one experiences many different “identities” throughout the day, depending on the salience of said identity.⁷⁴ If religious identity among emerging adults begins to fade, perhaps it is because that identity is no longer salient within the various social contexts of the individual.⁷⁵ This leads one to believe that *Nonism*, with the primary factor of promotion being secularization, provides fewer opportunities for the church member to exercise their faith in multiple contexts other than church. What would it look like if the believer could see the importance of their identity in Christ in *every* social context?

Identification with Christ makes the believer bound to their community, as the church is Christ’s Body.⁷⁶ The believer thus must be taught to form all opinions, aspirations, and choices on the character of Christ, as He is the primary identity marker for the life of any Christian.⁷⁷ A Christian is now a citizen of the Kingdom of God, and such a Kingdom requires conformity to the King.⁷⁸ Group identity through the church thus combats secularization by reinforcing ethical norms taught by Christ, thus providing not only a strong identity formation within the church member but also a strong ethic that is to be applied in the public square, proving cultural relevance.⁷⁹ Indeed, identification with Christ invites one into a personal and communal *mission*.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Reed, "A Book for None? Teaching Biblical Studies to Millennial Nones," 159.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 133.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁸ Witherington, *New Testament Theology and Ethics*, 561.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 567.

Identity, therefore, is never found in one's self-identity, it is formed by others.⁸¹ Indeed, identity in ancient cultures was confirmed by the elder and bestowed upon the individual.⁸² This process endowed by an honor-shame culture presents the believer with a process understanding that they are restored to Christ at the cross, but they are still being restored to Him by and through their community.⁸³ The individual was never separated from the communal context from which they derived. One example found in Christianity is the sacrament of *baptism*. The new believer is accepted by the community that baptizes them, confirming publicly that they are of the Body of Christ and together as a community they shall seek to be like Him, operating as one. Thus, a church that reinforces group identity proves a greater chance of combating secularization by forming salient Christians.

Identity formation in the Christian context also should appropriately change due to age and stage in life. Van der Walt theorizes at the time of adolescence should be the time in which the teenager is a *seeker*, meaning that they find for themselves what their beliefs are.⁸⁴ This is the stage of experimentation with various ideas and truth claims. They should be given space to ask questions, and better yet, be in a community where answers are given to objections that persist. By the time they enter emerging adulthood, these questions should be mostly answered and enter the stage of belief *ownership*.⁸⁵ The issue today is that many emerging adults are still in the

⁸⁰ Keller, *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World*, 135.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁸² Van der Walt, *Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview with a Younger Generation*, 7.

⁸³ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 98.

⁸⁴ Van der Walt, 6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

seeking stage rather than that of ownership. These individuals have statistically not *owned* their religious convictions until their thirties, correlating with the time they choose to get married and start a family.⁸⁶

Now a question must be posed, do Christians, specifically emerging adults, find a secure identity in the church if identity formation is present in the church? The answer is yes. Beth Seversen, Associate Professor in Christian Ministries in her studies states that young adults are “less likely to give up their religious identity” if they find themselves in Christian groups, campus ministries, or residential Christian colleges.⁸⁷ She continues, as emerging adults want to be *involved* in something bigger than themselves when they locate themselves within these communities, they form a positive religious identity.⁸⁸ Thomas Bergler, book author and Professor of Christian Thought and Practice, finds that *engaged* youth have more of a positive look on religion than simply *churched* youth, the difference being one group is active in their ministry context while the other takes a more passive role.⁸⁹ Therefore, when engaging with emerging adults, there must no longer be a line divided between who we are and what we do, as identity is formed and reinforced through *activity* and *involvement*.⁹⁰

Christian identity formation, like secularization, moves between cultural and generational boundaries. Studies show that ethnic identities “wane” when one becomes involved with

⁸⁶ Van der Walt, 7.

⁸⁷ Seversen, *Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults*, 20.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸⁹ Bergler, *Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity*, 80.

⁹⁰ Moser and Nel, "The Connection between Youth ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches," 5.

churches that empower young people with congregants of different nationalities.⁹¹ Ethnicity and racial background are seen as less important than religious background when paired with church involvement.⁹² Small group gatherings, the groundwork for group identity formation, are primary factors to promote church practice for young adults.⁹³

Secularization has promoted emerging adults to become spiritually active but religiously passive. This is reinforced through a scattering of identities. However, when one's identity is rooted in Christ and empowered by the church, studies show that church involvement increases. Churches that reinforce the salience of identity by practically involving emerging adults yield positive results not only in retention but the preparation of church leadership. Emerging adults want to be involved in ministry, and those involved are less likely to sway in their faith or simply "spectate" on Sunday morning.

Discipleship and Church Education

Thus, practical implementation of discipleship methods should be employed by the church to further educate young believers on whom they are called to be. Young adults have reported that Bible studies, taking sermon notes, and having discussions that challenge their way of thinking within the church are highlights in their process of spiritual growth.⁹⁴ Emerging adults want to be educated, and they want to know what it means to follow Jesus truly, without

⁹¹ Chen and Jeung, *Sustaining Faith Traditions: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion among the Latino and Asian American Second Generation*, 26.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹⁴ Seversen, *Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults*, 82.

“whitewashing” or “watering-down” Scripture.⁹⁵ But they want this not only in a classroom setting but relationally.

Ultimately, a discipleship process through which there is active church leadership has yielded successful results. Discipleship has been reported most effective when there has been a team of leadership (around 4 to 5 people) actively engaging in the lives of emerging adults.⁹⁶ Reports showcase that one-on-one mentorship, even within these teams of disciples, was proven to be the most helpful among young disciples.⁹⁷ Personal mentorship works most effectively because it appreciates diversity while simultaneously providing an avenue to incorporate sound theology, doctrine, and apologetics, into the discipleship model.⁹⁸ Theology is a practical discipline, biblical discipleship, therefore, is not only teaching theological premises in a vacuum but effectively “doing” theology.⁹⁹ In discipleship, the *head* must produce a change in *heart*, which leads to activity in the *hands*. As discipleship ultimately is about *following*, a mentor guides the believer in both orthodoxy and orthopraxy.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, mentorship is vital to worldview transfer. Without an older, wiser individual to show the next generation the way in which they should go, there is no hope that the younger generation will ever own any particular beliefs for themselves and will be forced to live in a world of utter isolation and self-reliance. Van der Walt describes a mentor as an “advisor, counsellor, guide, tutor, and teacher who is knowledgeable and holds vast experience in order to

⁹⁵ Powell et al., *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church*, 27.

⁹⁶ Seversen, 111.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁹⁸ Guinness, *Fool’s Talk: Recovering the Lost Art of Christian Persuasion*, 16.

⁹⁹ Dockery, *Theology, Church, and Ministry: A Handbook for Theological Education*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Petitt, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 105.

advance the growth of a younger person.”¹⁰¹ The worldview therefore leaves the realm of abstraction and takes physical shape in the form of the mentor.¹⁰² Practicality becomes paramount in the mentorship process. The younger individual properly sees that these lofty goals are achievable. Whereas emerging adults typically distrust organizations, they are far priver to mentors.¹⁰³

If emerging adults seek to be involved socially and the church can provide a discipleship model to do so, then the church should not only educate but provide outlets for leadership for the rising generation at hand. Bergler notes that the mark of true spiritual maturity is gaged by investing in the spiritual maturity of others.¹⁰⁴ Simply put, disciples make disciples. Severson encourages the church to find and implement discipleship models in churches that cultivate leadership development.¹⁰⁵ White found success amongst his young adults when his church founded Meck Institute, which provides a “community college approach” to discipleship including classes and seminars to basic spiritual formation, the goal being that two groups of people are being discipled at once: The *engaged* believer with experience in their walk with Christ, and the newly *churched* believer who has just been introduced to faith as a recent convert.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Van der Walt, *Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview with a Younger Generation*, 5.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁴ Bergler, “Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity,” 88.

¹⁰⁵ Severson, *Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults*, 111.

¹⁰⁶ White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, 108.

Identity formation is then solidified through an effective discipleship model. Allegiance to Jesus Christ and finding one's identity in Him is paramount to identity reinforcement.¹⁰⁷ Emerging adults do not need a gospel that is divorced from discipleship. When they encounter Jesus' call to follow, they do not shy from the charge. Mentorship is key to the success of any discipleship model, as this provides a bridge to the gap between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, an "edification program."¹⁰⁸ Effective discipleship among emerging adults is found in community, and fostering community gives young people a place to belong and learn together, a strength found in on-campus universities.¹⁰⁹ Therefore effective discipleship is found in mentorship, group settings, and leadership development, allowing for the right thought to lead to the right action. Church involvement, feeling that their voice is heard and their decisions matter, leads to solid discipleship opportunities, positive identity formation, and church attendance longevity. Ultimately, there are three levels to discipleship provided by the various educational outlets mentioned above, one being a personal level of discipleship, followed by a small group community of believers, and solidified through the corporate Body of Christ. Each level feeds into the other to provide a comprehensive, holistic method of spiritual formation.

Conclusion

In summation, several themes have been discussed and all relate in some way to the social and religious climate among emerging adults. Multiculturalism has led to cohabitation between ethnicities in and outside the church in the likes the world has never seen. This multiethnic society has led to a plurality of ideals, including various opinions on truth. Religious

¹⁰⁷ Witherington, *New Testament Theology and Ethics*, 161.

¹⁰⁸ Petitt, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 105.

¹⁰⁹ Seversen, 115.

pluralism is present both inside and outside of church walls. Pluralization has more often than not led to isolation rather than interconnectivity.

Social action increasingly has become an interest in emerging adults, as they are constantly exposed to different cultures and ideologies daily. Social activism apart from the reality of objective moral values has proven difficult for emerging adults to reconcile, leading to increasing numbers of this age group morally ambiguous, relying on moral intuitions rather than appealing to objective morality. This leads the individual to adhere to a weaker stance on ethical situations, ignorant to the source of moral claims. Culture therefore can tell emerging adults what is right or wrong with little to no pushback. Pluralization has allowed secularization to commence radically, leading to the rise of *Nones*, a religiously agnostic but spiritually active youth that does not necessarily leave the church and in some ways has influenced the church's approach to evangelism and discipleship.

With an innate distrust of organizations and institutions, one-on-one mentorship has proven to be an effective method of spiritual formation. Pluralism has also bred an attachment to multiple identities simultaneously, including ethnic and religious identities. Strong identity formation in the church breeds faithful Christians. These believers understand their identity is in Christ and become active members within their church communities, surpassing even borders of race and ethnicity. Emerging adults fare well in the church when they become engaged in discipleship models that allow them to lead, follow mentors, and practice the theology they learn. The institutions that have implemented these discipleship methods often include a communal and collective model, ensuring that one's personal discipleship is shaped by a larger community guiding them on as well as small group mentorship. Emerging adults learn best in community with peers alongside one-on-one interaction with mentors. Thus, this review of literature has

shown that emerging adults that have churches that reach to them in practical discipleship form a salience to a Christian perspective that allows them to be firm believers in the world.

Theological Foundations

Biblical discipleship is more than living life together. The Scriptural model entails not only fellowship, but education. One mode feeds into the other. Education fuels the believer to live in deeper relationships with their brothers and sisters. Likewise, the individual joins others to learn together. This type of education is relational as the disciple learns to be more like Christ. The Christian life is defined by the act of following Jesus, and that comes from learning more about Him to engage with Him more fully in both personal and congregational settings.

Relational knowledge is only reinforced by more classical “scholastic” knowledge. There are three spheres through which both Old Testament and New Testament discipleship is modelled: Corporately, communally, and personally. This education is by nature theological. Disciples who follow Christ naturally seek the things above where He is to further understand who He is and what He desires from His followers (Col. 3:1). Though Christ is present in the life of the individual believer, His word is proclaimed publicly. The Lord is not separate from His people, His body of believers. Therefore, one must examine how the Bible teaches on each sphere of discipleship.

Before introducing a functional discipleship model, it would be best to define the word *discipleship* first. Walter Elwell defines *discipleship* as equated to the practice of holiness, or more modernly coined *spirituality*.¹¹⁰ What separates Christian spirituality from worldly

¹¹⁰ Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 1522.

spirituality is that Christian spirituality is *Christocentric*.¹¹¹ Christ is the archetype by which every believer is to model their life, as the *ptisis* the Christian professes is ultimately a proclamation of allegiance to Christ the King.¹¹² Dallas Willard likens discipleship to an apprenticeship process.¹¹³

Indeed, proclaiming allegiance to Christ is the ultimate representation of the believer following Him in all that He did on earth, emulating Him in His life, in His suffering, and eventually in His glory. Without claiming and proclaiming that Christ is the ultimate ruler of the disciple's life, He simply becomes another option in the plethora of religions and philosophies in the world. Jesus is not one way to gain spiritual knowledge, but the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life (Jn. 14:6). In this statement found in John, Jesus Christ is not only saying that He is the only way to eternal salvation, but He is also *demanding* followership and exclusive loyalty as an earthly king would his subjects.¹¹⁴

When one dedicates their life to Christ, they find ultimate meaning in emulating Him. The disciple is *restored* relationally to God at the moment of conversion but is also in a constant state of *restoring* through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁵ Jesus tells of the spiritual realities concerning the two kingdoms that exist. There is a “ruler of this world” that is pit against Christ, the Ruler and Head of the Kingdom of God (Jn. 12:31). Before one becomes a Christian, they are subject to the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). Paul goes further as

¹¹¹ Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1523.

¹¹² Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 25.

¹¹³ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014), xiv.

¹¹⁴ Vähäkangas and Patrik, *Philosophical and Theological Responses to Syncretism*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Keller, *Preaching*, 98.

to call the ruler of the kingdom of this age as the *god* of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). This prince is none other than the devil who entered Judas to crucify Christ (Jn. 14:30). By repenting and following Christ, the new believer is a heavenly citizen, a disciple of Christ the Rabbi, and a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). The way that one “believes” in Jesus Christ is an active allegiance to Him and Him alone. When this proclamation occurs, the “old kingdom” is done away with, and guilt is severed.¹¹⁶ However, the disciple is empowered by the Holy Spirit to undo the *effects* of the old kingdom. The disciple then seeks to model Jesus in all that they do for the rest of their lives. The Spirit empowers them to do such things, as this work is not done naturally, but supernaturally.

Although Christ offers a complete picture of discipleship with the Apostles, the Old Testament is the theological basis of the entire process. Indeed, the process of discipleship began at creation to make other image-bearers of God, making the Great Commission and the Creation Mandate two sides of the same coin.¹¹⁷ One of the most explicit depictions of discipleship found in the Old Testament is the relationship between Elijah and Elisha. Elijah first finds Elisha while plowing a field (1 Kings 19:19). The Holy Spirit compelled Elijah to throw his cloak upon the unsuspecting student (19:20-21). In the Pentateuch, Joshua took a similar role to Moses. God commands Moses to transfer his authority through the “laying of hands” (like Elijah’s cloak) onto Joshua (Num. 27:18-23). Spiritual transferal occurs, or as Hamilton puts it, *commissioning*.¹¹⁸ Likewise, when Jesus calls His disciples, He spends all night praying, and in the morning, He has clarity of whom to choose for this process (Luke 6:12-19). Matthew Henry

¹¹⁶ Keller, *Preaching*, 98.

¹¹⁷ William F. Cox Jr. and Robert A. Peck, "Christian Education as Discipleship Formation," *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (August 2018): 245.

¹¹⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 241.

comments that no one can enter the discipleship process unless they are “drawn” by the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁹ Jesus then transfers His authority to the disciples and commissions them to make more disciples (Mt. 28:18-20). Elisha leaves everything to follow his teacher. Peter repeats the concept with Jesus as he explains that he has left everything to follow Him (Matt. 19:27).

The disciple, therefore, leaves their old way of life to follow the Master. Where they follow Him is crucial to note. The disciple follows Christ into a community of other disciples. Henry notes that disciples enter a new community of mutual service and edification toward one another.¹²⁰ Joint submission to one another is essential for any follower of Christ (1 Pet. 5:5; Eph. 2:21).¹²¹ Mutual edification is also a primary role for the disciple (Rom. 14:19).¹²² Elijah brings Elisha into the company of the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 2:3). Elisha was called out of his community and brought into another, where they learned to follow their teacher and God more closely. Thus, community, or *ekklesia*, is mandatory and essential to the disciple’s life.¹²³ Discipleship is the opposite of the isolated life, thus contrasting modern concepts of spirituality, which glorify sage-like solitude.¹²⁴

If this is a new community in which the follower enters, then what are the terms of said community? Jesus educates that the New Covenant discipleship must constitute three distinct points: That one denies themselves, takes up their cross, and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). Self-denial

¹¹⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 561.

¹²⁰ Matthew Henry, *The Gospel of Matthew: Complete Commentary Verse by Verse* (Brazil: Grupo Oxiênio, 2016), 24a.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 24b.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 367.

¹²⁴ Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1524.

is the “fundamental law of admission into Christ’s school.”¹²⁵ Paul expounds on this notion by stating that the follower, like their Master, must be “self-emptying,” taking the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7-8). *Taking up one’s cross*, therefore, represents all troubles, persecutions, and afflictions the believer will face considering following their Teacher.¹²⁶ Indeed, a student is not above his teacher; it is good that he shall be like him (Luke 6:40). If Christ endured severe denial, isolation, mockery, and even death, His followers should expect the same (1 Pet. 2:21). Thus, one follows Christ as they endure the pains of this life, for He “bore the heavy end of the cross” for us.¹²⁷

However, as Elisha had Elijah and Joshua had Moses, believers need models to show them how to suffer well. Paul urges the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). Henry underscores that insofar as the actions of men are Christlike, others should follow that example.¹²⁸ Paul, on one occasion, in his letter to the Philippians, writes of Timothy and Epaphroditus’ example of humility and endurance, charging the believers in that community to imitate the young men (2:19-30). Mentorship is paramount to succeeding in Christ’s call to follow Him. Ultimately, mentorship and community work together to develop Christlikeness in the individual.

If one is to suffer well, then there must be a method by which to do so. Christ calls the disciple not only to follow Him but also to live in community with other disciples and follow in the footsteps of a mentor; one must learn how to endure hardship through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Paul in 1 Corinthians tells the church that as every athlete trains their body, the

¹²⁵ Henry, *The Gospel of Matthew: Complete Commentary Verse by Verse*, 8s.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8t.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Bible*, 1836.

Christian is to prepare spiritually to carry their cross (9:26) better. Again, he speaks to his young aide Timothy to train himself for godliness (1 Tim. 4:6). Reformer Martin Luther comments that one does so by understanding the foundational underpinnings of the Gospel and learning to beware of errant doctrine.¹²⁹ The outward life is affected by the inward life. One must allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify the inner man to produce fruitful exterior work.¹³⁰ John Owen comments, “The Gospel is the promise of this life, and is profitable unto all things.”¹³¹

One trains oneself up in godliness by *walking by the Spirit* (Gal. 5:16). The Spirit is the One who sanctifies the believer, shaping them to Christ (1 Pet. 1:2). Indeed, the disciple is to conform to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). The disciple is to be Christ’s “witness” to the world (Acts 1:8). The Gospel understanding of the Holy Spirit links Him with the coming Kingdom of God (Isa. 32:15-20; Ezek. 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-3:1).¹³² The Spirit then produces heavenly citizens and leads them in the new Law by which the New Covenant people must abide (Eph. 2:19; Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:16-13). Therefore, a living relationship with the Holy Spirit enables the disciple to be Christ’s emissary.¹³³ Discipleship ultimately is participation with Christ in His mission.¹³⁴

In understanding the Holy Spirit’s role in forming the inner man, the Spirit produces fruit in the Christian’s life (Gal. 5:22-23). The Spirit is the Person who empowers and fills the disciple

¹²⁹ Timothy George, *1-2 Timothy, 1-2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 179.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹³² Kenneth Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary – Acts* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1998), 23.

¹³³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Believers Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 22.

¹³⁴ Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 7.

to proclaim Christ to the world (Acts 1:8).¹³⁵ This world in which the disciple lives is constantly at war with the Spirit, the Holy Invader.¹³⁶ The Spirit operates with a power distinct from the disciple, contending with the flesh, in the hope that the flesh will lose out to the Spirit in the end.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the believer “walks by the Spirit” in a life of self-denial, struggling to overcome the will.¹³⁸ In a life led by the Spirit, walking by the Spirit, and ultimately nourished by the Spirit, the disciple’s inner core transformed into the image of Christ and a light to the world.¹³⁹

Therefore, to walk by the Spirit and protect oneself against the doctrines and philosophies of this world (Col. 2:7-8), one must grow in the spiritual disciplines to ensure that the disciple *keeps in step* with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Many disciplines in Scripture enforce this notion of walking in and with the Spirit, some of which are prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, evangelism, etc. These disciplines envelop the everyday life of the disciple.¹⁴⁰

The church since its inception has been infiltrated with systems of thinking that oppose relational learning, for the church is charged to disciple believers into the way of Christ. Indeed, the Body is to grow together, supporting one another while every individual member is charged to develop themselves in love into the image of Christ (Eph. 4:16). Any form of thinking that

¹³⁵ Mark J. Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Credal Expressions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 111.

¹³⁶ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven & London: The Anchor Yale Bible, 1997), 528.

¹³⁷ Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 528.

¹³⁸ David Walker, “Christian Discipleship and Consecrated Life,” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 92, no. 2 (2015): 136.

¹³⁹ Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* 532.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

secludes the individual from their community is not godly, for the disciple is called to be a communal being, contributing to the whole body (1 Cor. 12:12).

One school of thought that continues to pervade the church is Gnosticism. Individual spirituality, pagan influence in religious life, and the desire for “privatized enlightenment” all have their roots in ancient Gnostic heresy. Paul and other biblical authors fought against a proto-Gnostic inclination that the early church had as seen in the book of Colossians.

The Colossian church had a temptation to fall into the practice of angel worship (Col. 2:18).¹⁴¹ One additional note to the subject of angel worship is the fact that this branch of early Christianity was a merging of pagan practices and Essenism, a first-century branch of Judaism that elevated the status of angels to almost Divine levels.¹⁴² Angels were invoked for various reasons for Gnostics, including but not limited to “protection, help, and deliverance.”¹⁴³ As seen earlier, these same cries for help are used in Western material religion when resorting to crystals to ward off evil spirits or healing rituals.

The idea of an individualized spirituality alongside an established religious system is not new to the Western *Zeitgeist* as it has its roots in ancient faith practices as well. Although the term *Gnosis* in Greek means insight or knowledge and sounds relatively harmless, the implication this phrase had in the early church was that this knowledge was esoteric, secret, or hidden, thus only the “religious elite” could achieve such powerful revelation.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 1.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁴⁴ Roelof van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 2.

This type of religious system isolates the practitioner from any type of community, as this is an individual search for a hidden knowledge kept from the masses. Paul understands this and combats spiritual isolationism by reminding the Colossian church that Christ supersedes not only the Judaistic tendencies of maintaining purity laws, but also “vain philosophy” that so desperately has led the community astray, filled with arrogance and conceit (Col. 2:18). Paul further concludes that this type of syncretism is *unspiritual*, which is the exact opposite result of which the Colossian community was seeking to achieve. The church is reminded that Christ is the head of the church, and the church has been baptized into Him, being buried with Him, and raised with Him (Col. 2:11-12). This admonition is nothing more than education in sound doctrine, where the church is reminded of the apostolic teaching of high Christology alongside a realized eschatology.¹⁴⁵ Paul’s reminder to the church is that one’s new life begins and continues with the interpersonal relationship with the risen Christ.

The way that Paul combats individualized spirituality is through the communal nature of the ordinance of baptism. Although Christ saved the individual, they are saved *into* the Body of believers. Baptism is a public rite; thus, Paul encourages the believers not to isolate themselves in a hidden spirituality but to grow together as a unit seeking to understand the “mystery of Christ” together. This “mystery” is not one that is unknowable, as Paul states that in Christ the mystery of God is made known (Col. 2:1-5). Therefore, the community is to seek out this mystery together, as this mystery, unlike Gnostic “secret knowledge,” is knowable and plain to see. Paul notes that empty philosophy is defeated through communal and corporate education. By “walking in Christ” (note the similar language to being “in-step with the Spirit” in Galatians), the believer is rooted in sound doctrine which establishes the church’s steady faith (Col. 2:6-7).

¹⁴⁵ Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 246.

Moreover, the way that the church is living in Colossae is that of slavery. They are guilty of putting back on the yoke of slavery to demonic forces, or as Paul calls them, the “elemental spirits of the world” (Col. 2:8).¹⁴⁶ James echoes this notion by stating that any wisdom that has selfish ambition is demonic (3:13). All religion that is self-seeking is from the devil, per these two passages.

Jude speaks to his congregation that false teachers seek to find ways that underscore Christ’s authority (Jude 1-2).¹⁴⁷ Peter, when speaking to his church, notes that false teachers have a specific strategy to “deny the Master that ransomed them.”¹⁴⁸ Although Peter does not specify how these false teachers will promote such denial, the connotation suggests that their teachings promote the Body to revert to their former pagan way of life to which their lifestyle confesses that Christ’s “ransom” for them at the cross means little to nothing.¹⁴⁹ Here Peter brings to mind the horrendous consequences of a syncretistic religious system. False teachers downplay the importance of Scripture and heighten the sense of self for their hearers.¹⁵⁰ Peter therefore charges his listeners to wait for the Lord patiently, anticipating His return, and seek to be found without “spot or blemish” (2 Pet. 3:14).¹⁵¹ Peter calls the church as a whole to watch for themselves what is pure and spotless. In his previous work, Peter stated that Christ was the Lamb without “spot or blemish” (1 Pet. 1:19).¹⁵² The church is now called to be like Christ, to be holy as He is holy, and

¹⁴⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotes are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publications, 2011).

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Keating, *First and Second Peter, Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 201.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

to wait for the day in which all impurities cease to exist in the New Heaven and New Earth.¹⁵³ This is nothing more than group discipleship. The concept of purifying one another as a community is found in the pages of the Old Testament, known as “iron sharpening iron” (Prov. 27:17). The only hope of being found spotless as Christ was by living as the covenant community in which Christ called His followers to abide. By living a communal lifestyle of discipleship, the believer “abides in Christ,” as Christ’s church is His Body (Jn. 15:4; 1 Cor. 12:27). By denying the Body of its community, the individual is separated from the organism that gives them power, leaving them susceptible to become slaves of the elemental forces of this world.

However, Christ saved the collective church from these demonic forces through the power of His sacrifice on the cross, bringing the church, that is now in Christ as a community, into a position that *they* have power to overcome the demonic as well.¹⁵⁴ To summarize, Christ and His word are sufficient to overcome the demonic, unspiritual forces of the world, and understanding that only in Christ, by seeking out His mystery made plain to the church and being rooted and built up in Him, the community can overcome these forces.

Sound theology is also a source of protection for the individual. Timothy was charged not to let go of the doctrine handed to him (1 Tim. 4:16). The Bible informs the disciple to watch their life and teachings; to *persevere* in them. Sound teaching is therefore necessary so that the disciple can discern the voice of God from that of the enemy. This is not merely knowing for the sake of knowledge; the doctrine is to edify the believers in their process of sanctification.¹⁵⁵ The

¹⁵³ Keating, *First and Second Peter, Jude*, 185.

¹⁵⁴ Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 247-248.

¹⁵⁵ George, *1-2 Timothy, 1-2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon*, 186.

disciple must dedicate themselves to understanding the Scriptures and the doctrines therein to protect themselves and their community from the devil's wiles. Indeed, a disciple is *disciplined*. As seen in the previous paragraphs, a mentor should administer discipline to guide one through spiritual dryness back to the Well of Living Water.¹⁵⁶ Spiritual disciplines and sound theology lead to spiritual formation found in community, which is the process of discipleship.

The short book of Titus allows the believer to glean insight on the work of the church elder or “overseer.” William Tyndale explained that in the first chapter, the overseer is to contend for the faith in teaching sound doctrine and defend the gospel.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, any philosophy that takes the believer away from the freedom that Christ provides through the Gospel work of the cross brings the individual back into the slavery of a works-based faith.¹⁵⁸ Seeking earthly spirituality forces the individual to “work,” be that physically or spiritually, to achieve a greater sense of “enlightenment.” These practices take the glory away from Christ by adding laws that are nowhere found in the pages of Scripture. Sound teaching through discipleship solidifies established truth in the heart of the Christian and clarifies questions the individual may have. These answers, per the book of Titus, is found in the community of believers and the corporate Body of Christ, never separate from it. The elder is to be taught sound doctrine, be firm in said teaching, and instruct other believers corporately on how to live the Christian life practically and rebuke those who “contradict” it (Titus 1:9).

Instruction and relationship are not separated from one another, but rather complement each other. The only way that one earns the credibility to speak, rebuke, or exhort another is by

¹⁵⁶ Trier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1517.

¹⁵⁷ Lee Gatiss and Bradley G. Green, *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, (Westmont: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 267.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

earning trust through interpersonal relationship. Hence why Paul encouraged Timothy in his letters by calling him his “child,” indicating an intimate relationship between the two (1 Tim. 1:18). Christ never called the Apostles to make converts, but *disciples* (Mt. 28:18-20).

Discipleship is an educational-relational process that requires not only doctrinal teaching, not only relationship, and not merely personal reflection, but all three. The individual is nothing apart from the community, as the foot is nothing without the leg, and the leg nothing without the Head, which is Christ (Col. 1:18). However, a community is made up of individuals, as there is no body without members. Education in the church is relational, both corporately as a body and communally with smaller groups. Therefore, holistic discipleship is found in three tiers: Corporate, communal, and personal.

However, Paul did not stop at simply teaching Timothy of relational education, but he continued to educate Timothy on how to rebuke and encourage others dynamically. Paul firmly taught Timothy that there are different methods of interacting with those who may have had the temptation to stray from the faith. Paul said that men older than Timothy are not to be rebuked but encouraged as a son would a father (1 Tim. 1:5). Moreover, older women are to be treated the same as if they were Timothy’s mother (1 Tim. 5:2). Those who are of the same age as Timothy or younger should be treated as brothers and sisters (1 Tim. 5:1, 2). Every aspect of the Christian life is modeled as that of a family. No one is separate from the whole. Instruction and correction must come, but not at the expense of relationship. Teaching and interpersonal connection belong together, and this is clearly expressed throughout the New Testament.

The various stages of *Bloom Anderson*, the model implemented in this intervention, are also found throughout Scripture. Joshua learned under Moses (knowledge), observing him sitting at the edge of the Tent of Meeting (Exod. 33:11). After Moses died, Joshua commemorated

victories using stones just like his master did, underscoring his *application* process (Exodus 14:21-30; Joshua 3:7-13).¹⁵⁹ After Moses commissioned Joshua at the end of his teacher's life, Joshua obtained the ability to "reinterpret or even suspend divine commands spoken by Moses (Josh. 6:17; 8:27)," indicating that he was able to *synthesize* and *create* in his leadership method.¹⁶⁰

Elisha did similarly with his master. Elisha learned from Elijah, leading to the repetition of many of his teacher's miracles, *applying* them to new contexts; for example, Elisha mimics Elijah's scenario in Zarephath with the widow's oil (1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4:1-7).¹⁶¹ Not only did Elisha perform the same miracles as his teacher, but he also took the principles that he learned from Elijah and utilized them to fit the needs of different people. While Elijah struck the waters of Jericho to pass through, Elisha sweetened the water for the people, calling on the same God who performs both (2 Kings 2:19-22).¹⁶² Elisha *synthesized* the data, what Elijah taught him (calling on the LORD), and the current need presented (bitter water).

Later, in the New Testament, Jesus taught the disciples to instruct those in "all that He taught them" (Matt. 28:20). In Peter's second epistle, he warned his church not to neglect what he taught them, passed down by Jesus (2 Pet. 1:12). Peter underwent the process of *knowledge* by sitting under Jesus' teaching that He was the apocalyptic Son of Man from Daniel (Mark 2:27-28).¹⁶³ Peter *analyzed* and *synthesized* the data declaring that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah),

¹⁵⁹ David J. Zucker, "Elijah and Elisha Part 1 Moses and Joshua," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (October 2012): 227.

¹⁶⁰ Zucker, *Elijah and Elisha Part 1 Moses and Joshua*, 228.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Francis J. Moloney, "Constructing Jesus and the Son of Man." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (October 2013): 719.

understanding that these two figures in the Old Testament were the same. The Apostle Peter demonstrated his ability to *create*, bypassing his gleanings on the Person of Christ to others. For example, the learned Apostle instructed his church that as he saw Christ's glorification as an eyewitness as his analysis came not from man but God (2 Pet. 1:20).¹⁶⁴

Paul's conversion also underscores this principle, as after he encountered Jesus on the Damascus Road, he was instructed to learn (*knowledge*) in Arabia for three years (Gal. 1:18). The finished work of Christ completed Paul's Pharisaic knowledge. Thus, in letters such as Romans and Galatians, where he utters that Christ is the "Last Adam" and that one is free from the Mosaic Law under Christ, he displayed that he could *analyze* and *synthesize* doctrines from both experience and Scriptural underpinnings.¹⁶⁵ Paul then adopted many spiritual "sons," such as Timothy and Titus, to continue teaching the sound doctrine passed to them from him, indicating his graduation to *creation* and the ability to teach others what he learned first-hand (1 Tim. 4:16; Titus 1:9). Sanders comments that the church's devotion to the "Apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:14) through the active role of the Holy Spirit has always been first epistemological (*knowledge*), then critical (*comprehension – analysis*), and finally revelatory (*synthesis-creation*).¹⁶⁶ Each example listed underscores the importance of understanding that one cannot simply *apply* the knowledge they acquired; the disciple must contribute and multiply. Cultural engagement comes from learning to think critically in the life of the disciple.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, the

¹⁶⁴ Travis B. Williams, "Confirming Scripture through Eyewitness Testimony (2 Peter 1.19a): Resolving a Crux Interpretum," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 43, no. 4 (2021): 606.

¹⁶⁵ B. J. Oropeza, "Audience Competency in Romans and Paul's Flexible use of Scripture," *Religions* 12, no. 11 (2021): 1.

¹⁶⁶ Don Sanders, "From Critical Thinking to Spiritual Maturity: Connecting the Apostle Paul and John Dewey." *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 1 (April 2018): 97.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

disciple is not divorced from the community of Christ, nor are they separated from the world that God loves so much (Jn. 3:16). The disciple is an individual who must live a life of constant education and edification to be an empowered ambassador for Christ to the world. Sound doctrine exists to mature the believer to better practice their faith and establish resilience, guarding themselves from the “vain philosophies” of this world to reach those who need Christ rather than falling prey to the “Prince of the Air’s” deceitful teachings.

Theoretical Foundations

The disciple is called by the mentor to *learn*. The mentor’s responsibility to the pupil is to *teach*. The disciple is to be more than one who is simply *taught* information, but one who takes matters into their own hands to make sure that they grasp what the mentor teaches them. Paul’s letters to Timothy placed the spiritual son to actively strive to teach sound doctrine, hold fast to their faith, and press on when things were difficult. Bloom-Anderson keeps the pupil from mismatched expectations, assuring that they are clear on their responsibility to seek to better themselves while the teacher instructs. Jesus was always teaching His disciples, but the Twelve’s aim was to imitate Christ in all they did. Jesus keenly understood where each pupil was on their journey and worked with them accordingly. As the pupil stays in an active role in the learning process, not only do they take ownership of the information dispensed, but in a Christian context, they make their faith their own, no longer inheriting what their parents or pastor may have taught them. The individual is becoming more Christlike through their efforts to *be* more Christlike. Activity overcomes passivity, and the disciple takes on the disciplines to partner with the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification.

To better understand why this method was chosen amongst the myriad of competing discipleship models, one must look to the positive effects of implementing the taxonomical model within educational spheres. First, a recent study found that even when students are in virtual learning environments, they learn the material at an above-average level than those who did not participate.¹⁶⁸ This pedagogy-first method of study, according to the researchers, “shed[s] light on the fact that pedagogical theories and models should be seen as the guiding and underlying principles that govern e-activities.”¹⁶⁹ Of course, these gleanings extend far beyond virtual learning. A study in South Africa understood their findings after using the taxonomy as the “bridge” between theoretical and practical understanding, understanding that students who underwent their examination learned more as participants rather than as passive lecturees.¹⁷⁰ Another study involving healthcare students concurs that when students are at the comprehensive level, they are more inclined to attain mastery and educational success.¹⁷¹ Indeed, the Bloom-Anderson method places students in an active role in their education and creates ownership over their mastery of the material.

The way in which Bloom-Anderson operates places the locus of accountability onto the student, rather than the teacher. The student’s responsibility is to learn, and the teacher’s is to

¹⁶⁸Nori Barari, Morteza RezaeiZadeh, Abasalt Khorasani, and Farnoosh Alami, "Designing and Validating Educational Standards for E-Teaching in Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), Based on Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy," *Interactive Learning Environments* (2020): 110.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁷⁰ M. Henning, D. Hagedorn-Hansen, and K. H. von Leipzig, "Metacognitive Learning: Skills Development through Gamification at the Stellenbosch Learning Factory as a Case Study." *South African Journal of Industrial Engineering* 28, no. 3 (2017): 111.

¹⁷¹ Anne-Marie A. Verenna, Kim A. Noble, Helen E. Pearson, and Susan M. Miller, "Role of Comprehension on Performance at Higher Levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: Findings from Assessments of Healthcare Professional Students," *Anatomical Sciences Education* 11, no. 5 (2018): 443.

dispense information. The teacher is not responsible for the student's learning. This type of understanding roles keeps students from blaming the instructor for a failed test, for example. The model also relinquishes frustration on the educator's part if a student does not grasp certain material. The teacher can then check to see where they land on the pedagogical scale and reach them more appropriately from where they currently stand. The teacher then has a greater understanding how to educate individuals in their process rather than leaving one behind while the rest of the class works onward. Expectations are positively altered by understanding where one is at rather than wrongfully expecting a student to be more advanced than they are presently.

Not only is the Bloom-Anderson model effective in various classroom settings, but it has also yielded positive results in other disciplines. The taxonomy's implementation has improved project management systems. One study showcased that PM activities were carried out with lower failure rates after gauging the program using Bloom's method, starting at the knowledge stage.¹⁷² However, what might be the most exciting finding is how leadership development was improved using this method. The taxonomy served as an "evaluation and ranking guide" to track rising strategic leadership success.¹⁷³ If these findings can be found in leadership and education secularly, the model could certainly be applicable in a church setting involving church leadership.

The principles behind the Bloom-Anderson's pedagogy are not foreign to the Bible, as seen in the previous section, and other churches have been successfully implementing the taxonomy in their discipleship programs. One study showcased that while applying Bloom's

¹⁷² Erastus Karanja and Laurell C. Malone, "Improving Project Management Curriculum by Aligning Course Learning Outcomes with Bloom's Taxonomy Framework," *Journal of International Education in Business* 14, no. 2 (2020;2021): 213.

¹⁷³ Haniya Sarfraz, "Strategic Leadership Development: Simplified with Bloom's Taxonomy," *Industrial and Commercial Training* 49, no. 1 (2017): 46.

Taxonomy in a sermon-based Bible study, "spiritual growth is essentially and necessarily reproducing."¹⁷⁴ The explanation of Bloom's pedagogy in this intervention underscores that the student is ready to "show" what they have learned at the point of synthesis. In contrast, analysis and application are naturally part of "growth."¹⁷⁵ Many leaders within IChurch's youth ministry are constantly growing but are not replicating, indicating that this is the area of intervention. This intervention will divert from Kimpel's. He used sermon outlines to develop personal Bible studies to gauge his congregation's biblical literacy.

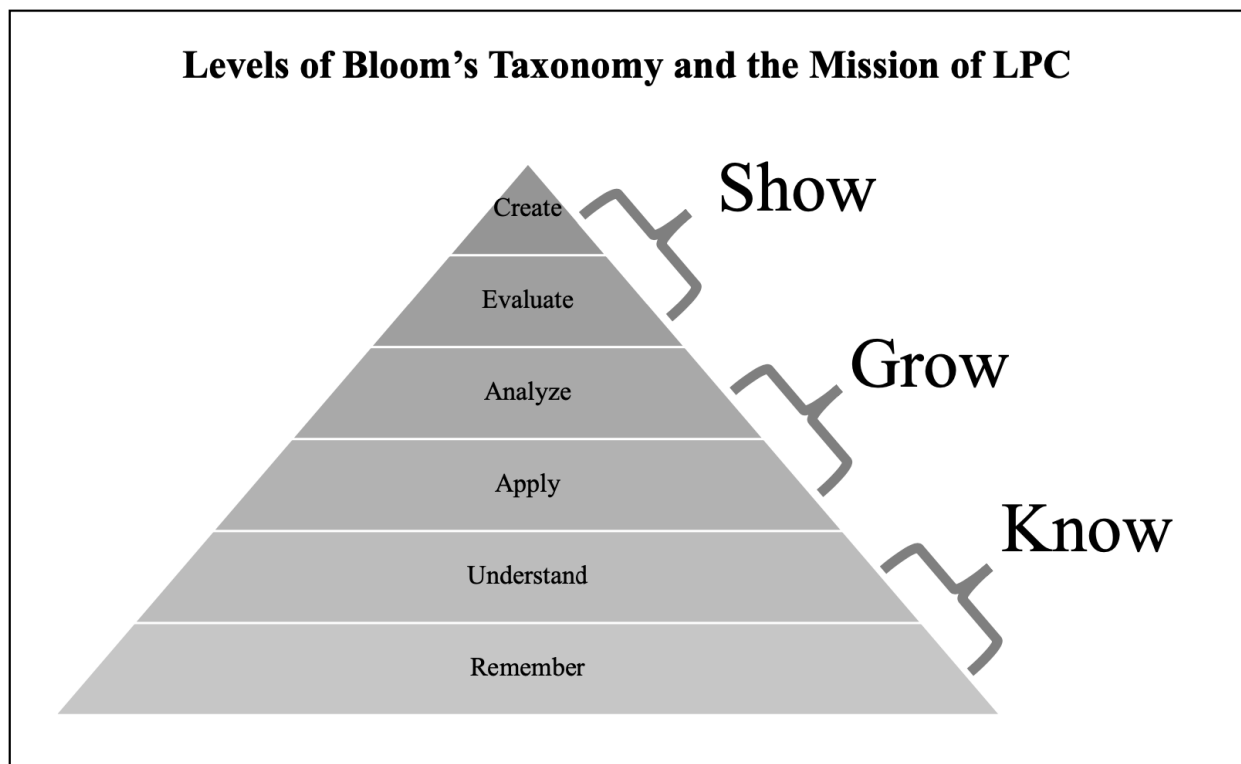


Figure 1: Kimpel's understanding of Bloom-Anderson in his study.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Stephen J. Kimpel, "Information to Transformation: The Implementation and Effects of Sermon-Aligned Daily Bible Study on Spiritual Growth" (D.Min Thesis, Liberty University School of Divinity, 2020), 95.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 10.

In contrast, this intervention will focus on a classroom setting and a personal, reflective journal to track spiritual progress. This project will only deal with the final three levels of the pedagogy. The project at hand will also focus on a social aspect not necessarily present in Kimpel's. The participants selected will be held accountable by peers as they undergo the following study. There will be times in which participants will interact with one another, guiding and encouraging each other as they work together to grow more biblically and spiritually competent. The students will do so by having one social assignment, followed by a personal assignment for the week which will consist of a five-day reflective journal to complete by the end of each week.

Furthermore, intervention will also divert in how Kimpel's implementation of the taxonomy did so in its entirety. The study will consist only of individuals who have the current ability to critically think of the topics at hand rather than anywhere within the first three tiers of the taxonomy. By doing so, the participants will have showcased the skill to teach one another alongside themselves as they study the ensuing topics. By the end of the study, the participants will be at the point (if not closer to the point) of teaching others who may be on the first three levels of Bloom-Anderson.

Another study, run by Steven Matthews, focused on the first three levels of the pedagogy. One finding from this study underscored the efficacy of implementing *Bloom-Anderson* in a church setting. After the students underwent the program, they were below fifty percent confident in Bible knowledge, motivation, and effectiveness. Still, after implementing the program, they were in the upper seventy-fifth percentile.¹⁷⁷ Utilizing a trackable model alongside

¹⁷⁷ Steven Matthews, "A Spiritual Disciplines-Based Discipleship Curriculum for the Local Church" (D.Min Thesis, Liberty University School of Divinity, 2005), 96.

the disciplines works in the church. Measurable discipleship allows the teacher to understand where to serve their students better and make them more effective disciple-makers.

This intervention is like Mathews' in that both studies focus on tracking progress in the spiritual disciplines. Likert scales and surveys will be implemented in this project, much like Mathews'.¹⁷⁸ What differentiates the interventions is that Mathews is concerned with the first three levels of Bloom, whereas this project deals with the final three. Another difference is that the Likert scale will not deal with true/false answers, as it will deal more with statements where participants move from a scale from *strong agreement* to *strong disagreement*.¹⁷⁹

The scales were implemented in this way to better gauge where the participants are in their individual spirituality. While they may have the ability to analyze theological concepts, it does not follow necessarily that they make a practice of prayer, fasting, solitude, and other essential Christian disciplines. Whereas the theological exam they take will focus on how well they could potentially carry information to others, the spiritual formation assessment focuses more on the private life of the believer. As emerging adults, as the literature has shown, are focused on private spirituality, the study at hand seeks to ground these spiritual practices to biblical principles, underscoring the essentiality of private spirituality while not divorcing the topic from God's mandates for the disciple.

Another project run by Daniel J. Hollifield combined Bloom's cognitive-psychological elements with premarital counselling in the church. Results were positive. Not only did

¹⁷⁸ Mathews, *A Spiritual Disciplines-Based Discipleship Curriculum for the Local Church*, 38.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

participants learn more about their potential spouses, but other areas of their life improved as well.¹⁸⁰

This project, like Hollifield's, also sought to provide a holistic outlook using Bloom's work. However, a significant difference is that this intervention is not a blending of cognitive theories like Hollifield's work, rather it utilizes the framework to gauge students' educational progress.¹⁸¹ Whereas the previous project focused on a more psychological element, the current project at hand deals with theological knowledge alongside practical spiritual growth. The mind, the psyche, and cognition are not the primary focuses, but rather tracking one's progress in relating to God, the Bible, peers, and personal disciplines.

Finally, Bart B. Bruehler conducted a study for an introductory Scripture course utilizing Bloom as the primary means of measuring growth.¹⁸² The author was interested in increasing Scripture memorization for his congregants. What Bruehler's work did to further inspire the current study is the usage of a preliminary and final test. Bruehler's methods accounted for a wider pool from which to study, as his methodology allowed the entire taxonomic scale to be studied. Therefore, whereas Bruehler used an exam to analyze where individuals fell in the hierarchy, this intervention will use an exam more focused on the latter three levels.¹⁸³ The exam also will not be just of general Bible knowledge, but Bible knowledge implementation, theology, and general knowledge of the disciplines.

¹⁸⁰ Daniel J. Hollifield, "Premarital Counselling as Foundational to Discipleship" (D.Min Thesis, Liberty University School of Divinity, 2021), 98.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 28.

¹⁸² Bart B. Bruehler, "Traversing Bloom's Taxonomy in an Introductory Scripture Course," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 21 (2): 92.

¹⁸³ Bruehler, *Traversing Bloom's Taxonomy in an Introductory Scripture Course*, 101.

Scripture memorization is of great benefit, but the purpose of this study is to see practical *application* in the participants' daily lives. What the Bible *teaches* must not only be understood but applied and taught to others. Therefore, participants have the responsibility of allowing the Word to change them throughout the course. The introductory and exit exams will be the exact same test, but the desired outcome would be that they score higher on the latter exam, indicating that they have further "ascended" the hierarchy, up an entire "level" or more, depending on where the individual participants initially land.

Bloom-Anderson has yielded success in various forms of education, including traditional scholasticism, specialized areas of education (project management, for example), and leadership development. The model has also positively affected discipleship programs in other churches along with the secular sphere. Ergo, for this project, the study concludes it to be paramount to implement this method to gauge where emerging adults in leadership stand on doctrine, spiritual practices, and disciplines.

Other methods have been used recently in the church, but many discipleship methods center around the *knowledge-application* tier, geared toward new believers. There is an ongoing disparagement in youth ministry between identity and mission.¹⁸⁴ However, Christ equipped the church through the Holy Spirit to be witnesses in both the private and public sector.¹⁸⁵ Moser insists that if youth knew their identity in Christ (knowledge), they would move toward mission (application).¹⁸⁶ The problem lies therein that there are other "steps" before getting from knowledge to application, and another mistake is assuming that application should be where the

¹⁸⁴ Moser, *The Connection between Youth Ministry's Division of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the Lack of Retention of Youth in North American Churches*, 1.

¹⁸⁵ Bruce Riley Ashford, *Every Square Inch: An Introduction to Cultural Engagement as Christians* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2015), 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

journey ends. More “participatory” methods hyper-focus on the mission (application) but forsake the foundational underpinnings of knowledge acquisition.¹⁸⁷

Regarding the theological and theoretical foundations of this project, IChurch’s emerging adults must discipline themselves for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7). Therefore, emerging adults in the youth ministry underwent a discipleship program that focuses on spiritual disciplines and theological education, thus leading to spiritual formation. The young adults chosen were assumed to at least be at the *application* stage of the model, which would indicate a leadership role in the ministry. The students had their progress tracked and scored by the Bloom-Anderson method to ensure that what they analyze would, in turn, be applied and multiplied when at the creative stage. As Christ commanded His church to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20), utilizing *Bloom-Anderson* ensures that those who succeed in the program will be able to teach others the same. Therefore, the aim is to spark spiritual maturity within IChurch’s emerging adults to grow as they embark on this theological program underpinned by educational pedagogy. The implementation of this discipleship method provides IChurch an opportunity to better aid emerging adults into spiritual maturity.

¹⁸⁷ Tracey Lamont, “Ministry with Young Adults: Toward a New Ecclesiological Imagination,” *Religions* 11 (2020): 8.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Ultimately, fixating on *doing* or *knowing* are equally pitfalls in discipleship training. Students needed a working model where mentors and students alike could track their progress as they seek to be more Christlike. Therefore, *Bloom-Anderson* was implemented in a discipleship program at IChurch to measure whether engaged, emerging adults take ownership of their knowledge. Moreover, this model measured if these young adults were able not only to apply but create by participating with the material to pass their understanding on to others. Specifically, this project emphasized the latter three levels. In IChurch, there was a disconnect between *application* and *analysis*. There were plenty of *doers* in the church. They served in ministry, but many had not passed what they knew to others. But if analysis, synthesis, and creativity were developed in young leadership, there would be a multiplicity of disciple-makers in the ministry.

Therefore, this DMIN project utilized the Bloom-Anderson model as the foundation of a discipleship model within IChurch, focusing heavily on spiritual disciplines and sound doctrinal teaching, leading to more profound spiritual formation.

Intervention Design

Bloom-Anderson has a six-tier hierarchy indicating various levels of understanding a student has acquired. The first level is *knowledge*. As defined by Bloom, knowledge deals with recalling specifics and universals, typically dealing with “pattern, structure, or setting.”¹⁸⁸ Recollection is concerned with an association. Thus, rote memory plays a considerable role at

¹⁸⁸ Benjamin S. Bloom, ed., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals* (London: Longmans, 1956), 201.

this tier.¹⁸⁹ The test must involve certain relational cues to bring said knowledge to memory in a testing situation.¹⁹⁰ Knowledge is the most basic form of learning and is the easiest to forget. Therefore, concepts must move through the level of mere knowledge to be transformative.

Moving past knowledge, the second tier is *comprehension*. Whereas knowledge deals with memory association, comprehension is the level where certain skills have been acquired.¹⁹¹ These techniques are often generalized, but at this level not only have the materials been *organized* in the student's mind, but they have also been *reorganized* so that the student may "achieve a particular purpose."¹⁹² The mind has thus structured the lesson that was once concrete and made it an abstraction.

Therefore, the third tier, *application*, takes abstraction and moves toward utilizing the material in concrete situations.¹⁹³ At this level, the lesson has been made into a principle. The student has graduated from grasping concepts to instrumentally using them in the real world.

Fourthly, after application there is *analysis*. This is the level where the material is broken down and examined with other material. The student in this tier can think critically, using the knowledge acquired to compare various other, possibly competing, concepts.¹⁹⁴

The fifth level takes other views and can mesh them with the material previously examined.¹⁹⁵ This level is what Bloom calls *synthesis*. Concepts, therefore, are constructed with others to form patterns not previously thought to be obvious.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*, 201.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 204.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 205.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Finally, there is *evaluation*. The student enters a state of meta-analysis, appraising the value of said material and methods.¹⁹⁷ Anderson's title for this stage is *creation*. For this project, *creation* will be preferred to *evaluation*, indicating the student's activity in teaching others what they have learned. The student expresses mastery over the material by forming their material to pass on to others, appropriating concepts as needs arise.

Two individuals needed consulting before commencing this project. One person was the senior pastor of the organization, and the other was the "co-leader" (essentially an associate pastor) over the youth. Both parties were more than supportive throughout the process.

Concerning how potential stakeholders began to participate in the project, at the end of youth nights, there is a meeting that involves the entire volunteer body, including leadership, at the end of youth nights. The potential participants were gathered into a room and informed of this intervention together generally, and those who were interested were asked to fill out an exam to see where they land on the taxonomical scale.

This project blended two concepts: One concerning theological education and the other, spiritual disciplines, to create a spiritual formation course for youth volunteers within IChurch. The participants in this program completed an eighteen-question exam concerning biblical and theological matters (see *Appendix D*). All questions were designed based on the Bloom-Anderson model, asking the student to define a certain term, make associations between biblical characters, and ultimately defend theological concepts. These questions were designed to see whether they are applicable to the program or not. The test was eighteen questions, three

¹⁹⁵ Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*, 206.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 207.

questions were designated to a particular segment of the taxonomy. Each *knowledge* question was worth one point, each *comprehension* question was worth three, *application* was worth five points, *analysis* was worth six, *synthesis* was worth eight, and *creativity* was worth ten points. Any question past *knowledge* achieved partial credit. To make it to the program, participants needed to score at least a twenty-eight out of ninety-nine (see *Appendix E*).

The approved applicants went on to take one longitudinal survey before undergoing the program, and then one after the program, focusing on their ultimate strengths and weaknesses based on Whitney's list of spiritual disciplines (see *Appendix B*). The participants also took the same theological test they took at the beginning, before being qualified to undergo the project to see what they had learned on the theological end as well. The goal was to take youth volunteers from the position of *doers* (the third tier, *application*) to *producers* (creators). This created an opportunity for emerging adults to follow a practical discipleship model to produce trackable results and share with others.

First, potential stakeholders were chosen from the pool of emerging adults that existed in the youth ministry. These ranged from ages eighteen to twenty-nine. In IChurch, the way that leadership is defined is *Department Director* and *Ministry Director*. The Department Director is the head of the entire ministry, and Ministry Directors lead *servants*, those who serve in the ministry. The desired outcome was to have a sample from the leadership pool as well as a sample from the volunteer pool to track how these two different groups perform. The chart below showcases the two parties to be tested out of the general pool of volunteers from ages eighteen to twenty-nine. Out of the thirty volunteers in the youth program, seven are leaders. The goal initially was to get at least four youth leaders and eleven volunteers to participate in the study. That would have generated half of the volunteer staff of the youth ministry participating in this

project, indicating a generous amount of representation from both leadership and the volunteer body.

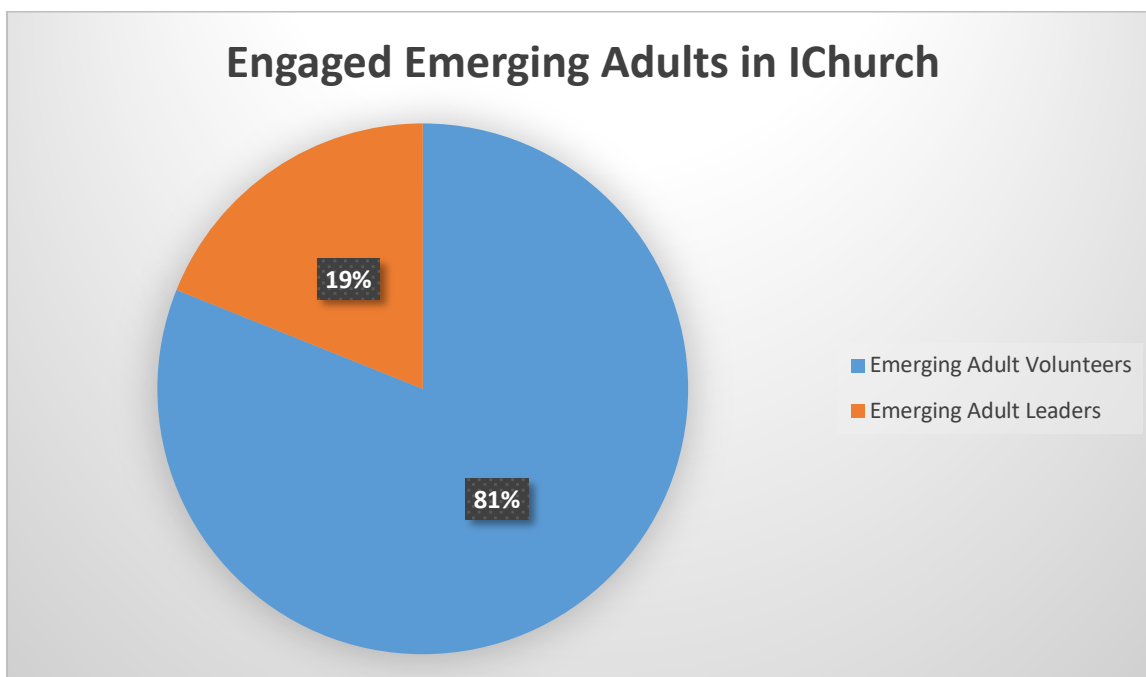


Figure 2: A pie chart of how many engaged emerging adults exist in the youth ministry

The researcher explained to the participants by employing small group interaction. Whoever responded affirmatively to the text sent out came to the church, to a room called the “education room” which sits approximately fifteen people. There, they were told that they were being asked to perform an integral project for the youth ministry. They were needed and valued, and their experience in and passion for God must be shared throughout the organization. Therefore, their input was invaluable for the project. They also were informed that they were helping the church improve in spiritual formation, and that they were to undergo a five-week exercise in spiritual formation and theological training to further solidify their beliefs to better minister to other young adults. As they grew in the process, the goal was that they take their knowledge at the end

of this project and apply it as they interact with others. The thought was that if they knew the goal and their role in the project, they would have “buy-in” and likely persevere throughout the program.

After the stakeholders completed the questionnaire, the exam, and agreed to participate in the program, they then entered a five weeklong course designated for them to grow doctrinally and personally. The first day of the classes was to be the same day that they filled out the consent form via pen and paper (see *Appendix A*). The learning, or “classroom” section, was the corporate end of discipleship, whereas the week’s “closing challenges” will focus on personal as well as small group (communal) discipleship and engagement with the student’s immediate social context. The classes were weekly, last from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm, and daily assessments five days per week were to supplement the appropriate class material. The classes were geared more toward theology, apologetics, and cultural engagement, whereas the journals and group activities were more geared toward personal spiritual disciplines (see *Appendix C*). Closing challenges were designed to put the participant “in the driver’s seat,” pushing them to seek community with other believers in the group. The aim was that if they could participate with each other in growing together, they would be more comfortable to disciple another “lower” on the pedagogy during week four (see *Appendix F*).

The classroom setting borrowed key concepts from David Dockery’s *Theology, Church, and Ministry: A Handbook for Theological Education* and many of the themes that were addressed in the course were from the second and third sections, titled *Theological Education: Shape of Ministry Preparation* and *Theological Education: Church and Ministry*. Topics ranged from biblical inspiration and inerrancy to Old Testament and New Testament theology, to Apologetics and Ethics; all of which are important for young believers to grow in knowledge and

stay rooted in the faith. Another springboard for topics was IChurch's *Creed of Faith*, which confesses several core tenants of Christian doctrine (see *Appendix G*). The project did not require the creed to run generally but was used as inspiration in discussing doctrine. The aim was therefore to mesh topics from the creed with additional material from Dockery, concluding with a Spiritual discipline and a social aspect of group discipleship (see *Appendix F*).

Figure 3: A crude lesson plan overview to be implemented throughout the assignment.

Week	Class	Lesson Plan	Discipline	Assignments
Week 1	The Bible	Teaching basic infallibility, inerrancy, and inspiration of the text.	Bible Study & Meditation	Focus on reading through Ephesians. One chapter per day. (2) Start a Bible study group with one other persons from your class on Ephesians. Meet up outside of class and discuss your findings in the book.
Week 2	The Triune God	Basic elements of exegesis using OT, as well as how the Hebrews would meditate over the text.	Prayer & Journaling	Write a small prayer each day and note when and how they are answered. (2) Start a prayer group with one other person from class. Pray for each other daily over the phone.

Week 3	Apologetic Application	Deliver basic explanations for the function of apologetics, lay out basic arguments from different “schools,” and give modern case studies as an example of proper apologetic usage in “real world” scenarios.	Evangelism	Meet with someone from your class and comprise an evangelistic strategy to implement. (2) Evangelize to one person this week and note the response(s).
Week 4	Personal Spiritual Formation and Discipleship	Teach fundamental principles of growing in the Holy Spirit and move to teach how to disciple others.	Discipleship	Begin a group chat with the class to share prayer requests and weekly encouragements. (2) Start the process of discipleship with one person and journal the experience.
Week 5	Final testing and collecting data.	N/A	N/A	N/A

To supplement theological education with spiritual formation, each week there were journal entries for Monday through Friday coinciding with a certain spiritual discipline. The list of disciplines utilized for this intervention borrowed certain disciplines from *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney and J.I. Packer. This book was chosen because of the basic disciplines listed and how they “flow” from one to another in the book. How these two resources will coincide for example is on a week that discusses biblical inerrancy, the discipline to be tracked for the week is Scripture intake; the week that discusses the role of

evangelism in the church will be supplemented with personal assessments from the discipline of evangelism, and so-on.

Figure 4: The order of each week's session.



The goal was to commence the project is at the middle of June and finish at the middle of July, therefore May and the beginning of June was dedicated to most of the prep work. Texts were sent out as lesson plans were being created (*Appendix H*). One month was to be the duration of the project. The youth volunteers were all either on summer break (on the younger end) or a had lighter workload at church. Therefore, roughly one month during the summer months was ideal because not only was that a significant amount of time to track daily and weekly data, but also the participants had more time to dedicate to the task. Therefore, five weeks was the goal with the implementation of trackable data for each weekday for the duration of the project yielding twenty spiritual discipline assessments alone for each participant, not including the introductory evaluations and final assessment to see their total spiritual growth.

The objective for tracking data was to leave nearly everything on pen and paper. Three-ring binders were given to each participant to write journal entries and to place handouts in at the beginning of the week. Per the advice from Sensing, the surveyor kept a reflective journal to “acknowledge any bias, feelings, and self-interests” that may arise during the project.¹⁹⁸ Any

¹⁹⁸ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 45.

change in the participants during the experiment was noted, along with any unexpected variables that entered during the project. In this way, stakeholders were not the only individuals being “tracked”, the enforcer also held themselves accountable throughout the process. Each handout was “fill in the blank” notes based on each course. The figure below explains the detailed process of the procedures that followed.

Figure 5: The action steps associated with the project overview and intervention design.

Project Overview and Design	
Step 1	Synthesize Dockery’s and Whitney’s work into a rough lesson plan overview.
Step 2	Create consent forms.
Step 3	Create handouts for each class. Four in total.
Step 4	Follow up with significant class notes to go with each handout.
Step 5	Create journal documents for the participants
Step 6	Create Introductory and exit Likert scale assessments for the first and final day of class.
Step 7	Develop introductory and final exams for potential participants.
Step 8	At the youth meeting commencing the experiment, distribute the introductory exam to see who potential participants for the project will be.
Step 9	Purchase three-ring binders for the potential participants to be ready for the first day of class.
Step 10	Produce physical copies of the consent forms, journal entries, and Likert assessments.
Step 11	Place all journal entries and note sections in the three-ring binders, dividing weeks into five-day segments.
Step 12	On the first day of class, after the consent forms are signed, distribute binders containing all physical materials to students
Step 13	Hold each classroom setting accordingly.
Step 14	In the fifth week, distribute the final Likert scale and exam.
Step 15	That following Friday, collect all binders from participants.
Step 16	Analyze data and synthesize trends visible in the surveys, journal entries, and exams.

Ultimately, this method of discipleship-tracking was multidimensional. The method employed was what the author calls the *CCP* model of discipleship. The letters stand for

corporate discipleship, *communal* discipleship, and *personal* discipleship. Many discipleship methods differ in that they typically argue that discipleship cannot be done with more than a handful of people. Others disagree by stating that their entire church is disciplined on Sunday mornings. This method blended these two understandings by incorporating the fact that an individual and community are disciplined at varying degrees in their respective spheres. The first dimension, *corporate* discipleship, is done in a larger body, be that Sunday mornings, Sunday school classes, or Bible studies. The *communal* level focuses on a small group atmosphere, where the group edifies one another as peers. Finally, personal discipleship is between the individual and the Holy Spirit, this is where the private disciplines are employed to gauge the sanctification process undergoes for one person.

Discipleship is involved in all three measures, as one feeds into the other. Personal discipleship enhances the edification of the small group, as the group edifies the Body. Likewise, no individual is strengthened solely by themselves, but are edified through the mutual sanctification of other believers, both communally and corporately. Therefore, throughout the implementation of Bloom-Anderson, the Spiritual disciplines Likert scale, and personal journal entries, all three dimensions of discipleship will be tracked and measured.

Old approaches employed by the church have primarily dealt with *knowledge* and ended with the *application*. This previously stunted growth in the youth ministry by preventing leadership from discipling others effectively, resulting in many of the youth not gaining the theological or biblical information they needed to deepen their faith and multiply to others. By focusing on the latter three tiers of the Bloom-Anderson model, leaders and volunteers were equipped not only to be engaged in their ministry setting as active disciples but also were equipped to disciple others. This level of learning allowed engaged youth to take ownership of their discipleship and put

language to the method to pass to others. Not only did the young adults involved gain theological grounding but also were able to make their faith “their own” by disciplining themselves and teaching others to do the same.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The first night of the intervention was on a youth night in which youth leadership arrived for a spiritual retreat with the lead pastor of the church. After a brief devotional, the leadership chose “breakout sessions” in which to participate. The sessions served as a means for young adults to grow in a particular area in which they felt they needed to grow the most. All individuals chose these classes on their own volition without coercion, as the observer was not present at the time of choosing the sessions. There were three sessions from which to choose. One session was designed specifically for females seventeen and younger. The young adults therefore had two options to choose. One of which was the introductory session for the project, titled, “Discipleship in Young Adults.” The session occurred on a Friday night, and they were all informed that the project would begin the following Monday.

Seventeen individuals entered the session, and there they were introduced to the intervention plan for IChurch’s young adults and the discipleship method that would ensue for the next five weeks on Monday evenings. All seventeen potential participants chose to take the introductory exam. The exam took roughly an hour and a half to complete. At this point, the observer began recording observations in an independent journal digitally on a laptop in a password-locked note.

During the exam process, there was considerable unease amongst the potential participants. A few individuals explained afterward that the nerves were a result of wanting to

enter the program. Initially, there was an overall lack of confidence in answering simple doctrinal questions, as some explained that they have never been asked to give an answer for what they believe. When observing their expressions and moments of frustration, they clearly knew what they believed more than they thought, but the frustration came from translating their beliefs into words and onto paper.

The qualification for “passing” the exam and entry into the program was making a twenty-eight or above. Questions on the exam were graded accordingly to a rubric the observer created, having questions that were on the lower tier of the taxonomy counting as less, while the more difficult questions requiring a more thought-out answer counting as more with the possibility for partial credit (see Appendix E). If any potential participant scored a twenty-seven or below, their score indicated that they were at the level of *application* or below, underscoring that they were not ready to participate in this project. Those who scored a twenty-eight to fifty-two were at the point of *analysis*, those who scored a fifty-two to seventy-seven were at *synthesis*, while those who made a seventy-eight to ninety-nine were at the *creative* stage.

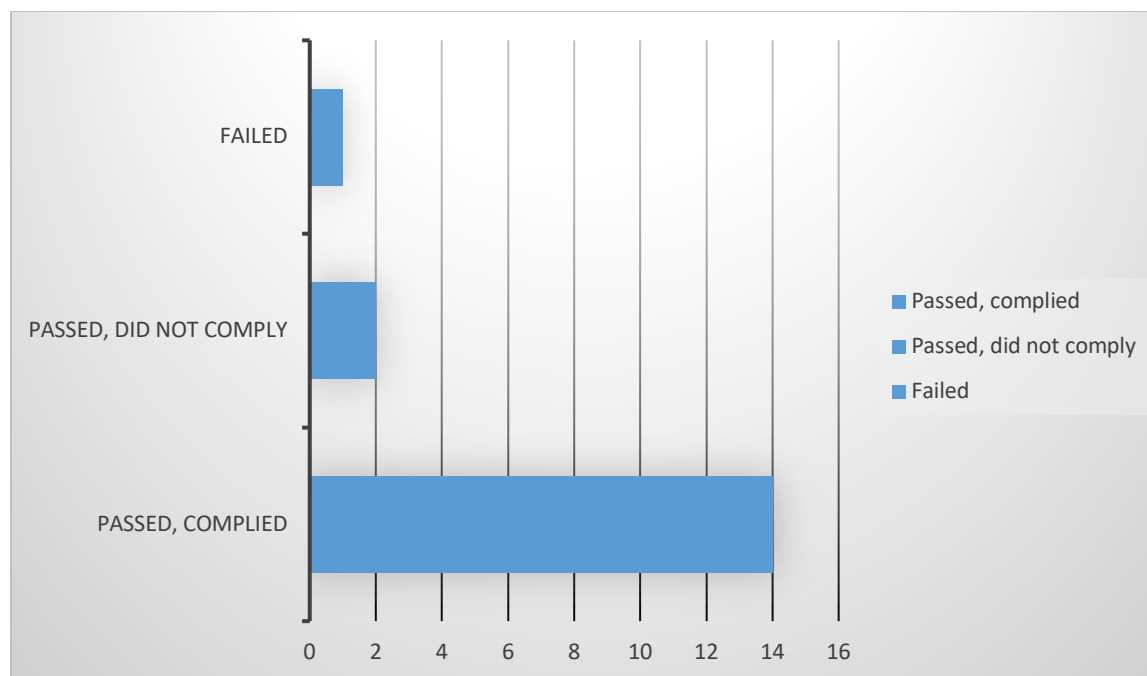


Figure 6: Percentage of Potential Participants for the Intervention

After collecting all screening exams, they were graded and those who passed were notified the following day that they qualified for the project. None of the participants knew their scores from the first exam until they retook their test on the final day of class, which was on the fifth week of the project. Out of the seventeen potential participants that took the entry exam, sixteen passed. The one participant that failed made a fifteen, indicating that they just made it to the point of *application*. Knowing this individual, however, it is more likely that they simply had difficulty putting their doctrinal thoughts on paper rather than a genuine lack of knowledge. It was more common than expected that the potential participants had difficulty explaining their faith on paper, but it appears that even at a leadership-level, they have not had much opportunity to describe their faith as they would to someone who has never heard the Gospel before. Although there were sixteen potential participants who passed, upon being notified, two individuals could not oblige to coming to church for the next five Mondays. One individual said

that they had college classes in the evening, while the other gave an un-descriptive reason as to why the timing was inopportune. With fourteen individuals agreeing to come in the following Monday, the project was ready to commence.

At the point of introductory exams, there were eight participants who scored to the point of *analysis*, six who were around *synthesis*, and two who were *creative*. The highest score at the point of introduction was a ninety-six, and the lowest that was able to participate was a thirty-one. All participants ranged from eighteen years old to twenty-seven. Upon observing who all qualified for the exam and agreed to comply to the next five weeks, ten out of the fourteen participants were in youth leadership, and two were in leadership under another ministry besides youth. The two who decided not to comply were not in leadership, and the one who failed the test was in leadership of another ministry. One outstanding observation was that those who were leaders decided to give their all for this assignment because they understood the severity of what it would mean if they did not undergo the project. Everyone in leadership had the desire to learn more about the Word and how to disciple others. They decided to put this project first before their other obligations, indicating that a strong discipleship culture can possibly be forged with the set of participants who chose to undergo the program.

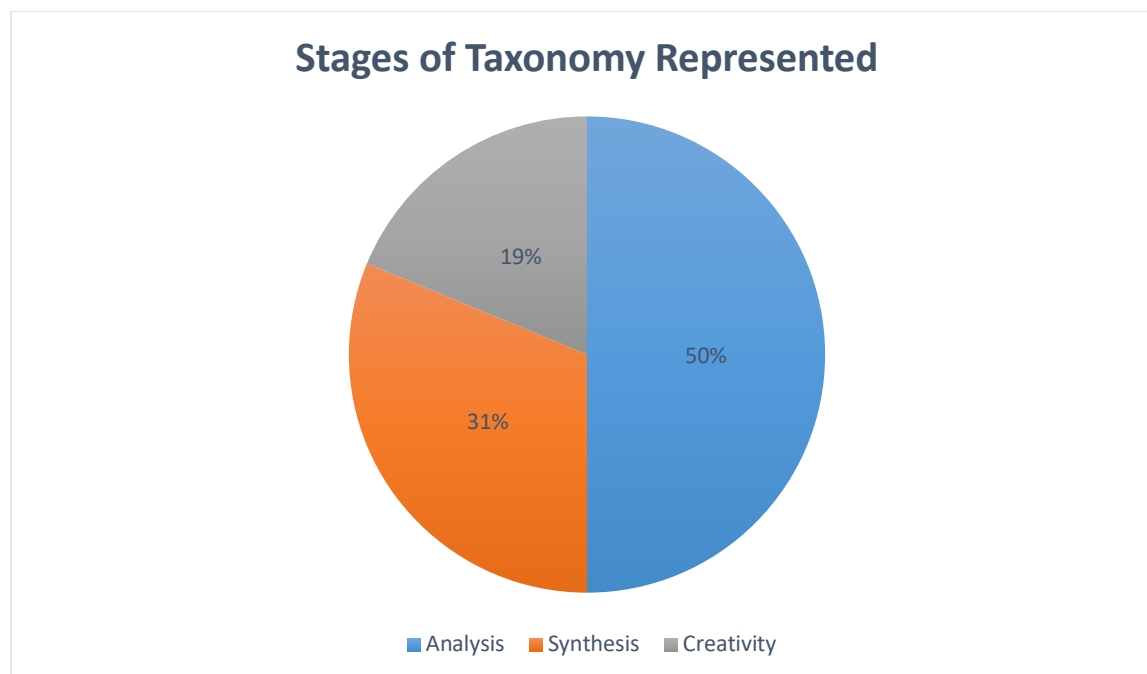


Figure 7: Percentage of Bloom-Anderson's upper taxonomy represented at the beginning of the project

Two-thirds of those who scored *creative* were above the age of twenty-two, the youngest being eighteen years old and the oldest twenty-seven. All who were in the *analysis* stage were ages twenty-two and under, indicating that the *synthesis* stage did not show any trend pertaining to age, as each participant at that stage was anywhere between nineteen to twenty-three. However, each participant at *synthesis* is a regular teacher or preacher within the ministry, underscoring the importance of synthesizing ideas, such as personal experience, culture, and the Bible, and then incorporating said factors into a lesson or sermon. Appropriately, the younger out of the young adults most likely recently entered the *analysis* stage, as they are at the point in life where they are starting to live somewhat independently from parents and are now forced to think of their faith on their own without parental influence.

The following Monday, the first class began at 6:30 pm. The lead pastor gave a budget of \$125 total for the next five weeks for food and drinks. Pizzas and sodas were ready for the

participants when they arrived. They had roughly fifteen minutes to eat and read through the consent form provided. All fourteen participants agreed to the consent form and moved to the spiritual formation assessment. Once they completed the assessment, there were forty-five minutes left to go through the first class on the primacy of Scripture.

The participants were then handed a three-ring binder filled with daily journal entries in which they were instructed to write their perspective of the process alongside their assignments that they were to complete throughout the intervention. The handouts for the first class were also distributed at the point of arrival. The class concluded promptly at 8:00 pm. The participants kept their binders the entirety of their time in the project, never disturbed by the observer. At the beginning of each class, the participants received the handout matching the class to be taken, followed by the closing challenge of what the participants were to incorporate in their journal entries for the following week.

Three days after the first class, the observer created a group chat titled, “Education + Formation” on iMessage for all the participants to place prayer requests and to encourage one another throughout the coming weeks. The observer also occasionally typed messages of encouragement, prayer, and updates on the schedule as the project continued.

The following week, participants were asked how the first week went. One participant stated that the previous week’s personal assignment, writing a rough outline for the book of Ephesians, allowed her to memorize the book better. She went on to say that throughout the week, the book became more personal for her than ever before. One important takeaway from this interaction is that by taking ownership of her learning allowed her to make the Word of God a critical part of her walk by allowing the book to speak for itself without outside influence. By

interpreting the Word using exegetical methods taught in the class, she could more easily describe the book, the contents, and the situation in which Paul was writing.

Alongside the previous participant, another stated that it was difficult for her to journal what she was reading. She said that she already had a routine time of journaling in the day, but it was more geared toward prayer. Instead of stating that a second journaling dedicated to the Bible was a problem for her, she indicated that it was more so a lack of time management on her behalf. The participant showed ownership of her apparent shortcoming amidst the entire class, showing that she had trust in her classmates to keep this sensitive information confidential. She also showed that she was not intimidated or afraid to be vulnerable in front of the observer. The level of vulnerability and bravery to share her weaknesses with her peers underscores a success in the project. When in an environment where peers are to positively influence peers, vulnerability is key in the process. Communal discipleship was slowly taking shape amidst the young adults.

During the following week, there was an instant where a participant asked the observer if their interpretation of the book aligned with the historical interpretation. The participant was encouraged to continue to seek commentaries to better ground himself in the history of the letters' interpretation and that for the purpose of this exercise, it is best that they seek these answers out themselves and with their fellow participants. The same participant continued to ask questions and express gratitude throughout the following week, stating that reading the Bible was becoming more accessible when proper exegesis was implemented.

The class was also made aware that since the following week was a holiday (Independence Day), that there would be two classes in one session and to expect a longer session than one hour and a half. The way that classes two and three were laid out was the

following: Class two was expected to last roughly fifty minutes, followed by a ten-minute break, leading to another fifty-minute class. The participants then would have two weeks of journals to complete. Their individual class handouts would dictate what they would do the week of Independence Day alongside the group chat to keep everyone active and alert for the week that they would not gather.

Therefore, the second class began at 6:30 but also allowing five-to-seven minutes for the participants to get their food and drink before officially beginning. As a church event was being planned before the class commenced, three students were tardy, and another could not make it as she was having preoperational procedures undertaken for an ensuing surgery. The two participants who were late received notes from other classmates who were ready to help them. When the participants showed an impressive amount of teamwork, the observer noted that group discipleship had taken place. Other participants showed kindness and service to those who were working in ministry elsewhere to ensure that they would not fall behind. The total amount of time for the double-class to finish was one hour and forty-five minutes. The look of exhaustion on the faces of the participants was noticeable, especially for the third class which was an introduction to apologetics. The observer noted that this incident would not be repeated.

The other participant who missed the class due to medical emergency texted the observer to see when she could make up the class. Two days later, she was contacted via Zoom to make up the class. She then informed the observer that she had just underwent surgery for her collar bone the day before the Zoom call. When pressed as to why she wanted to take the class so soon after her surgery, she stated that she wanted to learn what was missed and that by taking this course and staying busy, it helped occupy her mind for the week she would be out of work for recovery. Once again, the observer noted how highly the participants viewed this exercise. No

participant took the assignments lightly, and if they needed to miss one day, they were quick to try to make up the work. The participant's tenacity to understand the material, even under pain medication, was commendable. On Zoom, the class still lasted for one hour and forty-one minutes, as it was two classes in one session. Another student dropped off the class handouts for her so that she would not fall behind. Once again, the participants showcased a desire for everyone to learn so that no one fell behind. Participants continued to show selfless servitude to their peers to arrive at the goal together rather than seeking to be "ahead" of anyone else. Each participant made the project their own by allowing the entire group to succeed together as they grew throughout the course.

The following week was preparation work for Vacation Bible School. One of the participants was a key leader in the children's' ministry at the church, so they could not attend that Monday. Another participant had to work overtime, so they could not attend. Finally, a third participant contracted COVID-19 the prior week, ensuring their absence as well. As this was the last class and there were circumstances beyond their control for not attending, the class was voice recorded for their convenience while the rest of the class underwent the study on spiritual formation and discipleship.

Even though two participants could not attend, one participant stated that they would get the class handouts to the one with COVID by driving to his house when the class was over and placing it on his doorstep. The children's director came by to pick up the class notes before going back to working on Vacation Bible School, and the student who underwent surgery the week prior took the notes to the third absent student. What is remarkable about the third instance is that the student who was absent for the fourth class gave the previous weeks' handouts to the one in surgery. Therefore, this was a reciprocal case of generosity and mutual servitude. Each student

ensured that no one would fall behind. The Vacation Bible School teacher made sure that she was up to date for the following week, and both the participant with COVID and the other who worked overtime completed the final week's handout before coming to the week of retesting. Mutual discipleship had certainly taken root in the class by the time the course was over.

An added benefit of recording the class was that each participant was completely up to date for the final week. There was not a single student who missed an entire class who was not able to be taught by another participant, listen to the class via voice memo, or retake a class on Zoom. All participants were ready to retake their theological exam and spiritual formation assessment by the fifth and final week. Each participant put in the work, took ownership of the material, and chose to make the project their main focus for the five weeks that it took to complete, even if that meant extra work if they needed to be absent for any reason in the duration of the project.

The class, therefore, can easily be completed in a five-week timeframe. An additional observation is that there was an added convenience factor for those who were unable to attend week four. It is a possibility in the future to video record each class if the project is found successful enough in the church to be repeated later. If the project proves successful, make-up classes could be offered online to better keep the five-week schedule rather than extending. However, the added convenience of taking the class whenever one wanted could be a hinderance more than a help, as there is no means for accountability outside the observer reaching out to the absent party constantly. Unfortunately, at the point of writing, there is not enough data to formally conclude anything.

The final week was retaking the theology exam and spiritual formation assessment. The participants were informed via group text that they could arrive at 6:30 and leave whenever they

were finished with the assessments, turning in their journals as they left. Several participants were late to enter, but no one stayed past 8:00 pm. Each participant took their exams and were present for the final week. No food or drinks were offered the final week, as it was set to be a shorter session.

Each participant was silent and diligent upon taking the assessments. From a cursory overview of the tests, there are many more answers filled. Participants took the final day seriously and came in prepared. Some were even studying their notes in their journals and class handouts before taking the tests, ensuring that they make better scores than before.

Upon each student's departure, they were asked what they learned and if they had been able to track any growth. The final participant that left stated that they had no idea what spiritual disciplines were before undertaking this project. They also disclosed that at their workplace, they have ample opportunity to spread the Gospel. The participant also disclosed that as he works at a hotel, he has since been bringing certain individuals who live at the hotel to church. In week three, the project to take home was to embrace the spiritual discipline of evangelism. The challenge was to come up with an evangelistic strategy to implement before the end of the week. Therefore, he used that week as an opportunity to speak the Gospel to tenants and offer them a church home, even bringing IChurch flyers to the hotel to hand out to guests. The participant went on to state his hardship in developing the discipline of silence and solitude. He disclosed that it has always been difficult to retreat and be with the Lord in prayer, and that being alone in his thoughts was troubling to him, as he tries to always have either music in his ears or be around a large group of people. However, he left the group encouraged that he would overcome his fear of loneliness and seek to quiet himself before God more, and that without this project, he would not have given serious thought to retreating and finding the Lord in silence.

Another participant stated that he also never knew what spiritual disciplines were other than prayer and fasting. He went on to say that he wants to learn what other disciplines there are so that he can practice them better. Before leaving he disclosed that he felt that God had suddenly placed him in a large sphere of influence and feels blessed that he feels more equipped to influence others in the process of discipleship after this course. He was also grateful for the week of silence and solitude, as he stated that he feels as if he is about to enter intense spiritual warfare after completing the project. He left saying that he is setting a regular time each week to be alone with the Lord to prepare for what is ahead, citing that as he was reading the Bible this past week about the temptation of Jesus in the desert, he felt empowered to follow Christ's example and seek the presence of the Father.

Several other participants stated that they learned a considerable amount after completing the project. Some went to say that they feel more confident in evangelism, while others feel more confident sharing their faith with others in discipleship. A few others said that they now feel more equipped to defend their faith when facing skeptics.

One participant stated that after seeing her first grade, she was somewhat disgraced. However, she left the project feeling much more confident in her answers and said that she learned many new concepts in her time undergoing the intervention. She went on to say that she left more answers blank initially than she thought and was surprised that she did not know how to answer certain questions. From her observation, she clearly knew what she wanted to say, but was not equipped to articulate her faith in a theological way. She already knew what she believed, but this project aided her to better form her thoughts to words and to translate those words into writing. Confidence allows people to voice their opinions to others, therefore with her newfound confidence, she could more accurately speak what she already knew to be true.

Another participant said that she was unsure whether she had a higher score on the assessment. However, she and another participant said that they scored significantly higher on the spiritual formation assessment. They said that if that is all they learned, to be better disciplined in Godly things, then they considered the project worth taking. Indeed, personal disciplines ought to lead Christians deeper into the knowledge of God, as the disciplines feed theology, and theology feeds the disciplines.

However, not every tale that was told was necessarily a positive one. One participant stated that they did not know that they had to write in journals and did not bother to ask the observer what the daily entries were in the binder. He went on to say that he learned a significant amount and sees maturity in his walk with the Lord. Another participant ended up asking him how his journaling was going, and he confessed to them that he did not know that journaling was a requirement. Nevertheless, he owned up to the fact that he simply overlooked and did not pay attention during that part of the instructions. This was not a repeated endeavor, as every other participant took notes in their journals consistently.

Another participant went on vacation the final week and when they came back, decided to write in their journal before submitting. Although the journals were designed to be daily, the benefit of the participant doing what they did provides data that underscores that there is a possibility that journaling need not be daily in the lives of young adults, but only further study will tell whether that is the case.

Ultimately, the young adults who participated were responsible and took the challenge that this project was. Many were “owners” of the material, and very few were passive learners, asking questions when something did not make sense or texting the observer throughout the week to make sure that they had a certain concept correct. The individuals were humble and

were eager to learn, many of which gained new or deeper friendships with others along the way. Many others have started a personal Bible study going through a book of the Bible on their own, while another group decided to go on a trip out of state together. Group discipleship, personal discipleship, and corporate discipleship each played a part in the maturation of these young Christians, and many of them are eager to share what they have learned to others who are not as far in their journey with Christ.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Upon completing the assignment, the participants submitted their three-ring binders on the final day of meeting, including their introductory and exit theological exams, introductory and exit spiritual formation assessments, and daily journal entries. In this chapter, several takeaways will be discussed.

Firstly, there was identifiable, scalable theological development among all participants using Bloom-Anderson as a guide. When overviewing submissions, there were two cases in which there was no change in *tier* on the hierarchy; however, both participants in question scored better on the exam, moving them further upward on the scale. Overall, nine out of the fourteen participants graduated to *creativity* on Bloom-Anderson.

Secondly, all participants scored higher on Biblical knowledge. The find is significant, as the following pages will describe how ill-equipped the participants felt they were at not only interpreting the Bible properly but reading it. As the spiritual formation assessment separated Bible meditation and Bible study, participants as a whole found meditating on the Word to come more naturally than studying and applying exegetical strategies to the Text. By the end of the project, all participants felt more secure applying hermeneutics and drawing authorial intent from the Bible.

Next, not only did the participants grow theologically and biblically, but also personally. Those who were more active in class could describe their personal growth, which further indicates the important role of corporate discipleship in the life of the young believer. Furthermore, while every participant scored higher on the disciplines exiting than they did entering, many of the more active young adults scored *significantly* higher on their practice of the spiritual disciplines (*agree* to *strongly agree* on the assessment).

Finally, those who indicated their personal spiritual development tended to also be involved either with their classmates or another person in which they decided to invest. The final week had the participants choosing someone to disciple and continue their journey long past their time in the study. Those who became communally invested saw an increased personal development, and vice-versa, indicating that there is a dire need for group discipleship alongside personal spiritual formation.

The study found that each realm of discipleship feeds into the other. Communal discipleship was forged by corporate discipleship as assignments were given by the observer, and personal discipleship was deepened by participation with others in the faith, as personal discipleship deepened the knowledge of those with whom the participants interacted. The model presented was, ultimately, effective in what it was created to accomplish, but much more must be discussed regarding what worked, what did not, and what were more unexpected results that inevitably ensued.

Scalable Theological Development through the Taxonomy

Upon initial review of the theological exams, it was rather easy to track notable results. There was only one student who entered the program at the *creative* stage. Therefore, although this participant could not score higher that would lead her to another “level,” she still scored one point higher than she did on the initial exam. Below is a chart detailing how far in the taxonomy each participant underwent.

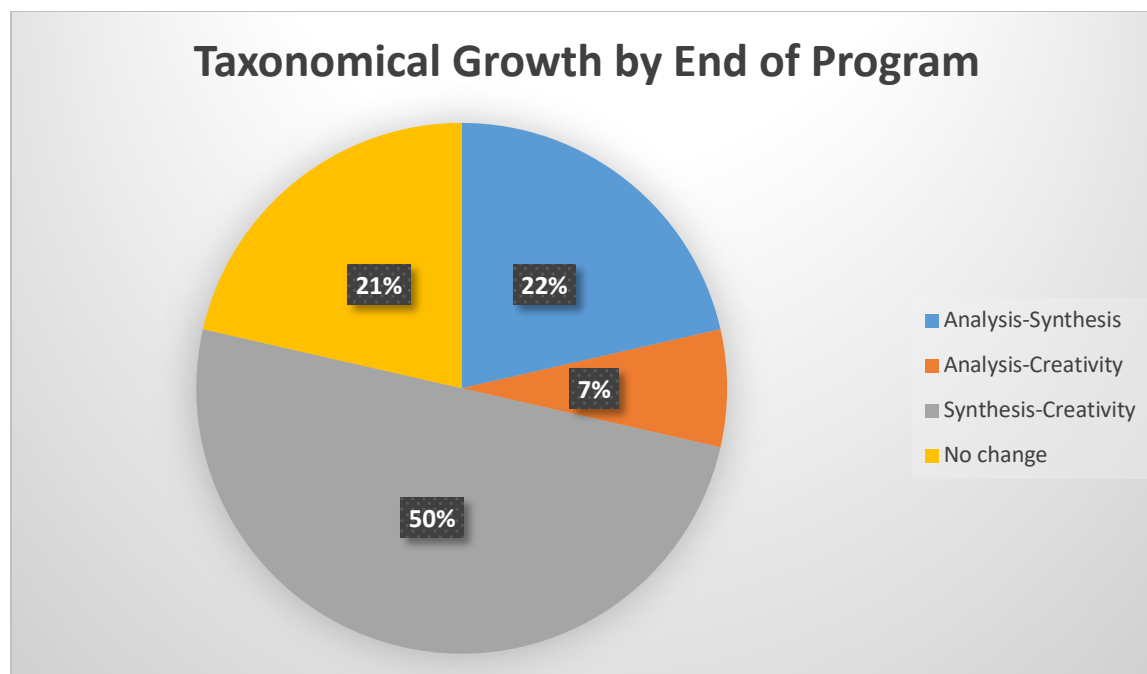


Figure 8: Growth displayed on Bloom-Anderson by the end of the program.

By the time the program was finished, all but three students scaled higher on the taxonomy from the point that they entered, yielding a 78.57% growth rate. What would be defined as growth is an increase of one entire “level” of the taxonomy. Another result of the program showcases that within one case of a participant, they increased two entire tiers, leaving *analysis*, entering and exiting *synthesis*, and achieving *creativity* in a five-week span. Later in this paper, the same participant will be examined to see how they achieved this rapid growth from their journal entries and spiritual formation assessment.

Among those who entered the program, eight were already at the point of *synthesis*. One of the participants at that stage stayed there for the entirety of the program, but the other seven achieved a higher stage, leading to the data presenting that half of the participants entered at the level of *synthesis* and achieved *creativity*.

Three participants who entered at *analysis* graduated to *synthesis* by the end of the program. One participant entered at *analysis* and stayed at that stage for the entirety of the

program. Therefore, three participants indicated no visible change taxonomically. However, the participants who indicated “no change” still scored higher on the exams upon departure.

Therefore, the data needs to be observed at a deeper level. Below is a chart indicating the overall growth of each student.

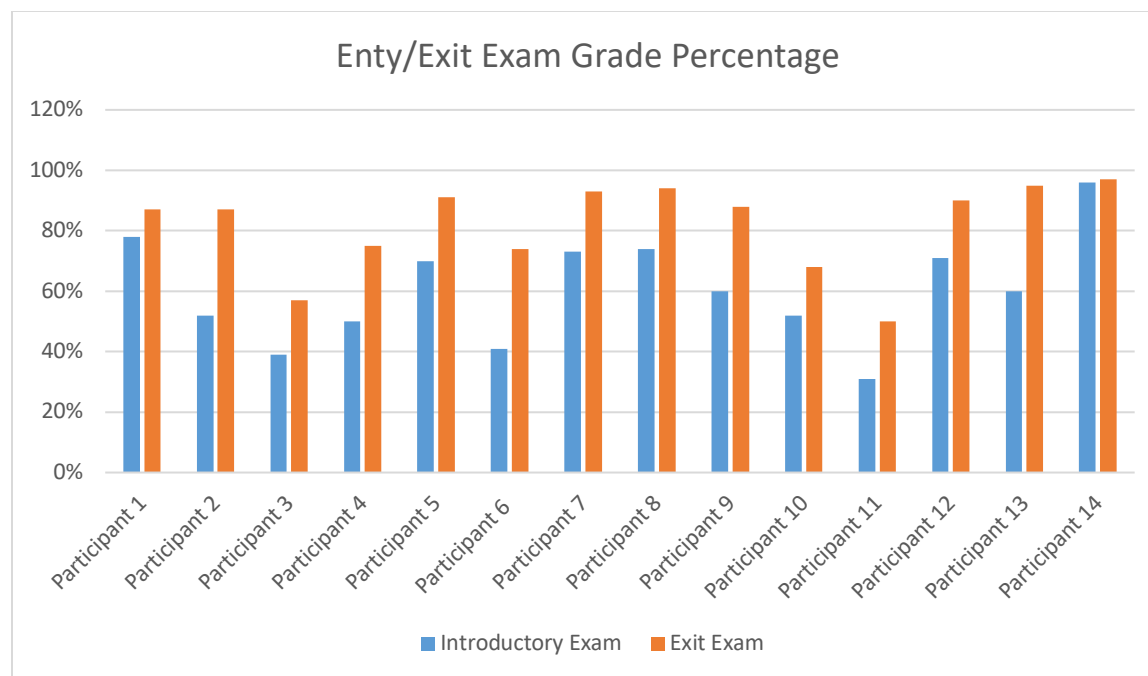


Figure 9: Percentage increase chart displaying growth in theological knowledge from the point of entry to the point of departure.

Students by the end of the program showcased the ability to explain credal expressions of faith at a much finer degree than at the point of entry. Most participants could explain the defense of heaven and hell, the doctrine of the virgin birth, the distinction of the Persons in and roles within the Trinity, a significantly higher rate of referencing the Bible to defend their point of view (explained in the next subsection to a greater extent), and precisely explain that Jesus is God and not just a “moral teacher.”

Before undertaking the exam, participants either did not answer the question defending the concept of heaven and hell, gave a blanket response appealing to the Bible, or they attempted to philosophically pose that since the existence of good and evil is apparent, heaven and hell are apparent as well. Four participants at the introductory exam pointed to the book of Revelation to justify the concept. By the time of departure, almost every stakeholder referenced Revelation or appealed to the teachings of Jesus to justify the doctrine. Interestingly, the doctrine of heaven and hell was not discussed during the program, indicating that the participants' brains were more geared to think biblically than they were at the point of entry. Teaching the concept itself was not necessary as throughout the five-week program the students were trained to think biblically rather than be "spoon-fed" every answer to the exam.

Another concept only briefly discussed in the class was the doctrine of the virgin birth. Many participants in the introductory test simply stated that when asked to defend the doctrine and why it was necessary for Christ to be born of a virgin, they did not know how to articulate their theology, most of which stating that Jesus was born of a virgin to fulfill prophecy, which is partially true, but not the full extent as to why Christ's coming necessitated that prophecy to be fulfilled. By the end of the exam, many appealed to His perfection, His Godhood, or that Jesus, like Adam, was not born of man, connecting Jesus as the "Second Adam" that Paul references in Romans and 1 Corinthians. Once again, the virgin birth was not a focal point in the study, but what was discussed extensively was the Christ's divinity. The participants took this understanding of Christ being the Second Person of the Trinity and applied it to the virgin birth without having a specific class on the doctrine alone. The students were able to explain the virgin birth through the divinity of Christ, using "greater doctrines" to discuss "lesser doctrines."

Furthermore, participants could more accurately describe the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and their respective roles in the Godhead. When asked what would occur if one of the Persons were “removed” from the Trinity, the participants could accurately state in their own words that this could not be the case, as the doctrine of the Trinity is unique to the Christian faith, therefore the Christian God would look either entirely different or not exist at all. When describing their roles at the point of entry, most would say that the Father was the creator, the Son the savior, and the Spirit was something else that they could not describe. The answers given were not entirely wrong, but mostly based on a misconception of how the Trinity operates. The concluding exam brought forth much more nuanced answers for the majority of the participants, placing the Son at the point of creator or savior, the Father laying out the plan of salvation, and the Spirit was described as the One who sanctifies the believer or draws them to the presence of the Father. A detailed and sophisticated answer to the Trinity questions in the exam was to be expected, as there was an entire class devoted to the Trinity in the program.

The stakeholders could accurately describe Jesus as God and could defend as to why He is not simply another teacher of morality in history. Every student was able to answer that Jesus is God, made authoritative claims to His Godship, or how His incarnation proved many biblical prophecies indicating that His mission was higher than merely teaching how people should behave with one another.

Upon reviewing every exam, only three participants did not answer every question on the exam. Nine participants upon entry did not answer every question, and many of the questions they did answer were either not full paragraphs or not properly developed thoughts. The time it took for the exam upon entry was also significantly higher, taking around two hours to complete less of the test than that of the exit exam, where they took the test again alongside the spiritual

formation assessment at roughly one hour and a half per stakeholder. The student's answered more confidently, more fully (at around a paragraph each answer), and at less time, underscoring the level of growth they underwent because of the program implemented. Below is a graph indicating where the participants landed by the end of the class theologically.

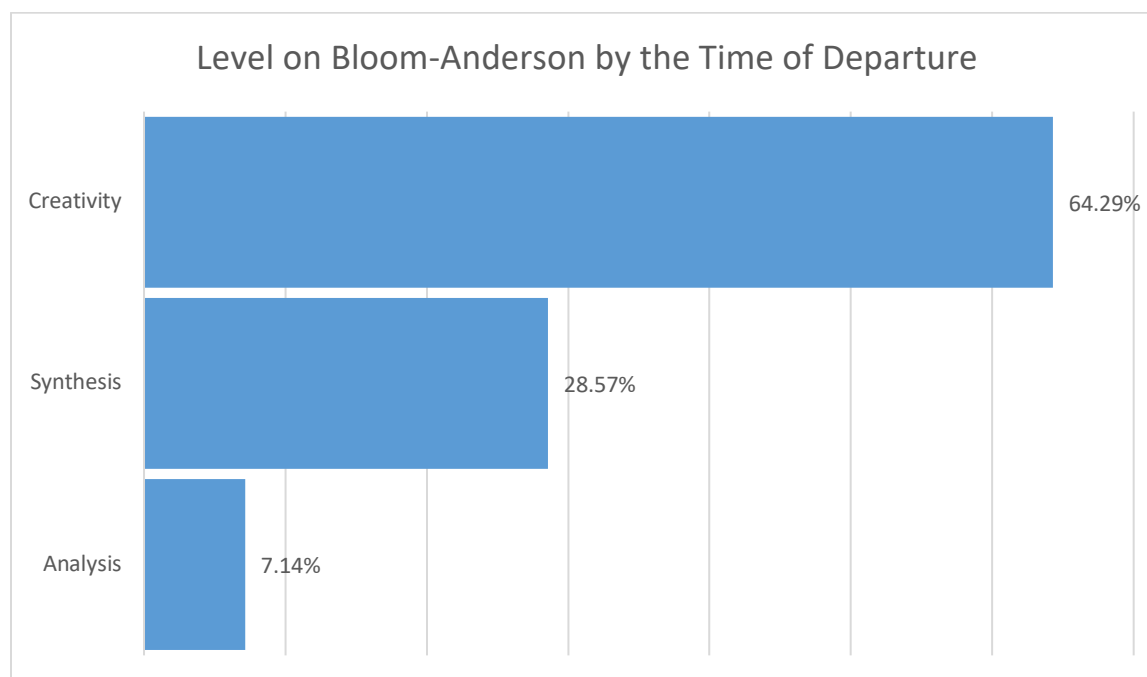


Figure 10: *Percentage of participants' level of theological development based on Bloom-Anderson*

Upon reviewing the results compared to the prospectus, a desired outcome before undertaking the program was that at least half of the participants achieved the *create* stage upon departure. The participants exceeded the expectation by 14.29%. The result at hand concludes that well over half of the participants are now at the point where they can teach others what they have learned in this project. Indeed, sixty-four percent of the young adults who participated are at the level to teach (therefore, *disciple*) others in the Christian faith not only based on philosophy or credal expression, but also using the Bible as a strong basis of belief by the standards of *Bloom-Anderson*.

Increased Biblical Knowledge

Growth in biblical understanding was an expected result in this study, but the amount of increase in knowing the Bible and the ability to apply it surpassed previous expectations. Below is a chart indicating the highest answers from the participants' spiritual formation assessment concerning overall Bible knowledge.

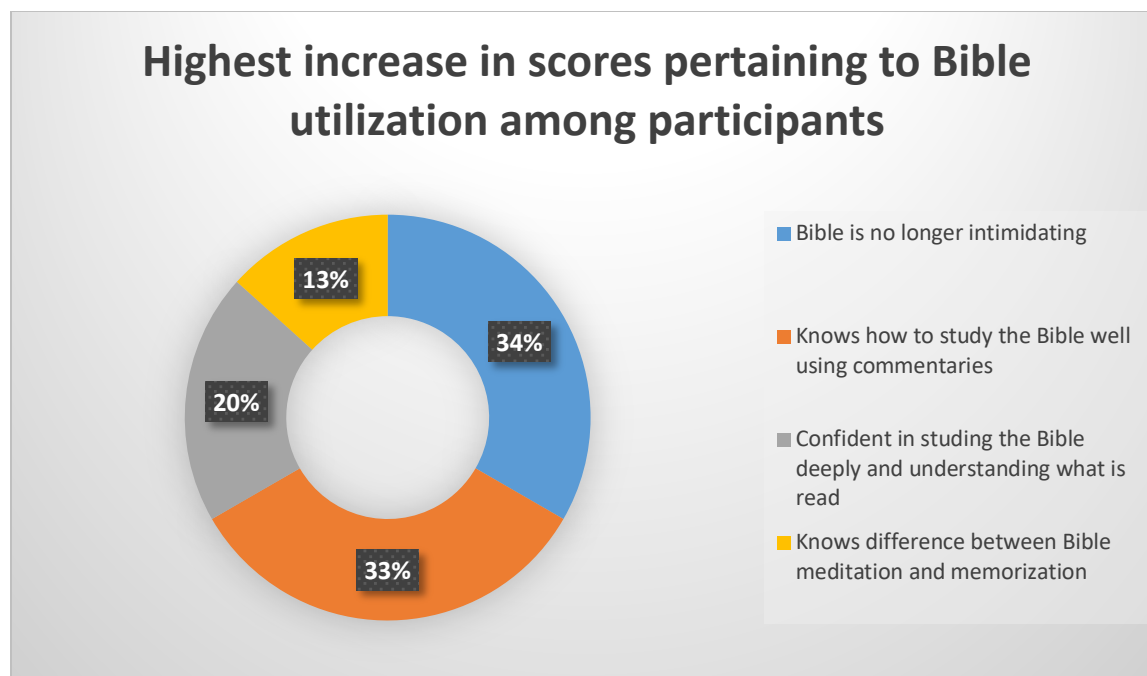


Figure 11: The highest increase in scores pertaining to Bible utilization among participants.

As an exercise for the first week of the project, the participants were expected to read one chapter of Ephesians each day and write a rough outline of each chapter. When reviewing the number of participants that underwent this study, thirteen (93%) of the participants participated in a deep study of Ephesians, with only the exception of one participant who did not input a single journal entry for the duration of the project. As to be expected, said participant grew the least in Bible meditation and Bible study, only showcasing a two-point increase in Bible meditation across six questions, with no change in the amount he studies the Bible.

Ten participants (71%), as disclosed in their journal entries, laid out the entire chapter of Ephesians. Whereas some placed bullet points throughout the chapter in their notes, others drew illustrations, while others wrote out their summation in segments based on certain sections of the chapter while writing personal reflections at the end of each day. Three participants did not use Ephesians as a journal entry, but rather wrote about what was going on in their life. At the following class, these students asked the observer if they were utilizing the journal properly, as they were unsure what they were to do the first week. Their class outline stated that they were to use the first week of their journal to break down each chapter of Ephesians, one chapter per day. Although they did not write on Ephesians each day, the participants in question verbally confirmed that they studied Ephesians each day.

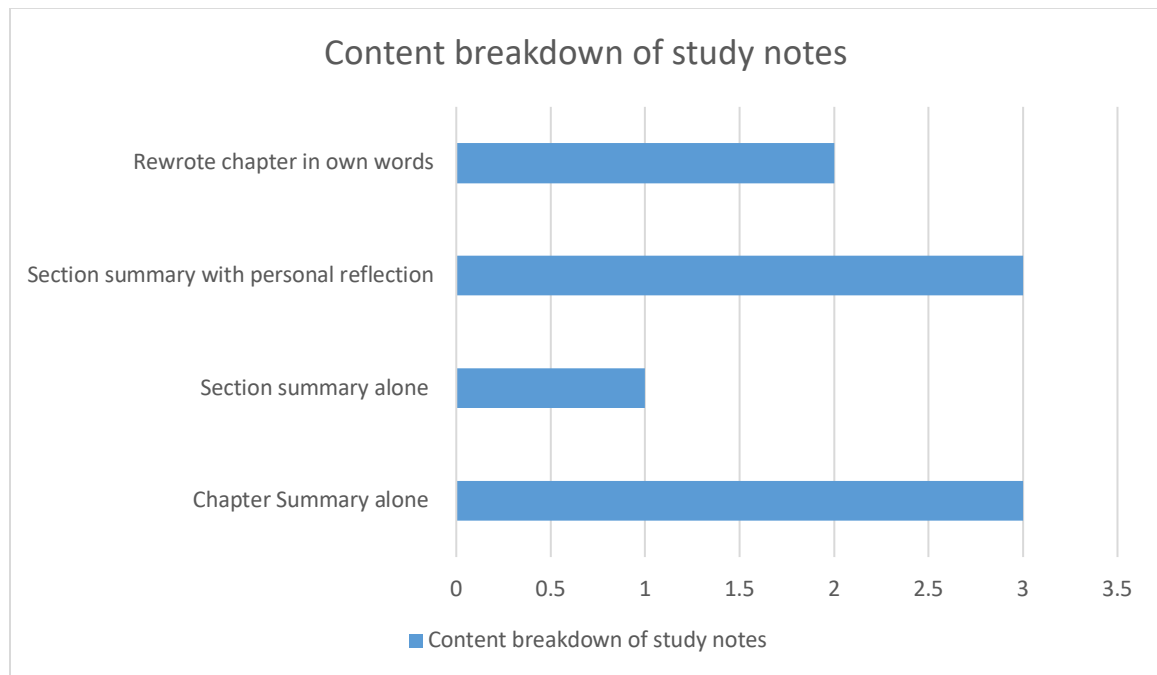


Figure 12: Among the ten participants who wrote their breakdown of Ephesians, this was the substantive data of how they studied the book.

One of the assignments for the first week was to gather a Bible study partner among the participants to go through the book together. From the journal entries, it is inconclusive whether the participants did so, as the entries only disclosed that they underwent the study alone.

The data also shows that those who participated in the assignment on Ephesians statistically were more confident in Bible study and meditation by the end of the program. Participant 2 who underwent the largest change in the Taxonomy rising two tiers by the end of the study, saw two-point decline in Bible meditation but four additional points in Bible study per the spiritual formation assessment. Assumedly, upon further reflection from the initial assessment, this individual understood that he did not know how to undergo a proper encounter with the Scriptures and answered more humbly as he assessed his meditation of the Word. Alternatively, he could have also had a busier month, preventing him from meditating the Scriptures more often. However, this is merely conjecture as the data is inconclusive currently.

Participant 3 saw a nine-point growth in the discipline of Bible study per the exit assessment. The correlation between personal reflection upon reading the Word and experiencing growth in competence in study is notable, as Participant 14 also saw a three-point increase in Bible competency explaining that the Bible is no longer intimidating for her. The final participant who saw the greatest change using personal reflection notes alongside Scripture study was Participant 12. As she wrote down reflections as to what was occurring in her personal life and applying it to the principles she gleaned from the Text, she saw a six-point increase in Bible meditation and a four-point increase in Bible study, as she disclosed in the assessment that she now meditates on the Word daily and can tell a noticeable difference when she does not do so in her actions and interactions with others.

Those who wrote the chapters out in their own words did not see a noticeable change in either Bible study or meditation, as they had already scored relatively high on both topics in the initial spiritual formation assessment. Rewriting the Bible in their words possibly was a practice they underwent before participating in the program.

The participants who wrote a chapter summary generally scored higher in their exit exams than when they entered. Participant 5 saw a five-point increase in Bible meditation and another five-point increase in Bible study. He noted in his journal entries that he used lexicons during parts of his Ephesians study, trying to understand the Greek alongside the author's intended meaning when he wrote it. He also noted in his exit assessment that he now meditates on the Word daily and consistently looks forward to doing so. He also agrees that he understands what he is studying when he reads the Bible and makes it a point to do so "deeply," cursory readings. Participant 7 also saw great change while tackling reading the Text. She stated multiple times in her journal that reading the Bible is intimidating to her, and interestingly, it only became more intimidating as the week went on. However, by the time of the exit assessment, she strongly agreed with the statement that the Bible is no longer intimidating for her and now agrees that she knows how to study the Bible well.

Participant 8 saw an eight-point increase in Bible study per her exit assessment, strongly agreeing that she knows to consult a commentary when undergoing a difficult passage. Participant 13 used the journal for week one as a breakdown of Scripture and saw a three-point increase in Bible meditation and a four-point increase in Bible study, as he was undecided on how to study the Bible upon entry and left the program strongly agreeing that he knows how to undergo proper Bible study.

As stated previously, another proof of an increased Bible knowledge was a constant referencing to Scripture on the exit Theology exam. Whenever participants were asked about the existence of heaven and hell, the virgin birth, or the Trinity, most individuals knew where to go in Scripture to reference these doctrines. If they did not know the exact reference (as a few participants did by the conclusion of the study), many could at least point to a narrative in Scripture or the book that one could go to for more knowledge. One stakeholder who remained on the same level of taxonomy as he began did not write in his journal according to the prompt. Instead, he used it as a prayer journal for the first week. He was supposed to log his prayers the second week of the participation per the prompt. He also did not score significantly higher in Bible study or meditation. He saw a subtraction in points regarding Bible study, indicating that he views the Bible to be more intimidating than he did upon entry. These results lead one to conclude that if one puts forth the proper work at the proper time, they will see noticeable change in their personal walk with the Lord.

On a final observation regarding Scriptural clarity, there is a positive correlation between doctrinal clarity and Scriptural familiarity among the participants who journaled and outlined Ephesians. The participants scored higher on the spiritual formation assessment and the theological evaluation by the end of the five-week course. As one grows in confidence, said confidence translates into the ability of putting one's thoughts about a subject accurately on paper, as stakeholders who saw noticeable change in their Bible habits wrote more extensively on doctrinal subjects and gave more substantial reference notes on their exit theology evaluation. Therefore, those who put in the work, went to consult commentaries when concepts were not clear, and notes regarding personal reflection were key aspects for scoring higher in personal confidence and putting thoughts into writing on the exam.

Personal Spiritual Formation Growth alongside Class Participation

As the participants finished the study, they were asked to fill out a final spiritual formation assessment with the same statements as the first on a Likert scale of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” While noting that each participant grew to some extent is important, what is noteworthy of further observation for this paper is if there is a correlation between personal spiritual development and corporate participation. Those who exercised corporate discipleship alongside personal discipleship saw a greater increase in spiritual formation on the Likert scale. As the participants journaled their process into further, deeper formation to Christ, what they chose to do with their extracurricular time must be noted to better understand whether a social aspect to discipleship is necessary among these emerging adults.

Concerning results, those who chose to participate for the duration of the program scored on average slightly lower on the Likert scale upon conclusion; however, the reasons for the difference in overall average will be discussed later in this section. “Class participation” is described in this section as filling out each outline given before class alongside complete journal entries and participation in each assignment as given after each session. The chart below discloses the increase in point value as the participants exited the program.

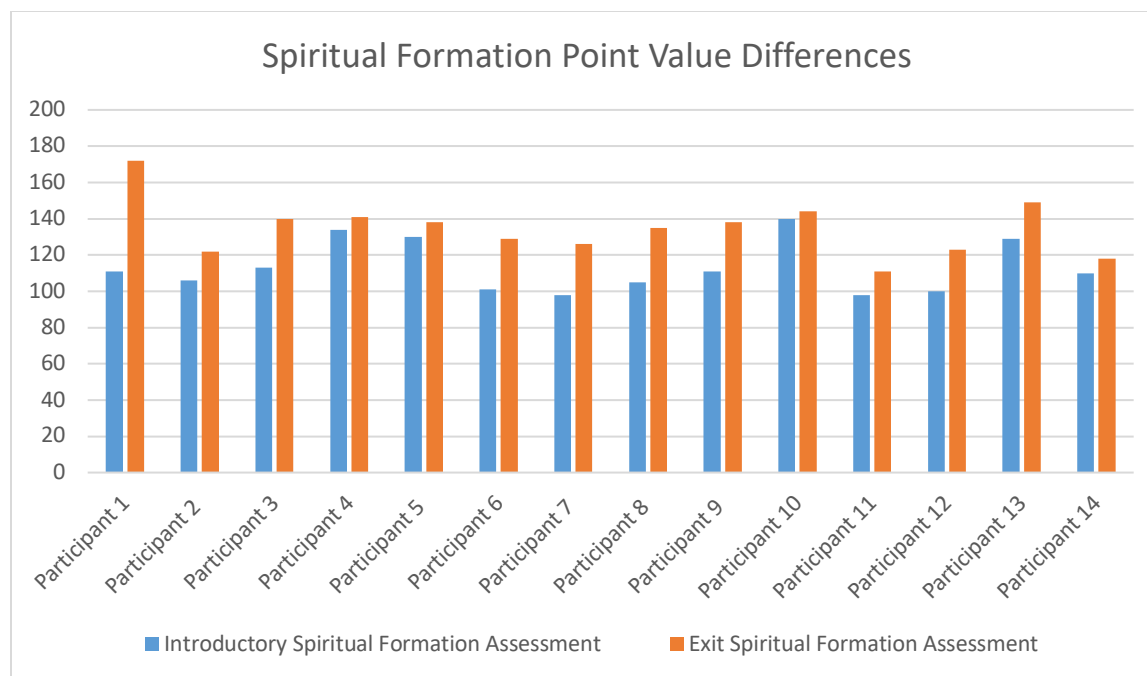


Figure 13: Differences in point values given the sum of points in the Likert Scale spiritual formation assessments.

The added responsibility to give an account for their actions increased the young adults' levels of accountability as wrote in their journals. All but four participants wrote in their journals daily. Those who wrote in their journals discussed hardships they endured while undergoing the project as well as successes. Week 2 was notable as the participants wrote down their prayers and noted when they were answered.

Another important note to discuss is the overall average point increases concluding the spiritual formation assessment. On a surprising note, those who did not fill out each class outline on class day or completed each journal entry scored higher on the personal assessment given at the end of the course. The overall percentage increase in point value given all six spiritual disciplines is displayed below.

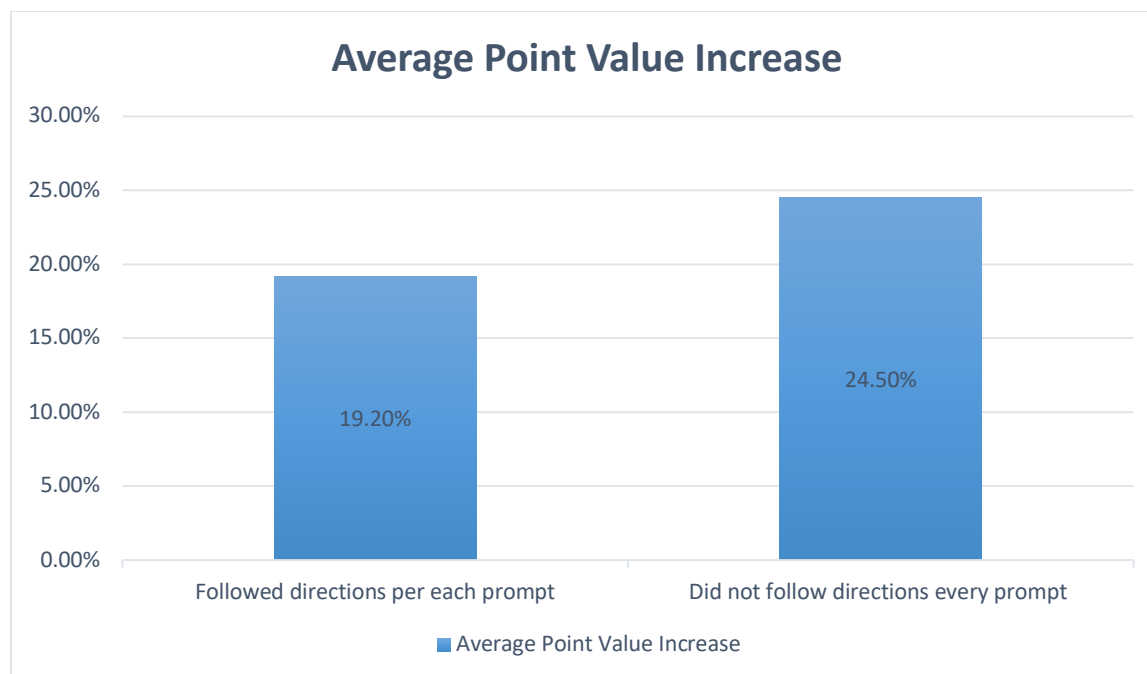


Figure 14: Average increase in point value in percentages per the spiritual formation Likert Scale exit assessment.

One reason for this surprising difference in average is the amount of people who did not participate. As there were less people who did not regularly participate as there were participants, the median is expected to be higher when dividing the total number of point increases by the number of individuals who did not regularly participate.

Another reason for the difference in average is that those who regularly participated in class, filled out each outline, and regularly wrote in their journals were already at a high level on the taxonomy and entry spiritual formation assessment. Knowing this indicates that there is less room to “grow” spiritually on the scale as they already have disciplined themselves to a certain extent as to assume rapid growth ought not be expected.

Half of those who scored higher on their Likert scale that did not regularly write in their notes or journal daily took it upon themselves undergo personal discipline as well as seek help for others. One of the two participants (Participant 1) missed the second class but went to another

student to fill out the missing material. However, he was unable to comply and the second class document remained blank at the point of retrieval on the fifth week.

Participant 1 also used the journal as a traditional “journal” rather than following the prompts given at the end of each session. Upon completion, he only filled out the first two weeks’ journal entry. He wrote that he filled out the initial spiritual disciplines assessment the way that he wished that he could answer rather than an honest evaluation of where he currently stands spiritually. He made it a point within the first two weeks to honestly evaluate his life. Although he verbally confirmed to the observer that he went over Ephesians, he did not do so in the journal. The second week he spoke of emotional turmoil that he currently was going through before a youth night. He noted that he did a personal study on Pentecost and decided to commit to dependence on the Holy Spirit and mimic the early Acts church.

Participant 12 also did not get class notes for portions of class 2 that he missed. However, he utilized the journal as it was to be and was aggressive in his evangelistic goals in week 3. He made it a point to invest in twelve different young adults to practice discipleship (this will further be discussed in the next subsection). Both participants supplemented their absence with aggressive strategies to better themselves, exercise the disciplines, and invest in others, leading to the anomaly that they exceeded on the assessment and theology exam more than what would normally be expected given their circumstances.

However, as to be expected, those who were faithfully participatory in the class did well on their theology exams. Indeed, out of the three participants that did not exceed to another level on the taxonomy, two did either did not comply with the journal entries (Participant 11) or did not fill out the entire class handouts (Participant 10). Participant 14, however, was already at the *create* stage and therefore could not excel any further.

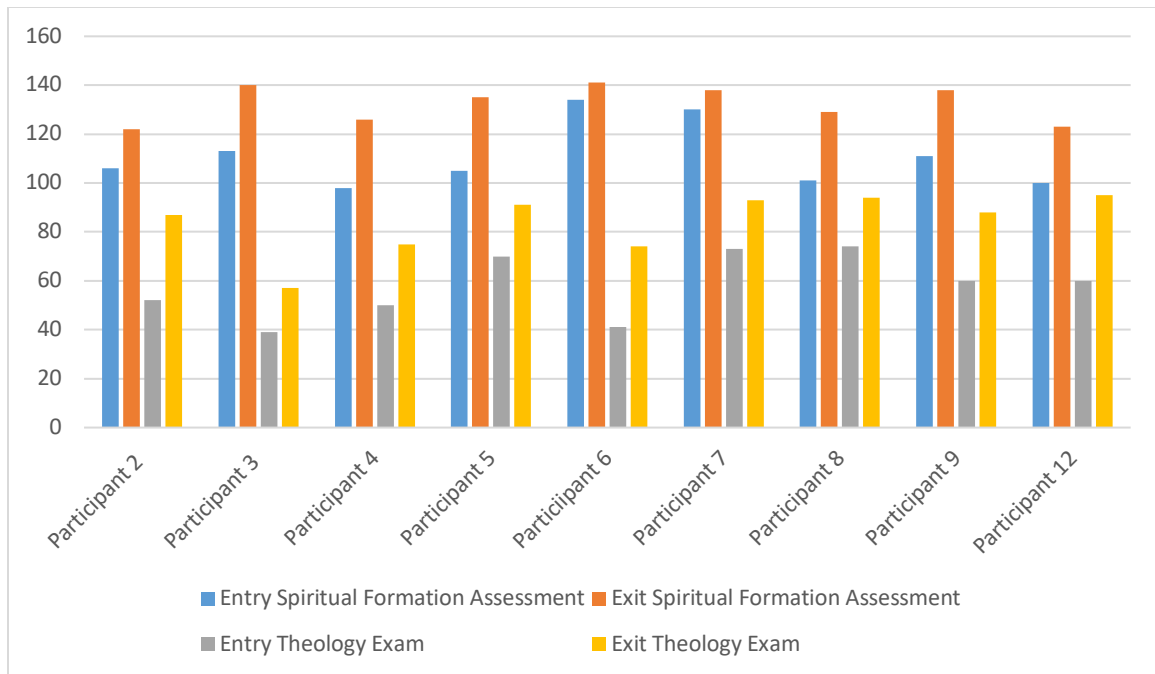


Figure 15: Comparison of theological evaluations and spiritual formation assessments for all active participants in class material.

As the bar graph illustrates, those who underwent normal classroom participation and followed the prompts experienced steady growth throughout the program, as there are neither peaks nor valleys. Those who missed a class are still marked present if they made up the course, such as the individual who underwent surgery and took the class the next day via Zoom. The other two participants who missed class 4 still filled out their handouts as well and daily wrote in their journals; therefore they are included in the illustration as well. Those who did not completely comply to the standards of the participation were forced to rely on those who completed the material, thus all participants underwent a level of discipleship, those who complied taught those who did not.

Ultimately, the correlation between personal discipleship and corporate discipleship cannot be overstated. Those who underwent corporate discipleship throughout the five-week course experienced steady growth in theological education alongside spiritual formation.

However, what is next discussed is of utmost importance to the discipleship model proposed, as communal discipleship is to feed into personal and corporate discipleship as well. Therefore, the next section focuses on the more social aspects of the spiritual formation assessment, including discipleship, evangelism, and apologetics.

Communal Discipleship Correlating to Personal Development

At the conclusion of this study, the participants were asked to answer not only how confidently they could exercise the personal disciplines, but the interpersonal disciplines as well. Individual, personal discipleship is important to track alongside corporate discipleship. However, one must also further observe the correlation between personal spiritual development and communal participation. Much like those who exercised in classroom participation, the participants that exercised communal discipleship alongside personal discipleship saw a greater increase in spiritual formation on the Likert scale. As the participants journaled their process into further, deeper formation to Christ, what they chose to do with their extracurricular time must be noted to better understand whether a social aspect to discipleship is necessary among these emerging adults. The chart below discloses the increase in point value as the participants exited the program.

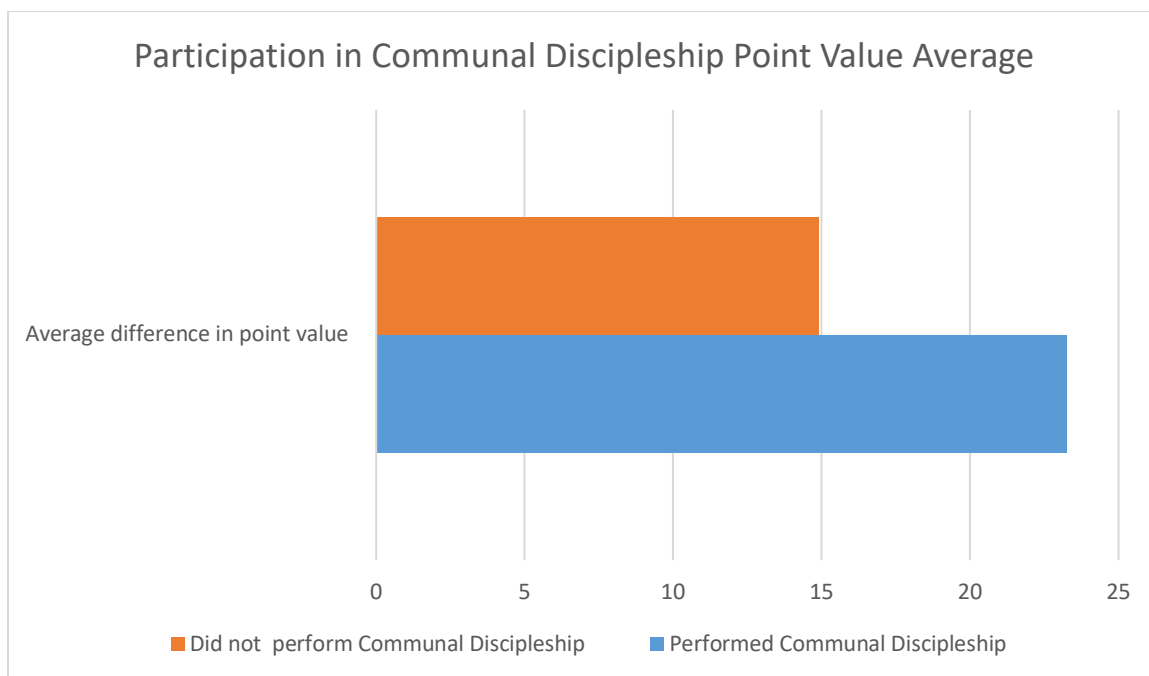


Figure 16: Differences in point value averages given the sum of points in the Likert Scale spiritual formation assessments between those who participated in communal discipleship versus those who did not participate.

Those who performed communal discipleship with one another as the assignments dictated showcase higher point values in both the exit theology exams and exit formation assessments. Consequently, every participant who chose to undergo group discipleship such as group prayer, Bible studies, and evangelism outreaches together all elevated to a higher stage on the taxonomy and were more confident in their answers in the formation assessments.

Several strong observations come from observing the participants' answers having to do with apologetics, evangelism, and discipleship, as all three factors are heavily influenced by the social aspect of spiritual disciplines. Nine out of the fourteen stakeholders now know, per the formation assessment, to evangelize more effectively and more often, are unafraid to publicly debate their faith against skeptics, knows the link between evangelism and apologetics, and feel more equipped with apologetic strategies. Upon further reflection, this is no small feat. All of the individuals strongly agree that they can publicly profess their faith adequately, whereas these

same participants strongly *disagreed* that they knew apologetic strategies or the link between evangelism and apologetics, and over half of them did not evangelize on a regular basis.

Several of these participants went to great lengths in their journals to describe their evangelistic strategies, one of which went to work and brought people who do not have cars to church with them on Sundays. Another participant prayed in their journal and asked God to bring five people to him as he worked so he could share the Gospel with them. Only a portion of those came to him that week, and he had a humbling realization that he did not talk about God nearly as often as he thought he did. He recorded that this realization drove him to talk about the Lord more to all who came to him. Another participant saw a nine-point change in evangelism, stating that upon reflecting on Matthew 28:19-20 daily, she was motivated heavily to evangelize to and disciple others. Participant 8 chose to evangelize to several young adults who she knew had been suffering from depression, and she prayed over their condition before meeting them.

Turning to discipleship, the same participant took her birthday to pray and fast over Participant 5, who had been suffering from depression and isolation from COVID throughout the course. In his journal, Participant 5 noted that he started to feel better when Participant 8 would call him and let him vent his frustrations to her. Participant 5 went on to say that although he did not evangelize or disciple anyone during this time due to emotional distress, he realized that he needed to be disciplined, and he grew from *analysis* to *synthesis* throughout the project.

Discipleship, alongside evangelism and Bible study, was the greatest yield in positive change amongst the emerging adults in the project. Participant 6 stated that the reason he felt God put him in the class was to learn how to care for others. In his assignment to invest in someone, he prayed that God would give him someone who is interested in music with whom to speak, and by the end of the week, he set up a meeting with someone who came along and

wished to meet with him. Participant 6 saw an eleven-point difference in his spiritual formation assessment concerning discipleship. Participant 9 made it a point to invest in her little sisters while she served in the church's Vacation Bible School, but also noted that she wishes to invest in herself before she considers investing in others. By the end of the project, she began training with apologetic strategies and seeking answers to difficult Bible questions so that she would be ready by the time her sisters began asking her questions. She saw a six-point difference in discipleship, with her biggest change that she understood basic principles of discipleship after the course.

Participant 11 had a sleepover with a younger believer and decided to use that time to speak on the Triune God with her, going through her class notes to theologically disciple the younger girl who serves in ministry with her. Participant 11 saw a two-point increase in discipleship, indicating that she now knew basic principles of discipleship. Although all but two participants stated that they felt they could disciple others better by the end of the class, five wrote that they are now discipled by an older believer. Those who did so scored highest on the discipleship section, underscoring the importance of being discipled by a more mature Christian while discipling others.

Alongside strengths, the weakest area regarding spiritual formation was silence and solitude. While every participant practiced it while in the program, all but three stated that it was easy to be alone in silence. Many also stated they see the importance in the discipline; however, they do not enjoy being alone. Interestingly, the finding proves how social Generation Z is, and social aspects of discipleship are easier to maintain than certain personal disciplines. On the Likert Scale statements, participants stated that they could tell a difference when they did not practice the discipline of solitude; however, they still struggled doing so. Participant 2 disclosed

verbally that he usually has music in his ears when he is alone to combat the feeling of loneliness. Silence and Solitude overall was the weakest and most varied section of the assessment and could benefit from further study in the future.

Ultimately, the participation was a success, both in the realm of theology and spiritual formation. Before undergoing the study, the goal was to see 75% of all spiritual formation assessment answers be a “strongly agree.” Another key goal was to have at least half of the participants graduate to the *create* stage of the taxonomy. At the beginning of the participation only 46% of the spiritual formation assessments were “strongly agree” answers, and only one participant was at the *creativity* stage, with the expectation that at least two participants would drop out of the study. By the end of the assessment, 80% of the spiritual formation answers were “strongly agree” and nine out of fourteen (64%) of the stakeholders graduated to the *creativity* stage, with no dropouts once the study began. One area of discipleship fed into the other, where corporate, communal, and personal levels worked harmoniously to develop emerging adults into more confident Bible students, evangelists, and mentors.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

After the project ended, many of the observations made in the Literature Review became apparent. Several of the social aspects by which emerging adults live were showcased during the project, such as the desire for all members of the study to stay “up to date” by not missing a class, by sharing notes, or by relationally evangelizing. Identity formation also played a key role throughout the project. If positive identity formation is formed in emerging adulthood, as it has been in the lives of the emerging adults in the project, there is little room for doubt that this passion will not continue through the time they start families. The young adults in this study also enjoyed being challenged, which led to a further deepening in Christian identity.

Also, by the end of the study, several results became key takeaways for the observer. One of which is that practical theology makes good disciples. The emerging adults during the assignment took on the closing challenges each class as a personal invitation to better themselves, positively shaping their Christian character. Young leaders are the key group of people in which to invest, as they have the drive, passion, commitment, and time required to undergo a rigorous discipleship process. Programs that expand their doctrinal knowledge that also pair with outreach opportunities should be implemented in more churches.

Finally, there are some areas that were on the periphery of this study that leave room for further study, such as the need for further breakdown in age and how that influences one’s discipleship journey. Another opportunity for deeper observation would be to study the content of the emerging adult’s discipleship process alongside a less mature believer. Finally, it would be a benefit to take *Bloom-Anderson* and apply it to the whole collection of ministries a church may have, ensuring each ministry plays a part in maturing the believer, no matter what age or stage.

Joining the Conversation

Firstly, there are several factors that must be further discussed by the end of this project that come in agreement with what has already been established in studies prior. If anything, this study further reinforces what has already been discussed pertaining to emerging adults, beginning with the concept that young adults who become heavily involved in church tend to forego their national identity for their religious identity, at least as a primary identification factor. For IChurch, national identity is celebrated, but places an emphasis on an identification with Christ as the main way to form the personality.

In the study, there were two Caucasian (or European American) male students, one Venezuelan female, three African American females, one Peruvian female, three Mexican males, two Puerto Rican males, and two Puerto Rican females. Throughout the study, there was intermingling and comradery. Cultural boundaries did not exist as they went through the course. Each individual either helped the other study, formed Bible study groups together, or created prayer group chats to which each member could contribute. Learning doctrine together also underscored that Christian teaching is a racial “neutral ground,” as it comes from a non-oppressive perspective, but rather an oppressed perspective from what would be considered a racial minority in the United States, indicating that no nationality represented would see its origins as a threat.

Another finding that corresponds with the Literature Review pertaining to identity formation in emerging adults is that emerging adults need to be “named” by another. In such formative years, against popular opinion set by the current culture in the United States, identity is not found as one looks inward, but is called outward. True identity is found in a calling rather than a discovery. Just as Jesus *called* His disciples out of their professions, societal expectations,

and cultural barriers. The Apostles did not “discover” their apostleship, but they were called into that lifestyle by Christ.

Likewise, the participants would not have developed new skills in apologetics, spiritual formation, or theological education without an older Christian calling them into deeper knowledge of Christ and the Christian ministry. Those who scored highest in the discipleship discipline were also discipled by a more mature believer. If emerging adults are not taken in by a more mature believer, potential simply stays dormant, and the Christian will sleepily walk through their life never knowing what they could have done to positively impact the Kingdom of God. The personality of the believer becomes more “rigid” rather than malleable the more their beliefs are reinforced corporately.

However, the identity is not only formed by older believers, but also Christians who are on the same journey at the same time. Creating outlets for emerging adults to share in fellowship with one another as they learn proved to be a positive experience for this study. Identity is formed through peers possibly more so than by older Christians, as the observer only saw the participants once per week. However, the peers saw and interacted with each other on almost a daily basis. The participants influenced each other in positive ways. Specifically, the participant who was suffering from depression was influenced by another participant. This participant took her week to speak with and pray for this individual and his attitude was positively altered due to her influence.

Peers also “call” each other to be more than what they are. Learning together pushed the entire group to do the best that they could. The participant who did not write in their journal and stayed isolated for the most part voiced their shame to the observer on the last day of the study, as another participant contacted him the day prior to see how his journaling went throughout the

participation. His shame was influenced by another believer who was seeking to hold him accountable. Growth happens when peers hold the other accountable. Discipleship occurs side-by-side as well as top-down, and this study proved that peer influence and group activities reinforce the Christian identity in helpful ways.

Next, following the notion of group discipleship and positive peer influence, the study also came in agreement with other studies that being challenged by the church is a positive experience for emerging adults. Throughout the project, the participants were challenged with concepts that were new to them. The strongest finding was how ill-equipped the participants were in the realm of apologetics. As they learned the difference between classical apologetics, evidential apologetics, existential apologetics, and presuppositional apologetics, the look on their faces were equally eager and intimidated. As several argumentation strategies were posed to them, they vigorously were writing extra notes as to ensure that they did not forget certain key concepts or flows of thought.

What the study adds to the conversation is not only do difficult questions or concepts need to be posed to emerging adults, but they need *homework*. The participants excelled in reflecting, meditating on, and then seeking to implement the concepts they learned from each class. Emerging adults must be trusted with the concepts they learn class. However, it is equally essential to note that it was essential that standards were explicitly set by the observer, ensuring that they would be held accountable as the observer went through their notes and journal entries by the end of the study. What differentiated this project from a Sunday school is that the concepts discussed were not given simply for the sake of knowledge or reflection, but that these reflections became *actions*. Emerging adults desire an active faith. If they do not achieve their desire for such activity in the church, they will find such involvement in either their peers,

politics, or some other extracurricular activity, indicating that emerging adulthood is the perfect time to challenge these individuals to go and make a difference spiritually. Therefore, emerging adults essentially need extracurricular activities to ensure that their identity is formed to Christ through not only classroom participation, but that they take these concepts and apply them to their personal lives, ensuring active followers of Christ rather than a life of passivity during these formative years.

One last observation that comes in agreement with previous studies conducted is the notion of social awareness in emerging adults. This age range is statistically the most activist and socially involved. As far as the study was concerned, as these young Christians were made aware of the social implications of their doctrine, they were more interested and sought more ways to apply what they learned. More specifically, the social aspects of the project were typically showcased more positive results than private disciplines. Regarding silence and solitude, very few participants saw it as a positive experience although many saw the value in doing it. However, the strongest weeks for the participants were when they had to perform an evangelistic outreach. The number of students who also stated that they were unafraid to publicly debate their faith by the end of the project is staggering. Relational evangelism was a key finding during this study. The emerging adults in the study were not interested in street preaching or social media posts, but rather conversations, text messages, and personal invites to church. The more the participants understood that doctrine has social implications, the more excited they were to participate in the study. Social awareness became relational discipleship once they made the connection between evangelism and discipleship.

Key Takeaways

Not only did this participation yield results that came in agreement with other studies conducted in the past, but there were also key takeaways that were observed unique to this study. One important gleaning is that while theology alone forms good *students*, practiced theology makes good *disciples*. As stated previously, positive identity formation is found when an individual is called to be more by peers and superiors alike. Emerging adults who are involved in church already are not looking for another class to take. The fact that they are already engaged in the church and ministry underscore their interest in all things Christian. They already go to church, attend Sunday school, or are involved in ministry work. What these engaged adults need is to make things practical. However, they need more than practice, but practical theology.

Most of the emerging adults who participated in the study have grown used to practical application from challenging sermons on Sunday. However, what they found most interesting was linking theology to daily activity. The overwhelmingly positive experience they had in learning apologetics and evangelism underscores this notion. Almost every participant noted in their spiritual formation assessment that they clearly understood the link between evangelism and apologetics, whereas almost none of them did before undertaking the program. Their readiness to apply what they learned by speaking to their nonbelieving peers or teaching theological concepts to younger believers showcase that once they understand to love the Lord more with their *minds*, their *actions* will follow.

Sunday mornings are typically not the place to learn systematic theology in IChurch. Therefore, the more opportunities there are for these individuals to learn the higher concepts of the Christian faith, if done properly, will open more opportunities for them to practice what they

learned, reinforcing Christian doctrine in their lives, and further reinforcing their personal walk with Christ.

The participants also enjoyed learning systematic theology. One participant noted that while learning the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture, she thought that she would not learn much in that section, but then realized how little she knew of the finer concepts of the doctrine. When learning concepts simply for the sake of knowing without practical application, said concepts may stay with the individual, but it does nothing for the Body as a whole. However, as the emerging adults were challenged to *do something* with the challenging material they learned, they took ownership of these concepts and what they only knew at a cursory level became more contemplative and concretely formed as knowledge that surpassed their minds into their attitudes, affections, and actions.

Another key finding is that young leaders specifically are important figures in which to invest. Emerging adults who were in leadership for the duration of this study yielded more positive results. There was only one case of a leader of a ministry who was not able to attend every class, and all other young leaders had perfect attendance. Those who are already accountable in leadership understand the need to be punctual and consistent. Leaders who understand the weight of being responsible for others were typically more consistent in reaching out to disciple others, evangelize and undergo more rigorous Bible study.

Therefore, young leadership do not only have the benefit of already knowing the weight of being responsible for others, but they are also at an advantageous age where they are highly social. Not only did the participants who were already in leadership show more responsibility making sure that they knew the material for themselves in the class, they also were more likely to share their findings with others.

The fact that these individuals were young, *and* leaders showcased a dual relationship between maturity, responsibility, and relatability. These individuals would have sleepovers, late night conversations, and international text conversations to teach others about Christ and what they learned. One participant, Participant 12, made it a point to reach out to his friend in Mexico who cannot find a church home to log in and watch IChurch's service online that Sunday and desired to hold him accountable afterwards. The same participant the week after prayed for God to give him several people to invest into after the class was over, resulting in twelve younger Christians that he reached out to and texted each one to start a discipleship process with them. This stakeholder was unafraid to take what he learned to others and ensure that those over whom he has influence is held accountable in the process.

Another participant took the apologetic strategies they learned and sought to do extracurricular studies on four types of apologetics studied in the program. She sought to do so that she would be prepared when younger Christians had questions that they could not answer on their own. This type of eagerness was not shared necessarily with those who were not already in active leadership. However, young leadership knew that times do come where difficult questions arise from those with whom they speak in ministry. Moreover, these participants were not only doing so because they knew they would be accountable, but they also went beyond the requirements to take ownership of the material because the *desired* to do so. The engaged, emerging adult leader is social to the point that they were willing not only to be prepared to have conversations reinforced by their findings in the classes, but they were willing to *start* the conversations. This comes from not only their need to take initiative as leaders, but also their sociability given their young age and free time to devote to these topics.

Emerging adults are not only eager to learn and teach others through relationships, but they also showcase a desire to be mentored by others. Most young adults who participated in the study could not identify someone in their life that was discipling them at the point of their introductory spiritual formation assessment. There was an eagerness displayed in the participants before taking the screening exam to undergo the study. There was a unanimous agreement in the room to take the introductory theological exam at the introduction to the program.

Therefore, it is essential to note that emerging adults need mentors in their lives to show them how to be more mature Christians. In the theological review there was an overview of how Elisha had Elijah, the Apostles had Jesus, and Timothy had Paul. Every great believer had another who went before them and showed them the way of their calling. Young adults are eager for spiritual mentorship, and the church must provide outlets for spiritual paternity to take place so that those who are next in leadership can confidently take up the mantle and in turn mentor other, younger believers.

Emerging adults are also at a unique point in their lives that they not only have the time to muse on topics that they otherwise would not in another stage of life, but the energy and resources to spread the information that they learn to others. All participants but one either had a full-time job that had an early-to-flexible schedule or was in school at least part-time. Also, nine out of the fourteen participants still lived with their parents, indicating that they have excessive finances and a lack of necessity to hold a job for an extended period of time due to levity of responsibility regarding bills. This gives them ample opportunity to be more involved in leisurely activities. As they have extra time, many of them became creative in crafting opportunities to invest in others. Therefore, emerging adults are at a prime time to be disciplined theologically and introduced to basic spiritual disciplines, as if these are formed early in their life at a point of less

responsibility, they will more likely take these concepts into their more developed stages of adulthood. Habit forming in emerging adulthood is essential to setting these individuals up to be fully formed spiritually and theologically later in life.

Ultimately, this project underscored the need for emerging adults who are engaged in church to have an outlet to learn about deeper concepts they would on Sunday mornings. Each participant was already involved in multiple ministries and had family responsibilities outside of church, therefore they were already busy individuals before adding this project to their schedule. However, there was never a complaint about the project being another “to-do” on their list. Each participant was eager to learn and apply the material, as they did not mind the added stress by seeing the value in the project.

Many participants, upon completing the course, stated that they were sad that the participation was over. The observation is peculiar, as the participants now have time that they gained back since they no longer had to journal, participate in extracurricular assignments, or attend classes. However, the participants did not see the project as something else they had to do, but they *wanted* to participate and make a difference in the lives of others. Therefore, the church has the opportunity and responsibility to invest in individuals who will not see theological discipleship courses as a burden, but as an opportunity to be invested in and invest in others.

The participants’ eagerness to learn and apply is easily showcased by their results, where over half of them came to the point of being able to teach others what they had learned (indicated by the *create* level being achieved on the taxonomy). The stage of life, the leadership experience, and social standing these young adults are at showcased that they can responsibly handle discipling others when entrusted to do so and are worth the investment themselves to establish practical theology and spiritual formation courses within the church.

The taxonomy is also more than adequate to discern where people stand spiritually and theologically, as positive correlations in spiritual development crossed over to overall theological proficiency in the introductory and exit theological exams. Spiritual growth was correlated with the effort the participants spoke of in their journals, which translated to scalable growth in using the methods given by Bloom. The taxonomy has proven beneficial for many outlets other than ministry but can be applied to spiritual formation in church settings easily. There was an overwhelmingly positive correlation between theological education, spiritual growth, and taxonomical elevation.

The study confirmed the inclination that churches need to further develop discipleship programs, specifically for the youth. There is already a general agreement in the literature that there is a lack of formalized training in youth ministry, at least in the United States. The study also confirmed that investing in those already serving in church yield the likeliest result to multiply and teach others what they have learned.

The success of the project also showcases the necessity of the *CCP* model of discipleship. Those who engaged in all three levels underwent the greatest amount of growth. IChurch has found a successful model of discipleship to implement in the lives of young adults. As other methods only engaged in one of the three levels, either an overemphasis of classroom teaching, small groups, or personal contemplation. The *CCP* model engages all three tiers while offering scalable growth using *Bloom-Anderson* to indicate how much the participant has grown in a particular time. One participant explained that they grew further in the past month than they had in a longer period of time when participating in earlier methods.

The *CCP* model is effective in that it grows students at a steady but rapid pace in a short period of time by engaging the individual in their immediate community with solid doctrine and

ample opportunity for personal contemplation. The model also underscores a cross-contamination in all three tiers, as theological education at the corporate level fed into communal discipleship and personal spiritual formation. Each level of discipleship was developed and engaged, showcasing that all three aspects must be addressed for the full formation of the individual. Emerging adulthood is the opportune time to engage Christians in this activity due to the time they can commit to the process and their eagerness to be mentored. If they set the discipleship culture at their age amongst themselves, they then set the culture for the future church and uprising generations after them. They are at the age of not only exponential growth intellectually or spiritually, but also in overall influence as rising leaders in the church.

Reflections for Further Study

Alongside several key findings that confirm what has already been studied among emerging adults and reflections the observer can make about the project itself, there are other important factors that should be discussed further in other studies. One particularly interesting find in the study is the effects of loneliness in young adults. What has come up several times in previous discussions in the paper is how social emerging adults are. They will go to great, and even unconventional, lengths to spend time with others. This concept can be both positive and negative upon further reflection.

As was explained previously, the most difficult spiritual exercise the participants faced during the project was that of silence and solitude. Although many saw the benefit in the discipline and could noticeably tell a difference in their attitude if they did not perform the discipline regularly, they still found it difficult to undergo the process even while recognizing the positive outcomes. Being alone tends to be a serious issue amongst young adults, as their

sociability comes at the expense of serious contemplation. The danger is that the participants could be more focused on *doing* rather than *being*, as the more active disciplines such as discipleship and evangelism trumped the more reflective disciplines such as meditation and silence.

A benefit to studying the effects of loneliness in young adults could result in a method or process to combat these negative feelings associated to a temporary lack of social interaction. Perhaps another project could glean information from a group who underwent only personal spiritual disciplines while another did not to see if there is any finding that would prove beneficial in discussing the benefits of silence and solitude, personal prayer, and contemplative Scriptural meditation. If a study were to do a similar project as this one, there is a possibility of teaching only on the personal disciplines and explaining that loneliness is not necessarily a bad thing, but loneliness positively enforces the social disciplines.

Another possibility for further study would be the level of sensationalist and emotionalism that young Christians undergo. Many of the journal entries showcased emotional battles that emerging adults underwent throughout the process. A positive outcome from this project was that these negative emotions did not interfere with their responsibilities. However, it could possibly benefit how much emotion influences young Christians in their walk with the Lord. The journals were specifically wrought with information that certain participants did not feel strong in their faith while some did not even wish to get out of bed that day. Emotions tended to lead the young believers to negative spaces. In this study, if the spiritual exercise was more emotionally taxing, there was less growth in that area, especially in the case of silence and solitude. A full study on the emotional state and level of influences emotions takes on young Christians would be beneficial so that church leaders could better counsel emerging adults in

their spiritual journey, as emotional hardship often translated to spiritual turmoil amongst the participants, which is not always true. Emotions can affect their spiritual walk certainly, but the emotions must not lead their spiritual walk.

The age of emerging adults and the general effects of life would be another added avenue to explore. As the project ensued, many of the younger adults spoke of emotional battles they were undergoing or social situations of which they were apart. The oldest emerging adult, Participant 14, who was twenty-seven years old, wrote more about her pregnancy, her husband, and her prayers for God to use her finances for His glory. Her entries were much less emotion based, but on what she already knew of God and what He had done for her in the past. She was also less social than the others and did not participate in the social disciplines as much such as discipleship and evangelism. Her focus was more on her family, her husband, and her developing child. However, she excelled in the private disciplines and was one of the only participants who enjoyed the discipline of silence and solitude.

Although emerging adulthood only carries across eleven years. The eleven-year difference in the lives of young adults carry many significant life changes. One of the advantages of separating the ages of young adults in this stage would be to study the prayer life, prayer frequency, and social adaptiveness of each age range. Stages of life are important to study; however, there is a massive gap in life experience from eighteen years old to one almost beginning their thirties.

An eighteen-year-old could still be finishing up high school, while a twenty-nine-year-old could either hold a doctorate in their experience, have a family and house of their own, and be well-established in their career. Desires, dreams, and drives are significantly different in these age ranges, and how they are disciplined may require a strategy more catered to their age.

Therefore, further study of early emerging adults and late emerging adults would be highly beneficial in the realm of discipleship and spiritual formation.

Concerning discipleship and emerging adults, further examination could also be *how* these individuals disciple others. All the journal entries could provide was that they *were* discipling or desired to do such. However, what are the methods young adults choose to employ when discipling others? How consistently are they meeting and investing in younger believers? What is the content of their discipleship? How much are they preparing to disciple others properly? These questions and many more would be beneficial in another study.

Perhaps it would benefit an observer to take a handful of emerging adults who are at the *create* stage of the taxonomy and charge them to disciple another, younger Christian. The participants could then write their methods of discipleship in a journal and log the outcomes of each meeting. The emerging adult who is doing the discipling could then have the individual they have been discipling for a certain amount of time take an exam showing what they had learned throughout the process using *Bloom-Anderson* or another hierarchical method. This process could lead the observer to develop a method not only for young adults to be disciplined, but for young adults to use in discipling others.

Given the success of *Bloom-Anderson* in the case of theologically educating emerging adults, another study could be given to see where the church stands hierarchically. Ministries within the church could be held under scrutiny to see where they stand on *Bloom-Anderson*. Some ministries such as the introductory courses of church membership may only be concerned with *knowledge*, whereas the parking ministry is in *application* and so on. Perhaps another goal would be to plot out every ministry that exists in the church on the taxonomy and ensure that there are outlets at every point for a member to exercise where they currently stand in the Body.

This method could ensure that the church takes a new believer from introductory aspects of the faith to high levels of leadership by knowing where each area of the church stands in maturing the Christian.

Another area for further study could be that as the study was positive for youth, then the next step would be to involve other areas of the church. Perhaps theological education and personal spiritual formation could be better implemented in a small group setting rather than a formal church class. A study on small groups would be another area where this type of study could benefit.

Perhaps because of this study, others will continue the conversation about whether theological education among youth or emerging adults is beneficial. Further study will need to be conducted to confirm or deny this notion. As the youth took well to this type of environment, perhaps the next question is if more churches should make connections with local seminaries to get accredited for classes. If the study proves useful for youth, it likely would be beneficial for the entire church, regardless of age.

One last observation that one could undergo is the implementation of theological education throughout the church. A question that is posed at the end of this intervention in the context of IChurch is that if emerging adults benefitted personally and communally through *Bloom-Anderson* and basic spiritual formation, could other ministries in the church undergo the same level of growth if the same method was incorporated?

Other churches could possibly continue the study by not focusing specifically on emerging adults, but rather use the worship ministry, parking ministry, or ushers as a springboard. Would the same results ensue? Would the results be higher as ministries do not

necessarily focus on age groups? Rather than focusing on age or stage, dealing with a specific aspect of the church could prove different results.

Ultimately, there are various avenues researchers could go from this point. The project achieved what it was set to do in the case of emerging, engaged adults. The given success of this intervention provides many opportunities for future researchers to implement *Bloom-Anderson* and the *CCP* method wholesale in various ministry contexts.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
CONSENT FORM

Theological Education and Spiritual Formation in the Lives of Engaged, Emerging Adults
Markus David Colbert
Liberty University
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a study concerning a discipleship model set to be introduced to young adults. You were selected as a possible participant because of your ability to not only apply Scripture to your life, but you have displayed abilities to possibly teach the material you have learned. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Markus David Colbert, a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to provide a workable, scalable discipleship program for IChurch's young adults.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Attend a weekly class from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. for the next five Monday evenings.
2. Journal your progress five days per week concerning assigned material from each class.
3. Take an introductory questionnaire involving your spiritual life.
4. At the end of the study, take a final exam and exit questionnaire concerning what you have learned during this study.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits:

Benefits to society include providing data that is essential to a missing link between discipleship and service in IChurch. Your participation directly aids the church. Other benefits include the possibility of being able to disciple others through what you learn in this study. Your spiritual life is desired to have a direct positive impact.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Responses in journal entries and answers on tests or surveys will not be kept anonymous. However, in any sort of report the researcher might publish, he will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Pseudonyms will be used to identify you. Your real name will be not used in the researcher's findings. Records will be

stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and external hard drive and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or IChurch. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study, but you may be asked to fill out an exit survey as to why you decided to leave the study. If you do not wish to fill out this survey, you do not have to do so.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Markus David Colbert. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him via phone.. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Lucas Farmer.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX B
SPIRITUAL FORMATION ASSESSMENT

SPIRITUAL FORMATION ASSESSMENT

Discipline 1: Prayer

Prayer is an essential task in the life of the believer. Please answer as honestly as possible.

I pray every day.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I understand the difference between prayer, supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I pray throughout the day as a normal practice.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Prayer is not “awkward” to me. I know how to pray.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Prayer is deeply formed value in my life.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Total Point Value for Discipline 1					

Discipline 2: Bible Meditation

Meditation has less to do with memorization as it does formation. Please answer as honestly as possible.

I meditate on the Word of God throughout my day.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I see the results of Bible meditation manifest in my mood and overall character.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I understand the difference between meditation and memorization.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
When I do not meditate on Scripture, I can tell a difference in my day.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I look forward to Bible meditation in my daily schedule.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Total Point Value for Discipline 2					

Discipline 3: Bible Study

Studying the Word sets it deeply in the heart of the believer, forming them to Christ's image. Please answer as honestly as possible.

I study the Bible deeply and understand what I study regularly.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
The Bible is not intimidating to me.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I would say that I know how to study the Bible well.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
When I do not understand a specific passage, I go to a trusted commentary or do a word study in the original language.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I know the difference between Bible study and devotional reading.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Total Point Value for Discipline 3					

Discipline 4: Evangelism

Evangelism is the tool that the Holy Spirit uses to bring people into the Kingdom of God from the Kingdom of Darkness. Please answer as honestly as possible.

I evangelize on a normal schedule.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I understand that evangelizing is more than just inviting people to church.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I know effective Apologetic strategies to help the unbeliever with any questions they may have.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I am unafraid to debate others who do not believe in a public setting.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I understand the link between evangelism and apologetics.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Total Point Value for Discipline 4					

Discipline 5: Discipleship

Service roots selfishness out of the heart of the believer, leading them to have a mindset that puts others before themselves. Please answer as honestly as possible.

I know basic principles of personal discipleship	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I make it a practice to disciple others	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I know what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I am discipled by another, more mature believer.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I feel confident that I could lead another in walking through life with them.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Total Point Value for Discipline 5					

Discipline 6: Silence & Solitude

Silence centers the mind and heart on the Word of God, allowing one to hear God clearer and block out the noise of this world. Please answer as honestly as possible.

I retreat to be alone with God regularly.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
If I do not retreat on a normal schedule, I can tell a difference in my character and attitude.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I find it easy to be away from others for an extended period of time.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
When I come back from a time away from people, it is easier for me to love them better.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
I see solitude as a positive thing.	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Total Point Value for Discipline 6					

Points Summary:

This is the end of the assessment. Add your points together and see where your strengths and weaknesses are in your “disciplines”. What can you capitalize on now that you know you are succeeding in one “discipline”? What can you work on now that this “discipline” has been brought to your attention in which you scored lower? Pray that the Spirit guide you even more in this process of becoming more like Christ. God bless you.

Summary of Marks	Point Total	Highest Question or Statement	Lowest Question or Statement
Discipline 1 section			
Discipline 2 section			
Discipline 3 section			
Discipline 4 section			
Discipline 5 section			
Discipline 6 section			

APPENDIX D
THEOLOGY EVALUATION FOR ENTRANCE INTO THE PROGRAM

Name: _____

Theology Evaluation

1. Define *Virgin Birth*

2. Explain the relationship between each of the following Biblical characters in relation to Jesus:

- a) Rahab
- b) Ruth
- c) David
- d) Adam

6. Evaluate the virgin birth considering today's understanding of Jesus Christ in the United States as just being a "good moral teacher."

7. What is the *Trinity*?

18. How could you prove that once someone is saved, they do not lose their salvation?

APPENDIX E

RUBRIC USED FOR GRADING THE THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Theology Evaluation Rubric

Taxonomic Scale	Point Value	Maximum Number of Points Earned	Points Earned	Total
Knowledge (1,7,13)	1	3		
Comprehension (2,8,14)	3	9		
Application (3,9,15)	5	15		
Analysis (4,10,16)	6	18		
Synthesis (5,11,17)	8	24		
Creativity (6,12,18)	10	30		
				/99

APPENDIX F
CLASS HANDOUTS: TEACHER GUIDE

Class 1: The Bible

The root of all theology, ideas concerning God, and Christian practice begins with the _____
(Bible)

The voice of God that creates light in the darkness is called _____ (illumination).

God *illuminates* the human experience in two distinct ways: _____ (general) revelation, which deals with scientific, moral, and general spiritual knowledge, and _____ revelation (special), concerned with Yahweh *specifically*. The Bible is the fountain head of the second type of revelation.

The act of creation is culminated at the sixth day where the God that illumines the world _____
(inspired) literally *breathed in* man.

Inspiration leads to the doctrine of _____ (inerrancy), meaning that there is no error in the text, which leads to the doctrine of _____ (infallibility), meaning that the text does not *fail* regarding Christian faith and practice.

The established, authoritative 66 books of the Old and New Testament are collectively called the _____ (canon). Concluding that since the Spirit *inspired* the texts, they are *inerrant*, and therefore *authoritative* in the life of the believer.

The Old Testament is not just an _____ (introduction) to get us to _____ (Jesus). It is still _____ (relevant) for Christians today.

It is important to study the Old Testament because it is equally as _____ (inspired) as the New Testament. When Paul talks in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that Scripture is *inspired* by God, all that he had to talk about was the _____ (Old Testament).

As believers we have a responsibility to understand what the text says, which is _____ (exegesis), and what the text teaches, which is _____ (theology).

The Old Testament is not just an _____ (introduction) to get us to _____ (Jesus). It is still _____ (relevant) for Christians today.

A primary way that the Israelites kept the Bible practical was through the discipline of _____ (meditation).

The New Testament and Old Testament are a _____ (unified) work. It should be read as one and interconnected.

The wrong way to read the Bible is reading our own cultural “baggage” into the text. This is called _____ (eisegesis) and should be avoided at all costs.

New Testament theology then not only is concerned with the *immediate context*, the chapter or book, but the overall _____ (narrative) of the Bible that points us to a closer, intimate knowledge of _____ (Jesus).

Essentially, one must ask when studying the New Testament is: What are the central _____ (themes) of this book and how does it fit in the greater whole of the _____ (canon)?

Spiritual Discipline: Personal Bible Study and Scripture Meditation

The Hebrew word and concept for meditation is _____ (hagah) or “humming” over the text. By repeating certain verses that reach your heart, you are not only _____ (memorizing) the text, but you are letting it hit your _____ (spirit).

You cannot simply read the Bible for _____ (information), you must read it for _____ (transformation).

Whitney gives these tips as to how to study the Bible:

- 1) (write down observations about the text you read)
- 2) (record questions that come to mind and look up cross-references in a study Bible)
- 3) (find a key word and look it up in a concordance to further study the fullness of the concept)

The last tip he gives is to outline the chapter one paragraph at a time and continue until the book is completed.

Closing Challenges:

Focus on reading through Ephesians one chapter per day. Write your own Scripture outline using the journal you were given each day.

(2) Start a Bible study group with one other person from your class on Ephesians. Meet up outside of class and discuss your findings in the book.

Class #2: The Triune God

God reveals Himself in Scripture as three _____ (Persons): The _____ (Father), the _____ (Son), and the _____ (Holy Spirit).

Although the word _____ (Trinity) may not be *explicitly stated* in the Bible, it is indirectly expressed.

The three Persons are _____ (distinct) yet _____ (united): Three _____ (Persons) with one _____ (essence).

These Three-in-one existed in perfect _____ (subordination) to one another in _____ (Love).

God the Son presents Himself in Divine ways before His time as Jesus of Nazareth, or _____ (Christophanies) in the Old Testament. An example is the _____ (Angel of the LORD) in Exodus 3, Joshua 5, and Daniel 3.

Jesus reveals Himself to be God the Son in many instances in the Gospel of _____ (John). The most controversial instance was in chapter 8, where He calls Himself _____ (I AM).

The goal of the New Testament is to point to the _____ (Person) and _____ (work) of Christ.

The _____ (Person) and _____ (work) of Christ are distinct, but inseparable.

In John, there are seven *signs* and seven *I AM* statements in Scripture, in which what He *does* directly reveals who He *is*.

His death on the cross was the atonement, or _____ (covering) of our sin.

Atonement means two primary truths for the believer: transfer, or _____ (imputation), and removal of sin, or _____ (expiation).

The resurrection was a _____ (historical event).

If death stems from imperfection, and Christ is perfect, then how could He possibly stay dead?

If Christ's _____ (death) is our death, then His _____ (life) is our life.

Faith in Christ is _____ (repentance), which is *turning away* from sin and *turning to* Christ.

The repentant life is one of _____ (submission) to Christ as _____ (LORD).
Meaning we *die to ourselves*.

According to Romans 8:11-13, the power of the _____ (Holy Spirit) raised Christ from the dead.

One of the first acts a Christian performs after they submit to Christ is mimic their death to sin and life in Christ through the rite of _____ (baptism). This does not *save* the Christian, but it is the outward working of the inward heart.

The Third, most often *overlooked* Person in the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, but He was active in creation (Genesis 1:3).

Christ _____ (died) so that the Holy Spirit may _____ (come).

Some roles of the Holy Spirit are:

1. (Conviction of sin)
2. (Sanctification)
3. (Dispensing Spiritual gifts)
4. (Converting an unbeliever / resurrection from spiritual death)
5. (The seal and promise of salvation before the judgment seat of Christ)

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer & Journaling

Jesus says in John 16:13 that the Spirit will lead the believer into *all* truth. If Scripture is the authoritative blueprint, then prayer is the _____ (guide) through practical application of the text.

Donald Whitney says that there is no book or class that will get you to pray. Only _____ (prayer) leads to effective prayer.

Prayer is _____ (learned). The practice of prayer is best guided through meditation on the _____ (Scriptures).

When we pray, we pray to the same God who _____ (inspired) the Bible and _____ (illuminates) the darkness. This is the Third Person of the Trinity, the _____ (Holy Spirit).

Therefore, as we have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, we must _____ (discipline) ourselves to read Scripture and pray to Him. In these ways we deepen our relationship with God and our Christian community.

Whitney notes that prayers historically were journaled. Just look at _____ (the Psalms).

Closing Challenges:

Journal your prayers. Write a small prayer each day and note when they are answered.

Set time aside daily, even if it is only for one minute, to learn to quiet your soul before a God who is willing to speak. A private life devoted to silence will grant you permission to speak in the public square.

(2) Start a prayer group with one other person from class. Pray for each other daily over the phone.

Class #3: Apologetic Application

The original meaning of the Greek word *apologia* is to _____ (defend).

The early letters of the church and the Gospels themselves were for the purpose of _____ (persuasion), either against false doctrines, other religious sects infiltrating the church, or for evangelistic purposes.

Streett gives a brief overview of different apologetic schools:

- 1) (Classical apologetics or *preevangelism*. Giving rational responses to objections. Dealing with causality, design of the cosmos, moral consciousness, and ontology)

- 2) (Evidential apologetics – Evidence coming from reason, history, archaeology, ancient nonbiblical documents, NT documents, transcendental experiences, or fulfillment of OT prophecy)

- 3) (Existential apologetics – Christianity is real because it satisfies the deepest needs of the human soul and gives meaning to life)

- 4) (Presuppositional apologetics – Assumes God’s existence and the truth of the Bible and becomes a “Gospel-focused presentation”).

Christianity is the _____ (best) explanation for what happens in the world around us.

Owen Strachan says that Christianity explains:

- 1) (why everything exists)

2) (what we are here to do)

3) (why the world groans)

4) (how things can go right)

5) (where things are headed)

_____ (doctrine) connects the believer to the one true God who has made Himself known.

Now we will quickly turn to three contemporary issues: _____ - _____
 _____ (same-sex marriage), _____ (abortion), and _____ (gender
 identity).

All three find their origin in _____ (creation).

All three deal with the _____ (soul), _____ (body), and _____ (spirit).

- Marriage is the union of two living *souls* for life through the union of their *bodies* by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- God knits the child's body and soul in the *womb of the mother* (Psalm 139:13-14). God knows the individual before they are born (Jeremiah 1:5).
- God sanctifies gender in the Garden when He unites _____ (man) and _____ (woman) in marriage. The body and soul are interconnected, distinct, and complementary.

In all three circumstances, the _____ (soul) and the _____ (body) are not in dysphoria, but united.

Regardless of confusion, attraction, or convenience, each individual is an _____ - _____ (image-bearer) of God, and therefore biological sex in marriage, in bodily autonomy, and the autonomy of the child should not be tampered with, but respected and honored as sacred.

Spiritual Discipline: Evangelism

Whitney acknowledges several passages arguing that evangelism is expected of every Christian. The Bible passages are:

- 1) (Matthew 28:19-20)
- 2) (Luke 24:46-47)
- 3) (John 20:21)
- 4) (Acts 1:8)

Evangelism is our responsibility, but it is entirely up to the _____ (Holy Spirit) to change the heart of someone. However, the believer is supernaturally _____ (empowered) to evangelize. Whitney likens the Christian as the _____ (postal service), simply delivering the news, with the source of authority coming from somewhere other than the individual.

Evangelism, like apologetics, takes _____ (practice). The Christian gets better at the activity the more they do so.

Depending on the situation, the strategy to evangelize takes different shape. Each opportunity to share is _____ (unique).

Remember, not everyone reaps, in fact, more people _____ (sow). Rejection is _____ (normal). The problem is not the Christian. Reaping comes from a history of many sowers that the Spirit uses on a soul.

Closing Challenges:

Meet with someone from your class and comprise an evangelistic strategy to implement.

(2) Evangelize to one person this week. Read and meditate on Matthew 28:18-20. Journal the process throughout the week in preparation for your evangelistic activity.

Class #4: Personal Spiritual Formation and Discipleship

Spiritual formation, per Dana M. Harris, is _____ (holistic) in nature, involving the _____ (mind), _____ (spirit), and _____ (body).

Spiritual formation flows naturally from conversion, but it is a lifelong process of allowing the _____ (Holy Spirit) to shape the believer to the image of Christ. But how can we let the Spirit work in our lives if we do not constantly seek _____ (to learn) who He is?

According to Matthew 28:19-20, the church is a collection of _____ (disciples) who have been called to _____ (make disciples).

The church has been called to carry the _____ (Gospel) to the world.

Spiritual formation is not only personal, but communal. This is the process of _____ (discipleship).

Discipleship ultimately is concerned with being “_____ (conformed) to the image of Christ” (Romans 8:29). This process is done through _____ (mentorship).

A disciple is conformed through the act of _____ (following) Christ.

“Taking up one’s cross,” as Jesus says, ultimately has to do with self _____ (denial) and self _____ (death).

Paul says in _____ (1 Corinthians 15:51) that he dies to himself *daily*.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said that the church is in a time where they prefer _____ (cheap) grace, meaning that they are not willing to take up their cross to follow Christ.

The only way to follow Christ is to follow Him _____ (together) in _____ (community).

Therefore, discipleship cannot be exercised without the _____ (church). Conforming to Christ is _____ (taught) as much as it is _____ (exercised).

A disciple is one who is _____ (disciplined) in the things of God. Therefore, each lesson is paired with a spiritual discipline. Once you are _____ (educated), you have the responsibility to _____ (act) on what you have learned.

You have spent the past 4 weeks learning communally, now you are to go out and _____ (plant) what has been _____ (deposited) in you.

How to disciple someone:

1. (See where they are at)
2. (Meet them where they are at)
3. (Teach them what you have learned in small doses)
4. (Teach by example through successes and failures)
5. (Train them to train others)

Closing Challenge

Pray to see who God puts in your heart to invest in. These classes were designed to ground you in a basic way to answer general questions that new believers may have. Write and record your process in your journal.

(2) Begin a group chat with the class to share prayer requests and weekly encouragements.

APPENDIX G
THE CHURCH CREED OF FAITH

WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. THE TRINITY OF GOD - We believe in the one eternal God that was, that is, and is to come, infinitely sovereign of the Universe, established by the Holy Word of God, Jehovah (Father), Jesus (Son), and Holy Spirit (Counselor). These three are in co-existence of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in Divine Unity, Divine Nature and Essence. The doctrine of the Trinity (although it does not appear in scripture) expresses that inside the being and the activities of the Unique God there are three distinct entities: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Gen. 1:26; Matt. 28:19; John 14:26, 15:26-27; 1 Peter 1:2; Gal. 4:4-6; 1 Jn. 5:7-9)

2. JESUS CHRIST - We believe in Jesus Christ as the second person in the Trinity. He is eternally as one with the Father, and they were united as one person: fully God, fully man, and the God of man. We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven having conquered death through the perfect and sinless human sacrifice of His own life and now intercedes for us. (Matt. 1:20-25, 16:15-16; Luke 1:26-35; Acts 2:22-36; Rom. 8:3-4, 32-34; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:12-22; 1 Tim. 6:14-16; Heb. 1:1-5, 7:22-28, 9:24-28; 1 Jn. 1:1-3, 4:2-3, 15) We believe that He is the only way to the salvation of mankind. Hebrews 7:25 - "Therefore he is able to completely save those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

3. HOLY SPIRIT - We believe in the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Divine Trinity, that He is always present and active in the Church of Christ, that His function is to convict the world of sin, restoring those that repent, sanctifying those that believe, and is a guide to the truth that is found in Jesus Christ.

We believe in the manifestation and the power of the Holy Spirit freely and voluntarily. (Jn. 7:39, 16:7-15, 1-4; Rom. 8:1-27; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Jn 3:24) The Holy Spirit's dwelling place is in the lives of those that have accepted salvation through Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 2: 10 - 12. 'These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.'

4. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES - We believe in the full inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand that the 66 books of the Old and New Testament were given by divine inspiration revealing infallibly the will of God necessary for our salvation and life according to God's perfect will. (Lk. 24:44-47; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

5. ATONEMENT - We believe that Jesus Christ by His sufferings, by the shedding of His precious blood, and His death on the cross, made a full atonement for all the sins of humanity. We believe that this atonement is the only way of salvation and is sufficient for every individual that repents and believes. (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2, 4:10)

6. REPENTANCE - As the Holy Spirit convicts, we realize we have sinned. Repenting is turning your back on sin and following God by allowing God to change your life for the good. The Spirit of God also gives help to all those that want to repent, so that they can believe, receive forgiveness, and continue their spiritual walk. (Psalms 32:5-6; Isa. 55:6-7; Ezekiel 18:30-32, 33:14-16; Luke 13:1-5; Acts 2:38, 3:19) THAT IS SALVATION IN CHRIST JESUS! John 3:16 'For God so

loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.'

Romans 3:23 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'
(Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 7:25; Acts 2:21,4:12,16:31; Titus 2:11-12; Luke 19:10; I Tim. 2:5)

7. BAPTISM - We believe that Christian baptism, commanded by our God, is an outward testimony that signifies the acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ. To the believer, it declares their faith in Jesus Christ as their only Savior and His full purpose of obedience to holiness and justice. Baptism is a symbol of a new covenant. Baptism should be administered by immersion according to the Holy Scriptures. Any other form does not support the definition of the word baptism, which implies the submersion below the waters. Only in the case of being physically incapable, will there be an alternative method. (Matt. 3:12, 8:16-20; Acts 2:37-41, 8:35-39, 10:44-48, 19:1-3; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-28; Col. 2:12) We do not believe in the baptism of babies, since they do not understand the concept of sin, only when a person recognizes their guilt and repents may they have the right to be baptized. However, we do believe in the dedication of babies. Before being baptized the person should know the following:

1. What baptism means - Col 2:12 "Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead?"
2. Baptism has significance: Die to the old life and live a new life.
 - c. Being underneath the waters means: You are leaving the old life behind.
 - d. Coming out of the water means: You are raised into a new life in Christ.
3. Who should be baptized? Those that have CONFESSED and BELIEVE in the Lord. (Romans 10:9) "If you confess with your

mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

4. Baptism is by immersion (submerged in the waters) Why? Because: The Word baptism comes from the Greek word bapto or BAPTIZO, which means submerged below. In the ancient times there existed a profession called baptizer. These were the ones that would take the clothing and submerge them below the waters so that they would take on a certain color. To not be submerged (underneath) does not complete with the definition of what baptism means. The body must be submerged (below) the waters. This is what the word indicates.

5. Baptism is a declaration of faith. To be baptized implies to give an example to all as to who you were and what you have done. Baptism does not forgive sins, that is only done by Jesus. Jesus Christ himself, being innocent of all sin, went to the waters and was submerged in baptism by John the Baptist. The same way we, the body of Christ, should be submerged in His presence and give testimony of our faith. This is a way of letting the world know that there is a new beginning.

8. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST - We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will come once again, that those that are living during the time of His coming will not precede those that have fallen asleep in Christ Jesus. Even more, if we have remained in Him, we will be captured with the holy resurrected saints to reunite with the Lord in the air, and we will always be with Him. The time of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is unknown to mankind. (Matt. 25:31-46; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thes 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:3-15; Rev.1:7-8, 22:7-20)

9. THE RESURRECTION, THE JUDGMENT, AND ETERNITY - We believe in the resurrection of the dead, that the bodies, the unjust as well as the just, will be revived and united with its spirit. Those that

believed, and therefore lived for Christ, will go out of this resurrection to eternal life. As well, those that did not, will go out of this resurrection to eternal damnation. We believe in the future judgment, in which all persons will go before God to be judged according to their acts in this life. We believe that those that are saved by believing in Jesus Christ, our Lord, have eternal salvation, and therefore will receive the joy in a glorious eternal life with Jesus. Those that remain in disobedience until the end will suffer eternally in Hell. (Isa. 26:19; Daniel

12:2-3; Mt. 25:31-46; Mark 9:43-48; Lk.16:19-31, 20:27-38; John 5:25-29; Rom. 2:1-16, 14:7-12; 1 Cor.15:12-58; 2 Cor. 5:10)

10.MARRIAGE - We believe that the Marriage Institution was ordained by God. Marriage should be a relationship exclusively between one man and one woman, in which both convert into one body being united physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. The intention is that this institution would last a lifetime. The union is assured by a holy vow, an alliance, and consummated by physical unity; faithfulness, care, and mutual support must be in the foundation of the marriage. The marriage covenant is morally bound while both spouses are living. Breaking this covenant is a violation of the divine plan of the perpetuity of marriage. By this conviction, we oppose same sex marriage. (Gen.1:26-28, 2:23-24; Malachi 2:13-16; Mt.19:3-9; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4) We believe that each case of the separation of a marriage is treated individually and particularly according to the specific situation of each couple.

11. DIVORCE OR SEPARATION OF MARRIAGE - Marriages that are found involved in situations of the infidelity of a spouse should look to prayer as a redeeming course of action in pure harmony with their vows and in clear teaching of the Scriptures, with the purpose of saving the home and guarding the good name of Christ and the church. Couples that are experiencing serious marriage problems

should search for the counsel and guidance of their pastor or whichever spiritual leader is appropriate. To not comply with these steps of good faith and with a sincere desire to search for a Christian solution, obtaining a divorce and remarriage could result in that one or both spouses may be pulled from serving. This disciplinary action will be determined by the Pastoral and/or Deacon Bodies. When a marriage has separated, we believe that Christ can redeem them, just like with the Samaritan woman at the well. Spouses are encouraged to look for the grace of God and his redeeming help in the marriage relationship. The couples can be received back to serving after they have presented evidence of reconciliation, and that they have understood the holiness of a Christian marriage. (Mt 5:31-32, 19:3-9; Rom. 7: 1-3; 1 Cor.7:10-16; Mark 10:1-12) We believe that each case of the separation of marriage is treated individually and particularly, according to the specific situation of each couple.

12. HOMOSEXUALITY - We love the individuals but cannot accept this lifestyle. We recognize the socially acceptable stance on this matter, and we take the Biblical view that homosexuality is contrary to the laws of God and Nature and therefore recognize the profoundness of its perversion and therefore are compelled to deny Ownership to those who willingly practice this sin. We would encourage those caught in this web of deception to remember Jesus loves them and died to set them free and IChurch is here to help break bondage and set prisoners free through Jesus. (Giving us the Biblical mandate to deny Ownership). In case of the revelation of the sinful condition in one of the Owners, this person will be considered for removal of Ownership from the church after trying to restore them, and it not being fruitful. (Gen. 1:27, 19:1-25; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:8-10)

13.ABORTION - At IChurch we believe in the sacredness of human life as God, the Creator, has established it, and that it should be defended for a child even if it has not yet been delivered. We believe

a child is born at conception. Therefore, we oppose abortion induced by all methods when it is used or for personal convenience or for population control. We oppose the laws that authorize abortion. (Psalm 22:10, 139:13-16)

Note: IChurch is composed of a structure and a constitutional doctrine taken from the Word of God. The creed of faith shall be used to care for the church and its parliamentary rules. This creed is revised by the Pastoral Board and consented by the Executive Board.

APPENDIX H
RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Recipient,

As a graduate student at the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a study as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree of Ministry specializing in Theology and Apologetics. The purpose of my study is to further understand what an appropriate discipleship strategy could be in the lives of young adults, particularly in the areas of theological education and spiritual formation, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be between the ages of 18 to 29 and have some experience volunteering in the church. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a theological education course once a week, test general knowledge of material, self-assess using a Likert scale, and journal daily experiences until the project is over. It should take approximately five weeks to complete the procedures listed. Names and or other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

The first procedure will fill out an introductory assessment of spiritual disciplines. This will be done at the start of the first class. The classes will be approximately one hour and a half every Monday from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. You will be given a three-ring binder on the first day of class that will provide pages for notes and subsequent journal entries. Daily journal entries will be based off instructions given at the end of the previous class. These entries do not need to be longer than 1 page. On the fifth Monday, the final day of class, you will take one final exam to see what you have learned, another spiritual discipline assessment, and turn in your three-ring binder to me, finishing the project.

To participate, please contact me at the earliest convenience.

A consent document will be provided on the first day of class fifteen minutes before the session begins. The consent document contains additional information about my investigation. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the first class.

Sincerely,

David Colbert
Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University

APPENDIX I
CLASS HANDOUTS: STUDENT SHEET

Class 1: The Bible

The root of all theology, ideas concerning God, and Christian practice begins with the _____.

The voice of God that creates light in the darkness is called _____.

God *illuminates* the human experience in two distinct ways: _____ revelation, which deals with scientific, moral, and general spiritual knowledge, and _____ revelation, concerned with Yahweh *specifically*. The Bible is the fountain head of the second type of revelation.

The act of creation is culminated at the sixth day where the God that illumines the world _____ literally *breathed in* man.

Inspiration leads to the doctrine of _____, meaning that there is no error in the text, which leads to the doctrine of _____, meaning that the text does not *fail* regarding Christian faith and practice.

The established, authoritative 66 books of the Old and New Testament are collectively called the _____. Concluding that since the Spirit *inspired* the texts, they are *inerrant*, and therefore *authoritative* in the life of the believer.

The Old Testament is not just an _____ to get us to _____. It is still _____ for Christians today.

It is important to study the Old Testament because it is equally as _____ as the New Testament. When Paul talks in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that Scripture is *inspired* by God, all that he had to talk about was the _____.

As believers we have a responsibility to understand what the text says, which is _____, and what the text teaches, which is _____.

The Old Testament is not just an _____ to get us to _____ (Jesus). It is still _____ for Christians today.

It is important to study the Old Testament because it is equally as _____ as the New Testament. When Paul talks in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that Scripture is *inspired* by God, all that he had to talk about was the _____.

A primary way that the Israelites kept the Bible practical was through the discipline of _____.

The New Testament and Old Testament are a _____ work. It should be read as one and interconnected.

As with the Old Testament, there are two elements with which we are concerned: what the text *says*, or _____; and what the text *teaches*, or _____.

The wrong way to read the Bible is reading our own cultural “baggage” into the text. This is called _____ and should be avoided at all costs.

New Testament theology then not only is concerned with the *immediate context*, the chapter or book, but the overall _____ of the Bible that points us to a closer, intimate knowledge of _____.

Essentially, one must ask when studying the New Testament is: What are the central _____ of this book and how does it fit in the greater whole of the _____?

Spiritual Discipline: Personal Bible Study and Scripture Meditation

The Hebrew word and concept for meditation is _____ or “humming” over the text. By repeating certain verses that reach your heart, you are not only _____ the text, but you are letting it hit your _____.

You cannot simply read the Bible for _____, you must read it for _____.

Whitney gives these tips as to how to study the Bible:

4)

5)

6)

The last tip he gives is to outline the chapter one paragraph at a time and continue until the book is completed.

Closing Challenges:

Focus on reading through Ephesians one chapter per day. Write your own Scripture outline using the journal you were given each day.

(2) Start a Bible study group with one other person from your class on Ephesians. Meet up outside of class and discuss your findings in the book.

Class #2: The Triune God

God reveals Himself in Scripture as three _____: The _____, the _____, and the _____.

Although the word _____ may not be *explicitly stated* in the Bible, it is indirectly expressed.

The three Persons are _____ yet _____: Three _____ with one _____.

These Three-in-one existed in perfect _____ to one another in _____.

God the Son presents Himself in Divine ways before His time as Jesus of Nazareth, or _____ in the Old Testament. An example is the _____ in Exodus 3, Joshua 5, and Daniel 3.

Jesus reveals Himself to be God the Son in many instances in the Gospel of _____. The most controversial instance was in chapter 8, where He calls Himself _____.

The goal of the New Testament is to point to the _____ and _____ of Christ.

The _____ and _____ of Christ are distinct, but inseparable.

In John, there are seven *signs* and seven *I AM* statements in Scripture, in which what He *does* directly reveals who He *is*.

His death on the cross was the atonement, or _____ of our sin.

Atonement means two primary truths for the believer: transfer, or _____, and removal of sin, or _____.

The resurrection was a _____.

If death stems from imperfection, and Christ is perfect, then how could He possibly stay dead?

If Christ's _____ is our death, then His _____ is our life.

Faith in Christ is _____, which is *turning away* from sin and *turning to* Christ.

The repentant life is one of _____ to Christ as _____. Meaning we *die to ourselves*.

According to Romans 8:11-13, the power of the _____ raised Christ from the dead.

One of the first acts a Christian performs after they submit to Christ is mimic their death to sin and life in Christ through the rite of _____. This does not *save* the Christian, but it is the outward working of the inward heart.

The Third, most often *overlooked* Person in the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, but He was active in creation (Genesis 1:3).

Christ _____ so that the Holy Spirit may _____.

Some roles of the Holy Spirit are:

6.

7.

- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer & Journaling

Jesus says in John 16:13 that the Spirit will lead the believer into *all* truth. If Scripture is the authoritative blueprint, then prayer is the _____ through practical application of the text.

Donald Whitney says that there is no book or class that will get you to pray. Only _____ leads to effective prayer.

Prayer is _____. The practice of prayer is best guided through meditation on the _____.

When we pray, we pray to the same God who _____ the Bible and _____ the darkness. This is the Third Person of the Trinity, the _____.

Therefore, as we have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, we must _____ ourselves to read Scripture and pray to Him. In these ways we deepen our relationship with God and our Christian community.

Whitney notes that prayers historically were journaled. Just look at _____.

Closing Challenges:

Journal your prayers. Write a small prayer each day and note when they are answered.

Set time aside daily, even if it is only for one minute, to learn to quiet your soul before a God who is willing to speak. A private life devoted to silence will grant you permission to speak in the public square.

(2) Start a prayer group with one other person from class. Pray for each other daily over the phone.

Class #3: Apologetic Application

The original meaning of the Greek word *apologia* is to _____.

The early letters of the church and the Gospels themselves were for the purpose of _____, either against false doctrines, other religious sects infiltrating the church, or for evangelistic purposes.

Streett gives a brief overview of different apologetic schools:

5)

6)

7)

8)

Christianity is the _____ explanation for what happens in the world around us.

Owen Strachan says that Christianity explains:

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

_____ connects the believer to the one true God who has made Himself known.

Now we will quickly turn to three contemporary issues: _____ - _____
_____, _____, and _____.

All three find their origin in _____.

All three deal with the _____, _____, and _____.

- Marriage is the union of two living *souls* for life through the union of their *bodies* by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- God knits the child's body and soul in the *womb of the mother* (Psalm 139:13-14). God knows the individual before they are born (Jeremiah 1:5).
- God sanctifies gender in the Garden when He unites _____ and _____ in marriage. The body and soul are interconnected, distinct, and complementary.

In all three circumstances, the _____ and the _____ are not in dysphoria, but united.

Regardless of confusion, attraction, or convenience, each individual is an _____ - _____ of God, and therefore biological sex in marriage, in bodily autonomy, and the autonomy of the child should not be tampered with, but respected and honored as sacred.

Spiritual Discipline: Evangelism

Whitney acknowledges several passages arguing that evangelism is expected of every Christian. The Bible passages are:

- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)

Evangelism is our responsibility, but it is entirely up to the _____ to change the heart of someone. However, the believer is supernaturally _____ to evangelize. Whitney likens the Christian as the _____, simply delivering the news, with the source of authority coming from somewhere other than the individual.

Evangelism, like apologetics, takes _____. The Christian gets better at the activity the more they do so.

Depending on the situation, the strategy to evangelize takes different shape. Each opportunity to share is _____.

Remember, not everyone reaps, in fact, more people _____. Rejection is _____. The problem is not the Christian. Reaping comes from a history of many sowers that the Spirit uses on a soul.

Closing Challenges:

Meet with someone from your class and comprise an evangelistic strategy to implement.

(2) Evangelize to one person this week. Read and meditate on Matthew 28:18-20. Journal the process throughout the week in preparation for your evangelistic activity.

Class #4: Personal Spiritual Formation and Discipleship

Spiritual formation, per Dana M. Harris, is _____ in nature, involving the _____, _____, and _____.

Spiritual formation flows naturally from conversion, but it is a lifelong process of allowing the _____ to shape the believer to the image of Christ. But how can we let the Spirit work in our lives if we do not constantly seek _____ who He is?

According to Matthew 28:19-20, the church is a collection of _____ who have been called to _____.

The church has been called to carry the _____ to the world.

Spiritual formation is not only personal, but communal. This is the process of _____.

Discipleship ultimately is concerned with being “_____ to the image of Christ” (Romans 8:29).

This process is done through _____.

A disciple is conformed through the act of _____ Christ.

“Taking up one’s cross,” as Jesus says, ultimately has to do with self _____ and self _____.

Paul says in _____ that he dies to himself *daily*.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said that the church is in a time where they prefer _____ grace, meaning that they are not willing to take up their cross to follow Christ.

The only way to follow Christ is to follow Him _____ in _____.

Therefore, discipleship cannot be exercised without the _____. Conforming to Christ is _____ as much as it is _____.

A disciple is one who is _____ in the things of God. Therefore, each lesson is paired with a spiritual discipline. Once you are _____, you have the responsibility to _____ on what you have learned.

You have spent the past 4 weeks learning communally, now you are to go out and _____ what has been _____ in you.

How to disciple someone:

- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Closing Challenge

Pray to see who God puts in your heart to invest into. These classes were designed to ground you in a basic way to answer general questions that new believers may have. Write and record your process in your journal.

(2) Begin a group chat with the class to share prayer requests and weekly encouragements.

APPENDIX (XX) IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Date: 6-16-2022

IRB #: IRB-FY21-22-1145

Title: Theological Education in Engaged, Emerging Adults

Creation Date: 6-1-2022

End Date:

Status: Approved

Principal Investigator: Markus Colbert

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial	Review Type Exempt	Decision No Human Subjects Research
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Key Study Contacts

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