

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Retaining Students After Graduation with Biblical Servanthood

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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December 26, 2023

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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This thesis addresses the inadequate understanding of the biblical concept of servanthood among high school students (grades 9-12) within the congregation of Macland Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Georgia. As a result of this problem, students gradually distance themselves from their faith, discontinue church attendance, and cease participating in church service activities. The thesis of this paper is that exposing these high school students to various dimensions of biblical servanthood will significantly impact their understanding of this concept. The underlying assumption posits that a profound understanding of biblical servanthood, coupled with knowledge and service opportunities, will cultivate Christlike character in students, encouraging continued engagement with the local church and inspiring them to serve as exemplars of servanthood for future generations. The premise is that fostering a production-oriented mindset over consumption is vital to this process. When deliberate mentorship and resources are provided to participants, it is feasible to cultivate the qualities of ministry leadership among students and the adult congregation. This study offers insights into strategies for deepening students' understanding of servanthood, bolstering their commitment to the church and their role as stewards of servanthood principles. As a result, the research addresses the challenge of retaining young adults in the church by offering a practical case study illustrating the transformative potential of biblical servanthood understanding within the church's student ministry.

Keywords: Biblical servanthood, church engagement, high school students, mentorship, ministry leadership, faith community, church service.

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, my most profound appreciation goes to my family. To my wife, April, and our children, thank you for your endless patience, understanding, and love. The countless hours you allowed me to be away from you to focus on this project did not go unnoticed, and I am ever so grateful for your unwavering support. April, your steadfast support has been my stronghold.

I am deeply grateful to my professor, Dr. Michael Eiras, whose guidance, understanding, and unwavering support have been instrumental in the successful completion of this project thesis. His expertise and advice have been invaluable in shaping this study.

My profound appreciation goes out to my reader, Dr. William Aleshire. His meticulous critique and insightful feedback have significantly enriched this work, pushing it beyond the boundaries of my initial vision.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Clay Hallmark, a great friend and mentor, who diligently helped me get my chapters in order. His meticulous attention to detail and invaluable suggestions have greatly contributed to the coherence and depth of this thesis. His commitment to excellence inspired me throughout this journey.

Last but certainly not least, to my friend, Dr. Buck Burch, your relentless push for me to pursue a doctorate has driven me to overcome obstacles and reach this milestone. Your faith in my abilities has been a constant source of motivation.

Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated to my loving wife, April, and our wonderful children. Your constant love and support have been my strength throughout this journey.

To my mother, your unconditional love and encouragement have always inspired me to reach for the stars.

Above all, this is for my father, who sadly did not live to see me become a doctor. You were my first and greatest teacher, and your faith in me has guided every step of this journey. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

Chapter One: Introduction

In this thesis project, the researcher seeks to investigate whether or not a better understanding of biblical servanthood will help students graduating from high school stay in church. According to Barna Research, the percentage of young adult dropouts increased from 59 to 64 percent in 2019. Nearly two-thirds of 18–29 year-olds with a Christian background have withdrawn from church involvement.¹

Jesus commissioned the church with making disciples. In Jesus's final moments with the disciples, Jesus gave them a mission that extends to the church in its present day. All four Gospels record various versions of Jesus's last command. The most popular record is found in the gospel of Matthew in chapter 28 and is called the Great Commission. Jesus told His disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on Earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mathew 28:18–20, New Living Translation). Making disciples has been and will continue to be the mission of the church until Christ's second coming. The mission statement of a church should be quintessential of what the church represents and intends to achieve. According to Aubrey Malphurs, "The development of an effective, biblical mission should be the goal of every church leader."² The mission of the church is vital to all ministries, and it dictates the direction that is being followed. As Malphurs demonstrated, the leaders in the Bible had a strong sense of purpose that came from the direction

¹ Barna Research, *Church Dropouts Have Risen to 64%—But What About Those Who Stay?* accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/resilient-disciples/>.

² Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 105.

of their God-given mission. All Christians have a purpose given by Jesus before he ascended into heaven. The mission for every Christian is described in Matthew 28:19–20.

The Great Commission identifies the steps ministry should take reaching the lost with the gospel, baptizing them, and disciplining them to follow the commands. Malphurs wrote, “The most effective organizations know and understand what business they are in or what function they perform. The same holds true for the church that proclaims Jesus Christ.”³ Ed Stetzer wrote “Transformation is at the heart of God’s mission to humanity. He delights in moving us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light—and then empowering and directing us as agents of His kingdom.”⁴ God has chosen the church as His instrument. The church, the body of Christ, is God’s chosen method to deliver His message of transformation to the local community and the world. If the church is to proclaim Christ, then the Great Commission should be the ministry’s focus, future, and guide as decisions are made within the body of believers, uniting them as they strategize how they will reach their Jerusalem and the ends of the Earth. Therefore, pastors and church leaders must move beyond entertaining consumers to moving people into engaging in Christ’s mission of transforming people with the Gospel.

A close look at the student ministry of Macland Baptist Church shows a gap between knowledge of service to God and real, hands-on service. Students and young adults are dropping out and leaving. No evidence exists of their knowledge being applied to serve God through the church. The goal of this research project is to investigate why and present a practical plan to reverse this trend.

³ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 107.

⁴ Ed Stetzer, and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 10.

Ministry Context

As mentioned, Barna's study shows the church is missing something somewhere, and students with a Christian background are leaving the church once they graduate high school. Therefore, the Connection, the student ministry at Macland Baptist Church, seeks to become the training ground with a holistic approach to the spiritual growth of every young person within reach of Macland Baptist church so they are equipped with the resources necessary to enter young adulthood with a strong and mature faith. With that in mind, Macland Student Ministry seeks to teach students to live as disciples of Jesus Christ by realizing their full potential and by making positive contributions to the Kingdom of God.

Macland Baptist's roots span back to January 16, 1966, when a group of community members gathered to form a Baptist church for the Macland area near Atlanta, Georgia. Their desire was to reach the community with the Gospel of Christ, bringing glory to God through all the lives transformed as the church reached the community. In the following month, a vote was cast to create a constitution for the new church. In April of that year, the Rev. James T. Huckaba was elected by the church body as the first church pastor. At the end 1966, church membership stood at 117. Macland Baptist has grown to achieve 1,300 members at its peak as its ministry and influence extends not only to the rapidly growing Powder Springs area, but also to the cities of Marietta, Austell, Hiram, Dallas, Mableton, Douglasville, Woodstock, and beyond.

Macland Baptist Church has experienced tremendous growth and change, but one thing has remained intact, the mission of the church to preach the gospel and carry out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Macland is committed to using any and every means available in the attempt to reach the lost and make disciples of all nations.

In 2008, during the recession, several expansion projects that included a new sanctuary and new children and youth education building were halted as the church weathered the recession. At the same time, Macland Baptist started to see a change in ministerial staff that included a music minister, children's minister, and student pastors. During this staff transitional time, Macland's numbers dwindled to about 500 active members. The majority of the families who left Macland Baptist were young families with children and youth.

During the following eight years, the church had four student pastors. One student pastor was asked to resign due to doctrinal disagreements with the previous senior pastor, which triggered several families to migrate to different local churches. The quick transition between student pastors also caused an unbalance in leadership, creating a leadership vacuum. The leadership vacuum was filled with faithful members who wanted to help the student ministry continue to thrive and reach local students with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, those efforts derailed as many strongholds were created to maintain the "status quo" and as a new student pastor would come in, those strongholds would not allow the minister to make the changes necessary for the health of the student body.

The church always had a strong discipleship program focused on biblical literacy. Several programs focused on biblical literacy were created and some are still active. This resulted in students being knowledgeable about the Bible, but the one area where Macland Baptist students lack development is the application of biblical knowledge and transitioning from being hearers to doers. It is paramount for a Christian to learn and apply what is learned. The lack of application of the biblical truths learned has caused the student body at Macland Baptist Church to develop an apathy toward their faith and to stop serving in areas of certain ministries around the church. The same apathy has caused the older generations to not invest much time or trust in the

students, further widening the generational gap. Service within and to the church is vital to continue equipping the church to the service of Jesus Christ.

Today, Macland Baptist Church's active membership is around 360 to 400 on a given Sunday. More than half of the members are over the age of 65 years of age, which is a great challenge for the church. In 2019, a Macland study revealed a stark reality. If Macland Baptist Church's age demographics do not change in the next five years, the church could suffer a devastating blow. With an aging congregation, Macland Baptist Church could be faced with closing its doors due to the lack of members. During that study, the interim pastor recommended that changes should be made to reach the missing age demographics. He requested a demographic study of the surrounding areas of Macland Baptist Church. That study revealed that Macland is surrounded by the age demographics it needs to survive the aging of its congregation and outlive the five-year mark warning the study suggested.

Macland Baptist Church, under the leadership of its new pastor, has rekindled the original mission statement of the church, which is to reach the surrounding community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Malphurs wrote, "Core values explain who you are—your identity. They are the very building blocks (DNA) of your ministry and explain why you do what you do or don't do what you should do. They form the foundation on which the mission and vision are built, and along with them form the church's core ideology."⁵ These values of Macland Baptist Church will serve as guideposts to move the church from its context and propel it into action to once again reach the surrounding community.

⁵ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 146.

Problem Presented

The proposed problem statement for this thesis is that students from 9th–12th grades at Macland Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Georgia lack an understanding of biblical servanthood. Due to the lack of this understanding, students are more likely to leave their faith, stop attending a local church, or stop serving in the church entirely. The lack of understanding of biblical servanthood can manifest itself in a variety of ways, such as a lack of willingness to serve in ministries, a lack of involvement in church activities, or a lack of participation in community service. These behaviors can lead to students feeling disconnected from the church and their faith, which can lead to a lack of commitment to the church and eventually, a decision to leave the church. Consequently, it is essential that church leaders and members actively work to combat this lack of understanding by teaching and promoting the importance of biblical servanthood.

Every year, high school students graduate and start in the workforce or go to college. As they graduate, their lack of knowledge of biblical servanthood becomes evident. Up to this point, they were not disciplined to serve. The majority of these students were conditioned to be church consumers. According to Berard, Penner, and Bartlett, the problem of identity is more fluid and elusive today, and is further complicated by a consumer culture that is more than prepared to offer ready-made alternatives.⁶ Graduating students are finding their way through these large images and values and discovering their lack of critical skills needed to navigate this journey. Skye Jethani writes, “Generations of Christians had brains full of biblical knowledge and

⁶ John Berard, James Penner, and Rick Bartlett, *Consuming Youth: Navigating Youth from Being Consumers to Being Consumed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Books, 2011), 20.

doctrine, but their lives showed little evidence of the transformation Jesus called forth in his Sermon on the Mount.”⁷

The challenge of the church is to understand the sociological plight of teenagers and offer a liberating new framework through an understanding of biblical servanthood and a renewed optimism for service to students. According to Berard, Penner, and Bartlett, with this new understanding, students can find expressions of service inside the church through an intentionally lived vocation culture. This reimagination in biblical service would encourage change in the knowledge of who teenagers are called to be and what they are called to do in the church and in the world.⁸ Because a consumer culture breeds dependency, selling an easy way out, students that are not challenged with a biblical service culture will eventually graduate out of the church, not understanding or accomplishing the good works God has set out for each individual (Titus 3:1–14).

A consumer culture will reduce students to a passive role, creating young adults who will not contribute to the overall health of the church. Students approaching Christianity as a brand to consume explains why the majority of students who identify as Christians live no differently than non-Christian students. Once graduated, these students will not be able to add to the church’s mission and Christ’s command, which is to disciple the next generation. Because of their lack of application of their biblical knowledge, their senses have grown dull, and in their consumer mindset, the only story that matters is their own. When their needs are no longer met, they will leave the church in search of the next big thing. Jethani wrote, “Our spiritual imaginations have

⁷ Skye Jethani, *The Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 25.

⁸ Berard, Penner, and Bartlett, *Consuming Youth*, 52.

fallen asleep on the comfortable mattress of the consumer culture, and before any remedy for the church can be prescribed, our dormant imaginations must be stirred from their slumber.”⁹

Biblical knowledge became something to be consumed and not applied. The God of Scripture has lost His awe and wonder to the Christian consumer. For them, He is nothing more than a commodity to be used for their personal satisfaction and self-achievement.

Rediscovering the awe and wonder for the God of creation can be achieved through service and sacrifice. Breaking through the consumerism walls can only be accomplished by a servant leader. According to Bill Hull, the leader must seek to paint a different picture of what authentic leadership is supposed to be, drawing attention away from self and refocusing on Jesus as the ultimate leader, one who might not fit the standard vision of a leader found in the world but is “our leader and our model for any leading that is to be done in His name.”¹⁰ Matt Perman wrote, “Very often we seem to settle for a reduced view of the good that God has for us to do.”¹¹ The church should strive to create more robust, Bible-centered Christians who have higher expectations of what God can accomplish through broken people. By shaping and highlighting discernment as a way of life, the church can provide a counter-cultural corrective to the unfiltered messages that a consumer-driven culture promotes.¹²

⁹ Jethani, *The Divine Commodity*, 20.

¹⁰ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating our Addiction to Secular Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 17.

¹¹ Matt Perman, *What’s Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Books, 2016), 75.

¹² Berard, Penner, and Bartlett, *Consuming Youth*, 104.

Purpose Statement

In this Doctor of Ministry action research project, students from 9th–12th grades at Macland Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Georgia are introduced to biblical servanthood in various aspects. Since Jesus epitomized servanthood, the first step is to understand the implications of the lack of knowledge of biblical servanthood. The second step is to design and implement a discipleship program of biblical servanthood focused on Jesus, drawing attention to vital principles that portray the spiritually mature attributes of living as servants.

The goal of the program is to find a breakthrough in the apathy caused by consumerism and ignite within students the desire to serve others first. The last purpose is to lead students to discover the power found in service when the everlasting truth of the Bible is applied to everyday life. The goal for every student is that they experience life-change fulfillment in participating in God's kingdom as they realize that serving others is at the heart of the gospel.

The researcher will take several steps to complete these objectives. First, the primary focus will be on implementing a small group discipleship class where students are exposed directly to the words, actions, and examples of Jesus in Scripture. This step is crucial for understanding biblical servanthood. Second, the group will receive leadership training that models that of Jesus. Third, the group will be given a practical outlet to practice all that was learned. The purpose of this action research project is to expose the High School students from 9th–12th grades at Macland Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Georgia to biblical servanthood.

Basic Assumptions

The foundations for the study of biblical servanthood are based on the Word of God and on the examples given by Jesus recorded throughout the New Testament. Jethani wrote, “A kingdom where rebellious criminals are embraced by God like a loving father; where the poor

and the weak are welcomed to God’s table; where the servant is honored and the powerful are brought low.”¹³ The gospel of Mark states, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45, English Standard Version). The fruit of biblical servanthood is the foundation for church health, church development, and effective discipleship. Such fruit can be achieved by fulfilling Jesus’s mandate, the Great Commission, and its result should be a well disciplined person. This author argues that a well disciplined student graduating high school will continue to serve in the local body of believers, even after graduation.

According to Walter Elwell, the term “Servant of the Lord” can be applied to a variety of people in the Bible.¹⁴ In the Old Testament, Isaiah declares that the coming Messiah will be a servant. In his writing in Isaiah 41:8–9, the prophet also gives the definition of servanthood as granted by God’s grace. “But as for you, Israel my servant, Jacob my chosen one, descended from Abraham my friend, I have called you back from the ends of the earth, saying, ‘You are my servant.’ For I have chosen you and will not throw you away” (Isaiah 41:8–9, New Living Translation). Servants and slaves were an important feature of everyday life in biblical times. The idea of servanthood is used literally and metaphorically throughout Scripture.¹⁵ According to Martin Manser, the biblical understanding of servanthood has its foundation as people serve God in worship. The terms for “service” and “worship” are often interchangeable.¹⁶ An underlying assumption is that the believer committed to Christ will have an increasing desire to know God intimately and to pursue ways to grow in knowledge and experience with God. According to

¹³ Jethani, *The Divine Commodity*, 26.

¹⁴ Walter A. Elwell, and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1180.

¹⁵ Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Malphurs, these values will inspire people to action. He wrote, “Values give servants a greater sense of meaning in their service, but not just any values and not just biblical values. The values must be shared, biblical core values.”¹⁷

In the Gospels, Jesus often referred to himself and His ministry as a servant in the world laying out the true characteristics of servanthood. Servanthood is as much of an attitude as it is an action, as noted in Philippians: “Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a servant and was born as a human being” (Phil. 2:6–7). One cannot function or adopt a servant attitude if a person is not a servant within the framework of the life of Jesus. The life of Jesus Christ clearly reveals what true servanthood is within the perspective of Scripture.

A true biblical servant always underscores and demonstrates the significant effects of effective discipleship for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission. Stephen Sorenson wrote that a successful discipleship from a biblical point of view is obedience, faithfulness, servanthood, love, purity, and teamwork.¹⁸

Joseph Stowell wrote, “Choosing the transformational identity of a “follower” as step one in the process of becoming a maximum leader is, like everything else in the kingdom, counterintuitive.”¹⁹ It is not in humanity’s DNA to do the right things but in the kingdom of God a person must understand that to gain life one must first lose it. Hull wrote, “Discipleship has

¹⁷ Aubrey Malphurs, *Look Before You Lead: How to Discern and Shape Your Church Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 30.

¹⁸ Stephen W. Sorenson, “Incorporating People on the Move,” in *Growing Your Church through Evangelism and Outreach*, ed. Marshall Shelley, 1st ed., Library of Christian Leadership (Nashville, TN: Moorings, 1996), 203.

¹⁹ Joseph M. Stowell, *Redefining Leadership: Character-Driven Habits of Effective Leaders* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 60.

broken down because we haven't been using Jesus as our model for leadership and done what he did or what he taught."²⁰ The church should not ignore the making of disciples. If the church of today could only do one thing, it should be to make disciples. William Hoyt wrote, "As Christians we are to be consumed with making disciples. There is nothing more important in God's eyes for a church to do than to make disciples."²¹

The church wants people to come to faith, grow in faith, serve in faith, and live in faith as Jesus taught it. Based on that assumption, this researcher will seek to investigate that if a 9th–12th-grade student from Macland Baptist Church is led on a path to understanding biblical servanthood through a focused discipleship program, he or she will be less likely to leave the church after graduating high school and less likely to change their sense of purpose as they understand that God is calling them to a higher life filled with purpose and meaning.

Malphurs wrote, "A good strategy is the vehicle that enables the church to accomplish the mission (the Great Commission) and vision."²² This discipleship strategy seeks to move the students from wherever they are spiritually (lost or saved) to where God wants them to be (mature), helping the church to accomplish the biblical mission that God has set for it.

Definitions

Discipleship according to Dave Early and Rod Dempsey is "abandoning the things of the world and following Jesus."²³ Discipleship is the process of developing or making a disciple.

²⁰ Hull, *The Christian Leader*, 93.

²¹ William R. Hoyt, *Effectiveness by the Numbers: Counting What Counts in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 12.

²² Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 169.

²³ Dave Early, and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is ... How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 22.

Those whom God calls, He equips through authentic training, making them fearless to accomplish His goals, and He helps them to live with accountability and the desire to push themselves into new habits that will transform them into little Christs. Replication was a crucial part of Jesus' worldview as He taught His followers to value the Father's agenda more than their personal comfort and safety. Jesus had to drastically change His disciples' worldviews. Tawa Anderson wrote that a disciple should desire to see things the way that God sees. He also wrote, "to understand ourselves, our sin, our redemption, our relationship with Christ, our relationship with fellow human beings and the rest of creation, our surroundings, and our terrestrial ball the way that God sees, understands, and knows things to be."²⁴ The worldview of the disciple should be rooted in the relationship with the Father; therefore, the worldview must change to God's perspective of the world, for His perspective is true, reliable, and trustworthy.

Servanthood is a major part of devoted discipleship. Servanthood is serving Jesus or serving with Jesus, which involves not just being servants of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:1) but being servants with Christ. Servanthood requires a level of discipleship that advances to surrender from a skin-deep, superficial, easy-to-consume faith. According to Siang-Yang Tan, "It is servanthood with the right kind of servant attitude that comes from abiding in Christ (John 15:5) and following him in loving humility and caring compassion for the people we serve, for as servants of Christ we are also servants of people (2 Cor. 4:5)."²⁵ Being a servant is contrary to human nature, requiring personal crucifixion. Greg Ogden wrote, "In a biblical sense, anything worthy

²⁴ Anderson, Tawa J., W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 2.

²⁵ Siang-Yang Tan, *Full Service: Moving from Self-Serve Christianity to Total Servanthood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 16.

of the name of servanthood will require sacrifice on the part of the server. It means doing the thankless job. In other words, servants are not self-absorbed but others-absorbed.”²⁶

God has given every believer a gift through His Holy Spirit to be used for service in His kingdom. Unfortunately, most believers do not know of or are unaware of the gift God has given them, and therefore never serve or minister through their gifts. John MacArthur writes, “We each have a gift that is measured out to us with certain distinct capabilities, parameters, and purposes. Each of us is given a specific gift (singular) through which we are to minister in Christ’s name.”²⁷ Every believer is to be a practitioner of the Word of God. This means that believers must put into practice all that has been learned from Scripture. Jesus calls every Christian to follow His example of surrender to the Father for servitude, so one must step out in faith and into action. When the commands of the Master are obeyed, the disciple will be forever changed. According to Hull, our worldview should be rooted in our relationship with the Father, so our worldview must change to God’s perspective of the world, for His perspective is true, reliable, and trustworthy.²⁸ The disciple’s life will be transformed, but so will everyone around him or her. To follow Jesus in surrender will restore the Christian’s purpose. Discipleship is deeply rooted in Scripture, not an optional task for Christians. Every believer should strive to be more like Christ and less like self. An effective understanding of biblical servanthood will help to produce students who are passionate followers of Christ, who continue to serve the King with their talents and gifts, bringing honor and glory to God.

²⁶ Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* (Westmont, VI: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 141.

²⁷ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 136.

²⁸ Hull, *The Christian Leader*, 56.

Limitations

Many works consider biblical servanthood. This project has the potential to pursue a variety of viewpoints and discussions, but this writer's intent is to help students graduating high school to gain insight into what the Bible teaches about biblical servanthood before graduating. It is impossible for this writer to completely justify the topic of biblical servanthood and how that avenue of discipleship affects students.

Several external elements could have affected the student sampling in this study. Parents that move could cause a student participant to not complete the training. If students moved to another church during the study, they may not have been able to complete the training. Due to the small number of students at Macland Baptist, the volume of students in the study was limited to a small number. The lack of time for the completion of the research could have limited the sample size of the graduating class, skewing the percentage.

Delimitations

The scope of this thesis project was to determine the ways students from 9th–12th grades at Macland Baptist Church, who, under the influence of biblical servanthood discipleship in the areas of information, transformation, and application, stay in church after graduation. It is not the author's goal to define other biblical servanthood areas of discipleship. The researcher defined, analyzed, and developed these three aspects of biblical servanthood to uncover a clear understanding of biblical servanthood.

The research in this project was limited to Macland Baptist Church students in 9th–12th grades in Paulding and Cobb County schools in the state of Georgia. As a student pastor at Macland Baptist Church, the author was bound by this limitation. Based on these limitations, the

results looked at Macland Baptist Church with the possibility of extending the sampling group to other local churches for a better control group.

The researcher assessed the students who participated in this study in regard to three fundamental components of biblical servanthood: information they know about biblical servanthood, transformation through newfound knowledge of biblical servanthood they will learn, and application of newfound knowledge. By looking at these components, the researcher developed a three-step approach to biblical discipleship to prevent students from leaving the church upon graduating high school. This thesis project does not address all potential issues that may lead a student to leave the church upon graduating high school nor does it address all areas of discipleship. However, it does address a vital issue for Macland Baptist Church. This thesis project does not comment extensively on Philippians 2:1–11 or Ephesians 4:7–16. The focus of the project is the understanding of the model of students serving in the local church and how that affects them as believers upon graduation. This project will not serve as a fix-it-all project but will address one area of biblical discipleship often neglected at the local church servanthood.

Thesis Statement

The proposed statement for this thesis is if students from 9th–12th grades at Macland Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Georgia, are exposed to biblical servanthood in various aspects, their understanding of biblical servanthood should improve. The assumption is that if students understand biblical servanthood and are equipped with the knowledge and the avenues to serve, the students will be more Christlike and will continue to serve in the kingdom even after their high school graduation. The premise is that they will be less inclined to consume and will have the desire to produce, therefore staying connected to the local church by continuing to serve and exemplifying biblical servanthood to the next generation of believers.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework

This chapter examines literature on discipleship and focuses on biblical servanthood as an avenue of a practical approach to discipleship and its effect on the local church in retaining students after graduation. The review is divided into thematic sections based on the best sources available on the subject and contents of this project. The reviews of other studies in this chapter substantiate and answer the research question, guiding the research and clarifying its context. The primary purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature related to discipleship and how it aids biblical servanthood.

With a focus on biblical servanthood within discipleship, this thesis examines servanthood as a practical approach. This choice of focus adds depth and specificity to the study. In addition to theoretical implications, the study has practical implications. By exploring how biblical servanthood affects the local church's ability to retain students after graduation, the study addresses real-world issues and challenges faced by Macland Baptist Church.

Literature Review

This systematic literature review surveys books, scholarly articles, and other sources, comprehensively overviewing sources aiding the conversation about the need for a better understanding of biblical servanthood for students graduating from high school. The literature review will substantiate and answer the research question while addressing the subject matter. This emphasizes the importance of the literature review in supporting the overall argument and thesis of the work. The literature review will provide a comprehensive overview of the research topic, providing the reader with the background necessary to understand the research. It will identify gaps in the literature and suggest areas for further research. As noted in the previous chapter, the need for a better understanding of biblical servanthood is necessary for students'

retention after they graduate high school. Therefore, the literature review is an essential part of understanding the importance of biblical servanthood and its implications for the church.

The History of Student Ministry

Student ministry is a relatively new ministry compared to other ministries in the church. We have only begun to understand the cognitive and emotional challenges of adolescence in recent decades, and youth ministry supports these often confused and uncertain individuals.²⁹ The origins of modern youth ministry were in the 19th century during the Industrial Revolution when churches started to notice a rise in migration of young men moving into central urban areas to find work in the factories. Some men in the church noticed these young boys working six days a week and wandering about town on Sundays. The men educated these boys in what was termed Sunday School. They trained the young men in the Christian faith in “small groups,” which are now prevalent in the modern church.

The Sunday School model focused on teaching basic literacy skills, such as reading and writing, along with religious instruction based on Christian beliefs. As the movement grew, Sunday Schools expanded their curriculum to include Bible study, memorization of verses, hymn singing, and character development.

Sunday Schools became an integral part of many churches worldwide, offering a structured learning environment for children and youth to deepen their understanding of faith and values. Over time, the Sunday School model evolved to incorporate age-specific classes and teaching methods tailored to different developmental stages.³⁰

²⁹ Michael J. Anthony, *Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 217.

³⁰ Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 1988), 4.

Along with the Sunday School model, some parachurch organizations, such as the YMCA, started when some laypeople decided to work independently, neither subjecting themselves to congregational scrutiny nor receiving church funding. This move fostered the development of interdenominational teaching programs and pioneered faith-based organizations devoted to youth. Parachurch ministries such as Young Life and Youth for Christ also worked alongside the church, aiding it to reach the next generation with the Gospel. The leading parachurch organization for church youth ministry was Youth for Christ, led by Billy Graham on a full-time basis. As a result of Youth for Christ, hundreds of similar parachurch ministries emerged across America, culminating with one of the most historic Christian movements in modern history, the Jesus Movement.

The Jesus Movement was a grassroots awakening in the early 1970s in California that spread across the country. It brought a wave of young people into the Church, creating an increasing demand for these new converts to be instructed and disciplined in what it means to mature as a Christian. Local churches recognized the need for specialized ministries for teenagers and hired youth pastors. These first-generation youth pastors, many of them former staff members of Young Life and Youth for Christ, brought with them the relational strategy of the organizations to the local church.³¹

In the early stages of youth ministry, youth pastors sought to reach sizable amounts of students with the gospel and employed an attractional model. The attractional model spread to the church and in the '90s, youth ministry saw another powerful wave spurred by the growing number of megachurches with full-time student ministry teams.

³¹ Paul Renfro, Brandon Shields, Jay Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), Kindle, loc 33.

Over the past 40 years, the protestant church in America has been profoundly impacted by the attractional church movement, also known as the seeker-sensitive model, with a ministry paradigm that has embraced consumerism, pragmatism, and moralism as its operational values. The movement is emphasized for churches to be relatable and effective in reaching the unchurched. According to Neil Cole, instead of connecting to the world, the attractional church movement isolates people inside the church, extracting people from their place in the world to join the ranks of the church. The new Christian loses the opportunity to grow into maturity, falling into the trap that does the new follower more harm than good.³² Hugh Halter wrote, “attractional, consumer-oriented ways of church are actually hindering the process of making disciples.”³³

This type of ministry stems from the primary purpose of making Christianity appealing. The attractional churches conducted their services and programs in such a way that people would be “attracted” to the church. This philosophy of ministry has significant implications for one’s aesthetics and expressions in the worship service and beyond. The goal is to have as many people come to through the doors of the church as possible. Andy Stanley wrote, “In our search for common ground with unchurched people, we have discovered that, like us, they are consumers. So, we leverage their consumer instincts.”³⁴ Thus, meeting the need for unbelievers is one of the primary aims of the attractional model.

³² Neil Cole, *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2010), 107.

³³ Hugh Halter, and Matt Smay, *And: The Gathered and Scattered Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 13.

³⁴ Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2012). WordSearch loc not present.

As the 21st century started, student pastors discovered students were no longer attracted to previous methods or the simplistic messages that were once effective. Christianity and the Church must be different from the world and set apart. Some ministries increased their determination by combining massive hype with strong messages that stirred students to take their faith to public schools, but they did not translate it to everyday life. This generation reached a faith that is unsustainable due to the way youth ministry is done in the church, creating a gap that must be closed to prevent students from leaving the church once they graduate.

Students are Leaving the Church

Many church leaders and parents at Macland Baptist Church speculate how to effectively cultivate durable faith in the lives of youth and retain them after they go to college. The church must find a balance between irrelevance and super-relevance by discovering a more biblical and healthier posture by redeveloping a missional foundation. According to Stetzer, “We must move churches beyond a “come and see” mentality to more of a “go and be” as well as a “go and tell” one.”³⁵ The church as a whole, not just youth ministry, has become infatuated with all things “bigger, better, stronger, higher, and faster.”³⁶ With student ministry incorporating an attractional model that morphed into entertainment-driven ministry, students in many churches become segregated, ministering in silos, no longer engaging with the “adult” church or “big church” and they have no place to go once they graduate high school.

In 2007, LifeWay Research reported that 70 percent of teens who were active in youth groups during high school dropped out of church during college. Ben Trueblood found the same

³⁵ Ed Stetzer, and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches That Multiply* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 17.

³⁶ Tim Suttle, *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 11.

statistic changed 4 percent for the better but still a high number.³⁷ Student ministry bought into the misconception of “edu-tainment” as a reasonable means of communicating the gospel. Students do not benefit from intergenerational connections and instead are relegated to the youth room. Steve Parr found that 38 percent of young adults integrated as children and youth with their parents and other adults were more likely to stay in church after graduating high school.³⁸ Perhaps the vacuum created by not having a deeper connection to the church causes these students to walk away. Many church ministries separate families into sub-groups, tearing the fabric of the family which is essential to the church.

According to Thom Rainer, the top ten reasons people leave church are:

Simply wanted a break from church. Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical. Moved to college and stopped attending church. Work responsibilities prevented me from attending. Moved too far away from the church to continue attending. Became too busy though still wanted to attend. Didn't feel connected to the people in my church. Disagreed with the church's stance on political or social issues. Chose to spend more time with friends outside the church. Was only going to church to please others.³⁹

The American church is doing little to become and stay relevant and essential to the lives of its members. Young adults see the church as one of many options, no more important than work, leisure activities, or simply doing nothing.⁴⁰ The fact is, students are ready for reality and the church should be significantly encouraged by that and should be training and discipling them by placing students in appropriate service roles and keeping them accountable. Rainer wrote,

³⁷ Ben Trueblood, *Within Reach: The Power of Small Changes in Keeping Students Connected* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2019), 12.

³⁸ Steve R. Parr, and Tom Crites, *Why They Stay: Helping Parents and Church Leaders Make Investments That Keep Children and Teens Connected to the Church for a Lifetime* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2015), 88.

³⁹ Thom S. Rainer, Sam S. Rainer, and Eric Geiger, *Essential Church?: Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

“When the bar is set high and excellence is demanded, the church will then attract and keep those who truly seek to assimilate and make a difference in ministry.”⁴¹ Most students do not plan to leave the church after graduating high school. In fact, LifeWay Research found that 71 percent of the 66 percent of dropouts did not plan to take a break from church; it just happened. Perhaps this is because they were underchallenged or found a place to continue to serve after graduating from youth ministry.

David Kinnaman categorized three types that drop out after high school. The first type are “Nomads,” who walk away from church engagement but consider themselves Christians. The second type are “Prodigals,” who lose their faith, describing themselves as “no longer Christian.” The last type are “Exiles,” who are still invested in their Christian faith but feel stuck or lost between the culture and the church.⁴² Barna Research found that about three of ten young adults raised with a Christian background stay faithful to church and to faith throughout their transitions from the teen years through their twenties.⁴³

According to David Kinnaman, the majority of young dropouts are not walking away from church and faith but are putting their involvement with church on hold. Students are caught between two possible destinies, one anchored to a cheap, Americanized “edu-tainment” yielding shallow and weak faith and the other anchored by the power and depth of a gospel-centered faith in Jesus. If the church is not able to demonstrate the importance and values of life in a community of faith, they will not reach the 66 percent of leaving students.

⁴¹ Rainer, Rainer, and Geiger, *Essential Church*, 32.

⁴² David Kinnaman, and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 19.

⁴³ Barna Research, *Five Myths about Young Adult Church Dropouts*, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/five-myths-about-young-adult-church-dropouts>.

Traditionally, life events that drive people back to the church are different from what drove previous generations to the church. Fewer are getting married and even fewer are having kids. It is not just that the millennials are growing up in a vastly different world from previous generations. If the church waits for them to settle down and come back to church, it will take a while for that to happen, causing an even bigger gap for the following generations. Kinnaman says, “The dropout problem is, at its core ... a disciple-making problem. The church is not adequately preparing the next generation to follow Christ faithfully in a rapidly changing culture.”⁴⁴ Sprinkle believes many students who leave the church do not leave because they had an issue with Jesus or were fly-by-night pseudo-Christians. They leave because they find their spiritual needs are not met by the church and they want to know more about the Bible.⁴⁵ According to Sprinkle, they are leaving the church to find Jesus.

Church leaders and parents cannot effectively help without understanding the “why” behind students leaving the church. Understanding the “why” will ensure their difficulties are addressed and students can be helped to develop a Christian walk that will last a lifetime. Most student ministries are known for camps, retreats, programs, choir tours, ski trips, fundraisers, and all-nighters. But how many are known for Christian discipleship? Could it be that the systems created were designed to meet the wrong needs and fix the wrong problems? A simple answer could be yes, and perhaps that is why so many students graduating high school also graduate out of our churches. A closer look at student ministry could reveal what areas could be improved to help the next generation develop spiritually and stay in the church upon graduation.

⁴⁴ David Kinnaman, and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 21.

⁴⁵ Preston Sprinkle, *Go: Returning Discipleship to the Front Lines of Faith* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2016), 12.

Student Ministry Models and Strategies

Thomas Bandy wrote that “lack of vision leads to program silos and turf protection, and creative thinking never goes beyond the boundaries of traditional “sacred” programming. Churches become so absorbed in strategic planning that they never question their lack of success. Or to put it another way, success is only measured by sustained harmony rather than effective ministry.”⁴⁶

Student ministry has lost its original intent, which was to disciple teenagers to become more like Christ. Student ministries have competed in an arms race of ever-greater attractions to lure students into coming to church. Many leaders erroneously believe students will not be interested in the Bible alone. Renfro, Shields, and Strother wrote that youth ministry today has more youth camps, conferences, Christian music, sophisticated technology, books, and trained leaders than ever before. But even with all that is available to reach students, for whatever reason, a significant number of teens fail to make the transition from student ministry to Christian adulthood.⁴⁷

Many student pastors get caught up in the “how-tos” of ministry and the particulars of how a program works. Every student pastor would love to have a thriving youth group, so student pastors love to hear about how to grow their youth ministry, and by doing so they get focused on the details of a program that worked elsewhere. However, the focus of any ministry or program should be on the eternal and not on the numbers. Leaders must develop a picture of

⁴⁶ Thomas G. Bandy, *Strategic Thinking: How to Sustain Effective Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 91.

⁴⁷ Renfro, Shields, and Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, Kindle, loc 2.

ministry with the right perspective.⁴⁸ According to Stephen Ingram, winning ministries are not developed with winning in mind, they are developed with a purpose and a design to achieve success. Success is defined by developing a student ministry that is healthy and growing, not just numerically, but spiritually.⁴⁹ According to Geiger, the simpler the plan, the more compelling the direction, and the better traction will be seen in the lives of students.⁵⁰

God's intentionality must be reflected in the design of a student ministry strategy. All ministries should be conducted intentionally, not haphazardly. Intentionality is crucial in student ministry because of the brevity of the opportunity. Student pastors have a short amount of time to impact students. DeVries discovered patterns within the churches he worked with and by far the most startling was that most American churches have often, without recognizing it, embraced a clear model for youth ministry. This model is more popular than purpose-driven, family-based, or contemplative models. Most churches have chosen to do youth ministry with a model best described as gambling, where leaders close their eyes, cross their fingers, and hope with all their hearts, that this time everything will work. The problem according to Jonny Hunt, "Quite honestly, is that leaders don't always have a clear vision for the church and its people—perhaps not even a vision for themselves. We cannot challenge others to embrace a mission we don't personally possess and embody."⁵¹ The church's inclination for models alarmingly reveals the

⁴⁸ Jeff Lovingood, *Make It Last: Proven Principles for Effective Student Ministry* (Colorado Springs, CO: TH1NK, 2012), page not present.

⁴⁹ Stephen L. Ingram, Jr., *Organic Student Ministry: Trash the Pre-Packaged Programs and Transform Your Youth Group* (Chalice Press, 2015, accessed January 25, 2020, ProQuest Ebook Central) Chapter 2.

⁵⁰ Eric Geiger, and Jeff Borton, *Simple Student Ministry: A Clear Process for Strategic Youth Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 88.

⁵¹ Johnny M. Hunt, *Building Your Leadership Resume: Developing the Legacy That Will Outlast You* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 13–14.

shallowness of their programs, and the belief that transformation across all church models can occur by tapping into the right principles.⁵²

According to Robinson many pastors and leaders gain a vision of their church from God but struggle to turn the vision into reality.⁵³

Voddie Baucham believes the problem with youth ministry is that teens are falling away not just because of the lack of planning but because parents are asking the church to accomplish what God entrusted and designed the family to do.⁵⁴ Parr agrees, writing that a healthy youth ministry helps parents and their children make the transition to middle school, high school, and then into life after high school.⁵⁵ While the role of youth ministry is to give biblical emphasis for strengthening Christian families in the church, a further role is to evangelize lost families of youth who attend.

The leader must prioritize the development of a strategy that fulfills the church's God-given mission and vision. According to Malphurs, "The development of an effective, biblical mission should be the goal of every church leader."⁵⁶ One must agree with that statement since the mission of the church is vital to all ministries and dictates the direction followed. Perhaps never before have youth been so ready for, and in need of, genuine biblical truth, deep and meaningful relationships, and the kind of real, in-your-face Christianity that characterized the

⁵² Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 45.

⁵³ Tri Robinson, *Revolutionary Leadership: Building Momentum in Your Church through the Synergy Cycle* (Garden City, ID: Ampelon Publishing, 2005), 30.

⁵⁴ Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2012), 9.

⁵⁵ Parr and Crites, *Why They Stay*, 164.

⁵⁶ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*.

first-century church. An encouraging sign of this generation of teens is their desire to be challenged.⁵⁷

Student Ministry and Discipleship

Those whom God calls, He equips through authentic training, making them fearless to accomplish His goals and helping them to live with accountability and pushing them into new habits that will transform them into little Christs. Jesus taught His followers to value the Father's agenda more than their personal comfort and safety. Jesus had to drastically change His disciples' worldviews. According to Hull "Discipleship has broken down because we haven't been using Jesus as our model for leadership and done what he did or what he taught."⁵⁸ Replication was a crucial part of Jesus' worldview but if ministers are so self-absorbed with programs and number replication will be an unhealthy discipleship worldview. A minister's worldview should be rooted in a relationship with the Father, so a change in worldview must shift to a more godly perspective of the world, for His perspective is true, reliable, and trustworthy. Anderson wrote that Christians should desire to see things the way that God sees them and to also, "understand ourselves, our sin, our redemption, our relationship with Christ, our relationship with fellow human beings and the rest of creation, our surroundings, and our terrestrial ball the way that God sees, understands, and knows things to be."⁵⁹ Christians should be consumed with making disciples. There is nothing more important in God's eyes for a church

⁵⁷ Alvin L. Reid, *Raising the Bar: Ministry to Youth in the New Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 37.

⁵⁸ Hull, *The Christian Leader*, 93.

⁵⁹ Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 2.

to do than make disciples.⁶⁰ Every student ministry should want students to come to faith, grow in faith, serve in faith, and live in faith as it was taught by Jesus.

Most churches have a goal of making disciples. Indeed, scripture commands all to go and make disciples, as seen in Matthew 28:19. True discipleship, according to Geiger, is not about information but transformation. Obedience, not knowledge, is the bottom line of discipleship. Discipleship is a word that is often hijacked and haphazardly tossed around to describe a multitude of things. And because it has become such a nebulous term, people launch complaints about ministry described as “discipleship” that may not have the slightest resemblance to what is possible in delivering transformation to people. Perhaps the deficiency flows from a faulty understanding of discipleship.⁶¹

Many student ministries claim to be big on discipleship, but according to the Barna Group, the disciples being produced in the local churches seldom look like the disciples Jesus produced. In youth ministry, discipleship can be viewed as the most unrewarding and nebulous activity since spiritual maturity is difficult to measure.⁶² According to Doug Fields, this is especially true with junior high students. Healthy discipleship flourishes under spiritual leaders who are willing to do what is possible. They plant seeds and water students’ faith with faith that God will do the impossible and bring growth.⁶³

Discipleship should not simply be a program or a Bible study. Geiger wrote that the solution to the increasing discipleship problem in student ministry is not another program or new

⁶⁰ Hoyt, *Effectiveness by the Numbers*, 12.

⁶¹ Geiger, Kelley, and Nation, *Transformational Discipleship*, 15–16.

⁶² Barna Group, *The State of Youth Ministry: How Churches Reach Today’s Teens and What Parents Think About It* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2016), 14.

⁶³ Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 38.

curriculum. Discipleship is a process of spiritual maturation and true transformation that comes from a daily relationship with God.⁶⁴ Once the relationship is understood, the question should become “How can disciples be made?” Just as people learn differently, disciples are made in different ways. Lovingood explains this does not take away or minimize the need for studying the Bible because that is a valuable discipline for spiritual growth, but discipleship is also about putting students into new environments and opportunities for them to grow in their relationship with Christ and their Christlikeness.⁶⁵

The fact that half of the current young adult population in churches does not personally align with the doctrinal teachings of the church should sound the alarm for the need to increase discipleship efforts. With such a divide between the church and the individual, it comes as no surprise that young adults are leaving the church in masses.⁶⁶ Rainer wrote that the major source of disillusionment with the church stems not from the expected differences in worship style wars, time slots, day of worship, or geographic location of the church. While some do leave for these often-stated reasons, the major loss originates from the lack of discipleship within churches.⁶⁷ Discipleship apart from Jesus is nontransformational, bringing some change but often leaving the student in the same spiritual state as when they entered student ministry. Powerless discipleship will only widen the gap of students leaving the church after graduation because it does not

⁶⁴ Geiger, and Borton, *Simple Student Ministry*, 16.

⁶⁵ Jeff Lovingood, *Make It Last*, Chapter 2.

⁶⁶ Rainer, Rainer, and Geiger, *Essential Church*, 27.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

change the student; rather, it is mere behavior control. Student ministry must change from the experience of spiritual shallowness into deeper, real Christian discipleship.⁶⁸

Training Student Leaders

A missing element in the Christian formation of youth today apart from discipleship is leadership training. Many student pastors lack the vision of what their students can accomplish if only they had the training to lead. Rick Warren wrote that most people think of “vision” as the ability to see the future. In today’s rapidly changing world, vision is also the ability to accurately assess current changes and take advantage of them. Vision is being alert to opportunities.⁶⁹ Vision motivates the Christian leader and keeps one’s focus and attention on what matters most. A useful vision is rooted in the Bible, addresses the future, and deals with today’s realities, causing real transformation in those under one’s care. A modification of present paradigms of youth ministry is necessary because contributing students have the potential to realize God can use them for His glory and that they are instrumental in ministering to others. When students are trained to serve in other areas of the church, their involvement will reduce the risk of leaving the church after graduation.⁷⁰ Instead of the linear program-based method student ministries we are used to, student pastors must re-imagine their students’ spiritual development as open practice based.

The majority of young youth workers step into ministry ill-equipped to walk through the political minefields that are a part of every church and lack the training needed to lead the

⁶⁸ Kinnaman, and Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 87.

⁶⁹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 22.

⁷⁰ Geiger, and Borton, *Simple Student Ministry*, 87.

ministry. Perhaps that is why many are unable to lead training for their students and too many become unnecessary casualties in a battle they did not know they signed up for.⁷¹ What far too many churches and youth workers are missing is the ability to give their first attention to ensuring that the right systems, priorities, and infrastructure are in place before they begin in ministry.

The church should be encouraged by the fact that most students are ready for reality. And the church and leaders should be training them, placing them in pertinent roles, and holding them accountable as they serve the Lord in the local church. When the bar is set high and excellence is demanded, the church will then attract and keep those who seek to make a difference in ministry.⁷² A continuous cycle of finding student willing to serve, training them, nurturing their spiritual growth, empowering them for ministry, and motivating them to continue. The more quality trained serving students a church has, the more the students will spiritually mature. As students grow spiritually, student ministry will grow numerically, and this growth will require additional adult leaders who will also need to be trained so they can train more students.⁷³

According to Preston Sprinkle, most ministry training does not equip students or leaders with the skills to investigate the uniqueness of God's work within communities and within their own personal stories. These students and leaders often feel adrift and alone as their creative imagination for the kingdom of God fades.⁷⁴ The purpose of any student ministry should be to

⁷¹ Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It* (Westmont, VA: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 28.

⁷² Rainer, Rainer, and Geiger, *Essential Church*, 32.

⁷³ Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, 234.

⁷⁴ Sprinkle, *Go*, 87.

develop and disciple students so their faith is strengthened and their commitment to serve Christ continues after graduation.

According to Kinnaman and Hawkins, leaders must cultivate an apprentice-like training for the next generation that goes to the heart of apprenticeship. The church must find what each student is gifted with and call them to it, doing all to nurture that calling. Most youth ministers and volunteers have some sense of how important that is but many for the sake of time and quality abstain from doing so. Students need a clearer, definitive, objective, and directional approach to finding their calling in Christ's body. This is not likely to happen through a weekly message. It is a mindset that needs to permeate student ministry, so a better job is done in challenging and training students.⁷⁵

Biblical models for Christians and churches training the next generation abound. The Bible points to mentoring as seen in the case of Moses and Joshua or Elijah and Elisha. Even more obviously, Jesus was constantly training the disciples to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth.⁷⁶ Therefore, any ministry that desires to glorify God should seek to become a training ground, having a holistic approach to the spiritual growth of every person so they are equipped with the resources to grow and mature in their faith, becoming fully equipped Christians ready to serve.

Biblical Servanthood in Student Ministry

According to the Bible, God is not necessarily looking for leaders, at least not in the sense most might think; rather, God is looking for servants (Isa. 59:16; Ezek. 22:30). He is

⁷⁵ Kinnaman, and Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 92.

⁷⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, and Elisabeth A. Nesbit Sbanotto, *Effective Generational Ministry: Biblical and Practical Insights for Transforming Church Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 48.

looking for character-driven, servant leaders whose exemplary lives influence and empower those within the sphere of their influence to achieve great outcomes personally, spiritually, communally, and organizationally. Every Christian who desires to become a leader must first learn to follow. Jesus was a servant leader and that serves as an example of how to lead while submitting to the will of the Father. Every Christian must learn to surrender their agenda for the agenda of the Father, which will lead us to achieve a kingdom-minded point of view. Every Christian participates equally in the Body of Christ. Paul acknowledges that some have gifts for exercising particular leadership roles as apostles, prophets, teachers, and so forth (1 Cor.12:28).⁷⁷ Service requires self-sacrifice. Servanthood is death to self. Being a servant is contrary to man's nature, requiring personal crucifixion. Being a servant is the opposite of being self-centered. In a biblical sense, anything worthy of the name of servanthood requires sacrifice. Even Jesus said the son of man came to serve not to be served. To serve means doing a thankless job, having the comfortable routines of life interrupted for needs that do not fit into the preplanned schedule, and not needing to receive attention for good deeds. In other words, servants are not self-absorbed but others absorbed.⁷⁸ Servanthood is a major part of discipleship. Servanthood is serving Jesus, or serving with Jesus, what Don Howell calls "servanting."⁷⁹ It involves not just being servants of Christ (1 Cor. 4:1) but being servants with Christ: servants in and through whom Christ lives and works by the power of the Holy Spirit. Servanthood with the right kind of servant attitude

⁷⁷ Jackson W. Carroll, Becky R. McMillan, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 17.

⁷⁸ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 141.

⁷⁹ Don Howell, *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 16.

comes from abiding in Christ (John 15:5) and following him in loving humility and caring compassion for others, for as servants of Christ one is also a servant of people (2 Cor. 4:5).⁸⁰

According to Eric Geiger “leaders who view discipleship through the lens of identity are bent to continually teach believers that their service to Christ and others is the natural response to being a bondservant.”⁸¹ Leaders must point to the grace of the Master and the honor of staying and serving. The Bible teaches an identity of being a humble and grateful servant with a heart surrendered to the Master. Church or ministry leaders who see through the identity lens remind followers of the joy and honor of serving Christ before discussing strategies for volunteer engagement.⁸²

In doing the work of a servant, Jesus showed men that God is unlike any god the world has ever known. Indeed, Jesus “had come from God and was returning to God” (John 13:3). By washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus shows us who God is. He demonstrates what it looks like to follow this servant God and models what true leadership and servanthood entails.⁸³

Students trained in biblical servanthood see themselves as valuable members of a church body and as important for the existence of ministry in the local church. Students will change the whole culture of their ministry as they learn what servant-leadership means and how it differs from traditional leadership concepts.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Siang-Yang Tan, *Full Service: Moving from Self-Serve Christianity to Total Servanthood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 16.

⁸¹ Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 82.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Jen Bradbury, *Unleashing the Hidden Potential of Your Student Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

Theological Foundations

Discipleship is profoundly connected in the New Testament. Discipleship is not optional for Christians. The New Testament states clearly that discipleship is the commission of every believer and follower of Jesus Christ. During Jesus's earthly ministry, He spent the majority of His time discipling twelve young men. Before His ascension, Jesus commanded the twelve to go and make disciples. The command to the twelve is known as the Great Commission. The Great Commission defines the way any ministry should function. Malphurs wrote, "The most effective organizations know and understand what business they are in or what function they perform. The same holds true for the church that proclaims Jesus Christ."⁸⁵ Proclaiming Christ as Lord attaches the Great Commission and all it encompasses, providing guidance as decisions are made within the body of believers, uniting them as they strategize how they will reach their Jerusalem and the ends of the earth.

Reaching the world does not end there. According to the Great Commission, the one receiving the Gospel must be taught to observe and learn all that Jesus poured into the first twelve. In Scripture, the idea of a disciple is found almost exclusively in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, with the only exceptions found in Isaiah 8:16 and less directly Isaiah 50:4 and 54:13, where the same Hebrew word is translated learned and taught, correspondingly. Yet wherever there is a teacher and learners, the idea of discipleship is present.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 107.

⁸⁶ Paul Helm, "Disciple," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 629.

Jewish and Greco-Roman history and literature provide examples of respected figures who gathered disciples to teach and lead.⁸⁷ In the Greek world, philosophers were surrounded by pupils. Since acolytes often adopted the distinctive teaching of their masters, the word disciple came to signify the adherent of a particular outlook in religion or philosophy.⁸⁸ In the Jewish world, discipleship is seen in the New Testament in reference to the Pharisees in Mark 2:18 with most of them considering themselves as disciples of Moses.

The immediate followers of Jesus called under His authority, came from a wide variety of circumstances. Not only the Twelve but additionally those who were supportive of His teaching and committed to Him are also called disciples.⁸⁹ The first usage of the term disciple is mentioned in the New Testament in Matthew 5:1 where the disciples came to Jesus and were taught the Sermon on the Mount. Based on this understanding, a disciple is taught by a teacher, follows the teacher, and practices what they are taught. Dave Early defined disciple as “a person who has trusted Christ for salvation and has surrendered completely to Him. He or she is committed to practicing the spiritual disciplines in community and developing to their full potential for Christ and His mission.”⁹⁰

In the last chapter of Hebrews, the author states that after people are equipped, they should serve God and by doing so bring Him glory. Stetzer wrote, “Transformation is at the heart of God’s mission to humanity. He delights in moving us from the kingdom of darkness to the

⁸⁷ Peter K. Nelson, “Disciple,” ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 348.

⁸⁸ I. H. Marshall, “Disciple,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 277.

⁸⁹ Elwell and Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 384.

⁹⁰ Dave Early, and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is ... How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 28.

kingdom of light—and then empowering and directing us as agents of His kingdom. He has chosen the church as His instrument in this world. We, the body of Christ, are God’s chosen method to deliver the message of transformation to our neighbors in the local community and around the world.”⁹¹ Therefore discipleship is the process through which one or more believers offer instruction, encouragement, support, and accountability to one another to produce greater levels of spiritual maturity in believers. Discipleship is a lifelong process that a Christian must go through to learn obedience to Christ, transforming a person’s values and behavior, resulting in ministry at home, church, and the world.

The risen Savior charged His followers in Matthew 28:18-20 to “go and make disciples of all nations.” This task of drawing Gentiles and Jews into Christian discipleship involves baptizing them and instructing them in Jesus’ teachings.⁹² Malphurs wrote, “The Savior makes it very clear through the pen of Luke that the church is to be so much more than a holy huddle or an inward-focused family that cares for its own and no one else. Instead, the church has a God-driven Christ-given directive to be outward focused on a lost and dying world that desperately needs the Savior.”⁹³ The NASB translation in Luke 24:47 reads, “Repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” The mission of the church is to proclaim repentance and forgiveness. Romans 10:14 raises questions about our resolve to proclaim, “But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?” When Malphurs raises this question, what does the Bible

⁹¹ Stetzer, and Rainer, *Transformational Church*, 10.

⁹² Peter K. Nelson, “Commission, Great,” ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 272.

⁹³ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*.

teach about reaching your community? The answer should be that the Bible teaches believers to proclaim and not be silent. Jesus took the initiative to become flesh, likewise, believers must take the initiative to proclaim His forgiveness as He commanded. It takes movement to reach a community with the Gospel; it takes intentionality.

Discipleship has many facets and responsibilities the disciple must learn, including servanthood. This thesis focuses on the avenues of discipleship called biblical servanthood. The foundation for the study of biblical servanthood is based on the words of Jesus. The gospel of Mark states, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The same can be observed in Philippians 2:7–8, “Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” Richard Melick wrote, “The contrasts between “Lord” (v. 11) and “servant,” (v. 7) and “very nature of God” (v. 6) and “human likeness” (v. 7) express the emptying. Thus, the emptying is that God became human, Lord became servant, and obedience took him to death.”⁹⁴

True biblical servanthood is serving Jesus or serving with Jesus, giving Christ His rightful place as Lord. His lordship is expressed in the way one serves others, and this is the foundation for effective discipleship. Therefore, any ministry that has the desire to glorify God should become a training ground, having a holistic approach to spiritual growth for every person one encounters so they are equipped with the resources necessary to grow and mature in their faith, becoming fully equipped Christians. Siang-Yang Tan wrote:

⁹⁴ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 103.

It involves not just being servants of Christ (1 Cor. 4:1) but being servants with Christ: servants in and through whom Christ lives and works, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is servanthood with the right kind of servant attitude that comes from abiding in Christ (John 15:5) and following him in loving humility and caring compassion for the people we serve, for as servants of Christ we are also servants of people (2 Cor. 4:5).⁹⁵

The Lord's way of humbling Himself was by obedience in serving and surrendering to the will of the Father. Charles Spurgeon wrote, "He invented no method of making Himself ridiculous; He put upon Himself no singular garb, which would attract attention to His poverty. He simply obeyed His Father, and mark you, there is no humility like obedience: To obey is better than sacrifice; to give heed than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22)."⁹⁶ According to Powers, "The church is to be a community of persons who are wholeheartedly committed to doing what God wants to be accomplished on earth."⁹⁷

The term servant is applied to a variety of people in the Bible. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the term "servant" is used as a title of Moses, Joshua, and David, who were each called a servant of the Lord.⁹⁸ In its basic form, the term servant covers a range of meanings. Used some 800 times in the Old Testament, the word servant refers to a slave to an officer close to the king, or to the chosen leader of God's people. Isaiah 41:8–9 defines this highest servanthood as something granted by God's grace.⁹⁹ The traditional interpretation, Jewish and Christian, is that the Servant is an ideal individual figure of God's agent, an element

⁹⁵ Siang-Yang Tan, *Full Service: Moving from Self-Serve Christianity to Total Servanthood* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 16.

⁹⁶ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: Philippians*, ed. Elliot Ritzema, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 55.

⁹⁷ Bruce P. Powers, *Church Administration Handbook* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1997), 19.

⁹⁸ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 39.

⁹⁹ Elwell, and Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 1180.

in the New Testament that aids in the understanding of Jesus’s redemptive work through serving the will of the Father.

William Nelson wrote, “Yahweh describes His servant as chosen, endowed with the Spirit, humble, and compassionate.”¹⁰⁰ God has given all believers at least one gift to use for the service in His kingdom, and when believers freely and joyfully accept the position of servants of Christ Jesus, they can be united and effective in service of the Lord. The gift Christ has given to all believers must also be applied for the growth of the Kingdom. Unfortunately, the majority of believers do not understand or recognize that God has given them such spiritual gifts for serving in the kingdom. MacArthur wrote, “We each have a gift that is measured out to us - with certain distinct capabilities, parameters, and purposes. Each of us is given a specific gift singular through which we are to minister in Christ’s name.”¹⁰¹

Spiritual gifts were distributed to all true believer men and women, beginning at Pentecost and continuing throughout the history of the church.¹⁰² The words used in English “Spiritual gifts” are translated from two familiar words in Greek that derived from more familiar words, *charis* (grace) and *pneuma* (spirit). Both affirm the power of the Spirit of God is present in the world. The words have similar senses—*charisma* meaning “expression or manifestation or

¹⁰⁰ William B. Nelson Jr., “Servant of the Lord,” ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1189–1190.

¹⁰¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 136.

¹⁰² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 457.

embodiment of grace,” *pneumatikon* meaning “expression or manifestation or embodiment of Spirit.” Their range of application, however, is different.¹⁰³

God’s Spirit empowered individuals from the time of Moses and the wilderness wanderings of the Old Testament to the apostle Paul in the New Testament.¹⁰⁴ According to Allen Myers, Paul’s designation of “spiritual gifts” is special endowments used in service of God by the Christian in and out of the church.¹⁰⁵ According to Paul, spiritual gifts are “the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7), and ways in which the one Spirit possessed by all Christians works in diverse forms (vv. 4–6, 11–30; cf. Ephesians 4:4–11). Spiritual gifts are not to be confused with natural or acquired talents; although, in some cases the gifts involve a release or enhancement of natural ability. The difference is the emphasis is on enablement by God of gifts through His Spirit. Putman wrote that “a general diffusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, marking the new dispensation, was foretold by the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28), and confirmed by the promises of Christ to his disciples.”¹⁰⁶ The purpose of these charismatic gifts is primarily for the edification of the church. Secondly, according to Romans 15:18 and I Corinthians 14:21–25, their purpose is for the conviction and conversion of unbelievers.

¹⁰³ Walter A. Elwell, and Barry J. Beitzel, “Spiritual Gifts,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1993.

¹⁰⁴ Barbara E. Bove, “Spiritual Gifts,” ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1249.

¹⁰⁵ Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 968.

¹⁰⁶ W. G. Putman, “Spiritual Gifts,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1130.

According to Walter Elwell, a spiritual gift is a specific act of God, and this remains true even when it is mediated through individuals. This means that no one can hope to manifest such a gift except in conscious openness to and dependence on God.¹⁰⁷

Helping students identify their spiritual gifts will help equip them to carry out the good works God has designed and assigned to them. According to I Corinthians 3:9, knowing one's gifts will give insight into how the Holy Spirit works through a believer, because understanding the strengths and weaknesses aids the believer to become more efficient. The potential for a believer to bring glory to God is multiplied when they identify their gifts and use them generously to serve others in the kingdom of God.

God has made each of his children unique. He has given each believer unusual gifts, talents, personalities, temperaments, and passions to accomplish His unique purpose in their lives. Real significance in life comes when one discovers that purpose and calling and puts it in practice.

Biblical Servanthood and Christ's Example of Service

The example set by Christ in Philippians 2:7 shows how to become a servant. Christ identified and demonstrated to the disciples that He thought of others first; therefore, He became a servant. Christ was not captivated by egocentric thinking about equality with God. He emptied himself, taking the nature of a servant.¹⁰⁸ Jesus, who existed eternally, surrendered that high place and gave up the position of being the "Image of God" and humbled himself to accept the

¹⁰⁷ Elwell, and Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 1222.

¹⁰⁸ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 116.

role of the servant. The “form of God” could not be relinquished, for God cannot cease to be God but by taking the form of a servant, his existence in the form of God was concealed.¹⁰⁹

The example set by Christ was a guide to the Apostles in their ministries, which changed the world according to the will of the Father. Discipleship is learning God’s transformative word. As believers are discipled, the Word of God becomes apparent in their lives. All Christians receive the Holy Spirit and gain the privilege to serve God and others in a covenantal relationship with God.

Theoretical Foundations

The Bible provides the theological foundations for this thesis project. The Scriptures teach that healthy discipleship consists of a person who understands every Christian is a disciple and a disciple maker, and just as one learns, he also instructs the next person.

Throughout the Bible, God’s Word relies on crucial foundational truths about servanthood. When the Bible is read and studied consistently, its influence and transformation increase and change the lives of its readers. This author has a central belief that teenagers do not connect with programs, but rather connect with the teachers who lead the programs. Therefore, to add a relational element to discipleship is paramount to retain students connected and serving in the local church.

For Christians, serving others is not new. Jesus called His disciples to serve as noted in the Gospel of Mathew 20:26 and in John 12:26. Jesus exemplified service for His disciples in Matthew 20:28, John 13:3-17, and Philippians 2:7. He reminds His followers to serve one another in 1 Peter 4:10, Galatians 5:13, and 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Scripture is filled with

¹⁰⁹ Homer A. Kent, Jr., “Philippians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 123–124.

examples of leaders who served others, with the biggest example being Paul. The Bible declares that “we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (Eph. 2:10).

Nate Palmer wrote, “Serving in the church is not just the privilege of the few. It is the call of every Christian’s life.”¹¹⁰ For a person to fully understand what a servant is and how to become a servant they must first understand the fundamental element of trusting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Paul writes, “If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9). Salvation will bring a person into a personal relationship with God the Father. Once the relationship with God is established, then a person is brought into fellowship with other believers.

The church is the primary place where a person can practice servanthood by serving God and each other. Palmer writes, “biblical service requires that we prefer others over ourselves that we sacrifice willingly, giving time and energy that could have been used for personal benefit to benefit others. Biblical service calls us to direct our focus outward.”¹¹¹ Jesus taught His followers to value the Father’s agenda more than our own personal comfort and safety. Jesus drastically changed His disciples’ worldviews. Anderson wrote that we should desire to see things the way God sees them, and “understand ourselves, our sin, our redemption, our relationship with Christ, our relationship with fellow human beings and the rest of creation, our surroundings, and our terrestrial ball the way that God sees, understands, and knows things to be.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Nate Palmer, *Servanthood as Worship* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2010), 11.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹² Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, *An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 2.

God intends for every believer to serve and use the gift He freely gives in the local church. Those who God calls, He equips through an authentic training making them fearless to accomplish His goals, help them live with accountability, and push them into new habits that transform them into little Christs. Service is an essential part of being a Christian which is being equipped to equip others according to Ephesians 4:12. Tan says, “True servanthood is characterized by loving obedience to the Lord, and compassionate ministry to others.”¹¹³

A student graduating high school should have learned essential characteristics of biblical servanthood and had the ability to practice them prior to graduating from high school while developing a heart for service as they enter adulthood. Biblical servanthood, whether taught by a youth worker or parents, is essential for continual involvement of students in the local church after high school. Biblical servanthood is only one part of a student’s discipleship that is often neglected in the local church. There are other spiritual disciplines such as daily quiet time or devotionals, consisting of time in prayer, Bible reading, and Scripture memorization. A student must also learn accountability with other believers and involvement in the church through service.

¹¹³ Tan, *Full Service*, 32.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology for the various approaches used in this study on biblical servanthood. The goal was to help students graduating from high school stay involved in a local church and continue serving God and others. The intervention plan for this thesis project was to develop a four-step process that assesses, informs, transforms, and applies all that was learned by participating students from 9th–12th grades at Macland Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Georgia. Students were encouraged to follow the command given in 1 Timothy 4:7 to “train yourself to be godly” while living out Ephesians 4:16, “From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (New International Version). This next generation of students is the now generation. They are not just the future of the church, they are the church of today. With Gen Z being the least religious generation to date and considered an unreached people group by some scholars, this generation is in great need of teaching, training, and empowering to serve and be the church. According to Shane Pruitt, the National Next Gen Director from the North America Mission Board, this next generation wants to assist in “doing” something that matters.¹¹⁴

The focus areas of this project included biblical knowledge, biblical servanthood, and helping students understand their spiritual gifts. This project looked to achieve its focus areas by ensuring each student is well-versed in biblical knowledge, knowledgeable of biblical servanthood, and empowered to use their spiritual gifts.

¹¹⁴ Shane Pruitt, *Six Common Traits of Gen Z*, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.gensend.org/resource/six-common-traits-of-gen-z/>.

Students can be trained in aspects of servanthood and learn to model biblical servanthood. The researcher hoped that after receiving the training, every participating student would be transformed by the truth of Scripture, come to have a better understanding of God's purposes for their lives, and be empowered to put into practice all they learned in this project for the service of God.

Every year, high school students graduate and start in the workforce or go to college. That reality is evident in the local church. But statistics show us students are leaving the church without the knowledge of biblical servanthood each year as they graduate high school. According to Roc Collins, one out of nine teenagers will lose faith in Christianity, four of ten will leave the church but still call themselves Christians, and two of ten will disconnect from church and express frustration with "church culture" and its disconnect with society.¹¹⁵ Many factors explain these statistics. A key factor is many students have grown up in church having been taught to become consumers of the church rather than servants. According to Skye Jethani, these generations of Christians leave the church with brains full of biblical knowledge and doctrine, but their lives reflect little to no evidence of the transformation Jesus makes in the life of those who accept Him.¹¹⁶

The challenge of the church is to understand the sociological plight of teenagers and offer to students a liberating new framework through an understanding of biblical servanthood and a renewed optimism for service. According to Mike Cospers, no one decides to be consumeristic or embrace a celebrity culture, but mass culture has a way of swallowing people and institutions,

¹¹⁵ Roc Collins, text message to author, August 22, 2022.

¹¹⁶ Jethani, *The Divine Commodity*, 25.

conforming them.¹¹⁷ A consumer culture breeds dependency, selling an easy way out. Students that are not challenged with a biblical service culture will eventually graduate out of the church, not being able to learn and accomplish the good works God has set out for each individual (Titus 3:1, 14). Jared C. Wilson agrees, stating that consumer culture can negatively impact the spiritual health and mission of churches. When churches prioritize consumer preferences, Wilson points out the risk of diluting the gospel message and compromising the essential mission of the church. As church members may become more focused on what they can obtain from the church in terms of programs, entertainment, or comfort rather than participating in worship, discipleship, and the mission of the church.¹¹⁸

From the time students start attending church, ministries are designed for their consumption. Consumer behavior reduces the students to a passive role. Starting with children's ministry and continuing through student ministry, students have learned the church exists for them to come and enjoy the things they like, to ignore the parts of the ministry they do not like or that makes them feel uncomfortable, and how they are to take from the ministry offered to them while contributing nothing in return. For many students, their church experience is an all-you-can-eat ministry buffet where they pick and choose whatever they desire while discarding or disregarding what they do not desire.

The consumer mentality causes students to be ineffective in ministry or not participate in church ministry at all. Large numbers of students leave the church after graduation and do not return because they do not know where they belong. They have never learned or put into practice

¹¹⁷ Mike Casper, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 16.

¹¹⁸ Jared C. Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto Against the Status Quo* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 100.

God's purposes for their lives. Sometimes they desire to consume and participate in other things. These students have never learned where God has gifted them to serve or how to be a servant. In many cases, serving others and participating in ministry are not modeled for students. Many churches do not understand students should be given opportunities for servanthood. These churches underestimate or do not value the effectiveness, energy, and encouragement the participation of students in ministry can have on the local church. The church often reinforces this consumeristic ideology by not allowing students to serve. Students are considered by many as irresponsible and unable to perform tasks alongside the adult congregation.

This mentality does not prepare nor train students to graduate into adulthood with a complete understanding of their faith. The myth that students are the future of the church is propagated, causing a cycle of disinformation that keeps students from being in the church now. This same disinformation keeps the student from being trained to do the work of the ministry. Students not only represent our future, but they are also a part of our present. This upcoming generation of students, known as Gen Z, wants to contribute to something more meaningful, something that matters. Shane Pruitt wrote, "They'll want more out of their church than sitting on a pew, listening to sermons, going to pot-luck dinners, while waiting on the Rapture Bus to swoop down to pick them all up. They are not scared to die young; however, they are terrified to die at a ripe old age while not having done anything significant with their lives in their own eyes."¹¹⁹ This generation of students wants to do more with their lives, they want to make their mark, but they are not sure how. One of the greatest obstacles the church faces today in reaching this generation is the struggle with letting go of traditions.

¹¹⁹ Shane Pruitt, *7 Common Traits of Gen Z: In Their Own Words*, accessed August 23, 2022, <http://www.shanepruitt.com/7-common-traits-of-gen-z-in-their-own-words>.

There is nothing inherently wrong with tradition, but certain traditions have become dead rituals that cannot be changed. Christian Historian Jaroslav Pelikan wrote, “Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”¹²⁰ This generation does not want to replicate some of the church’s favorite moments from the past or have a cookie-cutter faith that is the same as the previous generation. They want to be authentic and want to follow someone who is intently and genuinely following Christ.

According to Jonathan Pokluda, this generation is filled with influencers, and they want to make a difference, but many of them are misguided. Shown how to use their gifts, they will be the most powerful force the church can unleash.¹²¹ According to John Berard, with this new understanding students can find expressions of service inside the church through an intentionality lived vocation culture. This reimagination in biblical service would encourage change in the knowledge of who teenagers are called to be and what they are called to do in the church and in the world.¹²²

The lack of equipping can be debilitating and make someone’s job difficult or impossible, ask a doctor, teacher, or carpenter. According to Bill Elliff, it is equally debilitating to have the right tools but lack the know-how to use them. Christ is the essential equipping, and He lives in those who have accepted Him, but someone can know Him for years and fail to understand that Christ lives through them in their service to others.¹²³

¹²⁰ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 65.

¹²¹ Jonathan Pokluda, *Welcoming the Future Church: How to Reach, Teach, and Engage Young Adults* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 13.

¹²² Berard, Penner, Bartlett, *Consuming Youth*, 52.

¹²³ Bill Elliff, *The Presence Centered Church* (North Little Rock, AR: Truth Ink Publications, 2015), 88.

This chapter presents the applicability of a grounded approach and a constructivist strategy for this study. The study plan, including the methodology, study participants, procedures, analysis method, and ethical concerns, are primary components of this chapter.

Intervention Design

The intervention plan for this thesis project was to provide a systematic and logical approach to addressing the issue. The study ensured that interactions are more productive instead of reactive, thereby contributing to the fulfillment of the project's objectives. So, the intervention plan was designed to incorporate strategies that maximized the project's impact to ensure its success.

A close look at the student ministry of Macland Baptist Church revealed a gap between the students' knowledge of service to God and what hands-on service and ministry look like. A systematic problem is that students and young adults are dropping out and leaving the church. Student ministry provided attractions to lure students into coming to church. The goal was not to make disciples to serve the Lord and others in and through the church but to entertain a captive audience, draw in a crowd, and make sure they enjoy themselves enough to return. Many leaders erroneously believe students will not be interested in the Bible alone. Paul Renfro writes that youth ministry today has more youth camps, conferences, Christian music, sophisticated technology, books, and trained leaders than ever before. But even with everything available to reach students, for whatever reason, a significant number of teens fail to make the transition from student ministry to Christian adulthood.¹²⁴ Little evidence shows their knowledge of the Bible being applied to serve God through the church. God's intentionality toward people must be

¹²⁴ Renfro, Shields, and Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, Kindle, loc 2.

reflected in the design of a student ministry strategy, and all ministries should be conducted with clear intentionality and not haphazardly. Intentionality is crucial in student ministry because of the brevity of the opportunity a church or a student leader has to invest in and speak into the life of a student. If a student attended a small group and worship every week of the year, then he or she would only be involved just over 100 hours per year or less than a week's worth of time in the year. The leader must prioritize developing an intentional and relevant strategy that accomplishes the mission and vision God has given the ministry leader. The leader must invest in the lives of students and help them come to grasp and put into practice that strategy. The goal of this research project was to investigate why students are leaving the church and not continuing to serve, and then present a practical plan that might reverse this trend.

First, the researcher chose the age group most affected by the trend of leaving the church, as explained in earlier chapters. The target group chosen was students from 9th–12th grades at Macland Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Georgia, who received a verbal, informal invitation to participate in the study. The verbal invitation goal was meant to spark the interest of the students and to see how many would be interested in joining a project that would teach them something new. The verbal invitation included information about the gap between high school and college and how many students their age lose their faith and/or leave the church at the time of graduation. Students were informed that they lose faith not because they do not have knowledge about God or because cunning college professors persuaded them to believe otherwise but because their faith was not there from the beginning. These students never moved from consuming faith to producing faith. They never owned their faith and worked it out. The students took an avid interest in everything that was taught to them. However, they did not apply what they learned to their daily lives. This suggested that the students did not understand the

relevance of the material, highlighting the importance of effective teaching strategies. The verbal, informal invitation was followed by a formal invitation letter mailed to the participant's home, inviting the student to participate in the study formally. This invitation included instructions for the participant and had a covenant for each student to sign before the strategy was implemented. Most of the recruiting invitations were templates provided by the Liberty University IRB. (See Appendix B) Although a covenant may not feel like a necessary part of the process, the covenant provided the skeletal framework for the student to understand the responsibilities of service and aided the student in visualizing how their work is important. The researcher wanted to help the students understand their faithful participation was not just for their own benefit but for the benefit of the entire group. The covenant was a partnership and promise to each other in working together to reach a common goal. Some guidelines for the study were in the letter for the participant's review and were explained in detail during the first scheduled meeting. The letter informed the participants about the first in-person meeting with the date and time stated. A similar letter was sent to the participant's parents/guardians informing them of the decision made by their student(s) to participate in the study. The formal letter also informed parents about the statistics involving students leaving the church and/or faith after high school graduation by explaining that students are leaving the church without the knowledge of biblical servanthood because, for many years, they have been taught to become consumers of the church and not servants. This has resulted in students leaving the church after graduation because they do not know where they belong, where to serve, or how to be a servant. The parent/guardian also learned that their student(s) would be trained in several aspects of servanthood and what this looks like in the Bible.

This letter requested the parent's involvement in keeping the student accountable for the work done at home. Parental/guardian involvement was necessary since parents/guardians play a vital role in spiritual formation and discipleship in the lives of their children. Parents/guardians, by the way they promote faith to their students, can empower or sabotage their student's spiritual growth since they play a role second only to the Holy Spirit. In Deuteronomy 6:7 Moses wrote, "Teach your children diligently" to "Love the Lord your God with all their heart, soul and strength." According to Leslie Nunnery, "Parenting God's way will ensure that God's kingdom goes forward, and blessing will be upon His people. It just takes one generation to drop the ball, though, before we start to see our children walking away because they do not know God."¹²⁵ Howard Worsley wrote, "Parents and children are both on the same road of faith. Neither parent nor child is more in command of what the Scripture means today. Both sit under the Word of God as they follow Jesus, and both are there to reflect theologically."¹²⁶ According to the Orange Strategy, parents have influence over their students' lives because of the amount of time they spend together, so what happens at home has an influence on the student's discipleship.¹²⁷ So, by default, parents have an impact that a youth worker cannot match in the discipleship of students. According to Wayne Rice, parents will love, care, know, influence, spend more time, and have more authority than any youth worker.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Leslie Nunnery, *Teach Them Diligently: Raising Children of Promise* (Green Forrest, AR: New Leaf Publishing Group, 2018), 21.

¹²⁶ Howard Worsley, *How Not to Totally Put Your Children Off God: A Conversation on Christian Parenting Between a Father and his Sons* (Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson, 2020), 23.

¹²⁷ Orange Strategy, *The Orange Strategy: Reimagine What Your Church Does for Kids and Teenagers* (Cumming, GA: The rethink Group Inc., 2016), 23.

¹²⁸ Wayne Rice, *Engaging Parents as Allies: Youth Ministry in the Trenches* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2009), 21.

In some cases, parent/guardian involvement does not occur because the parent/guardian is not involved or does not know their responsibility in the biblical discipleship of their student. Secondly, some parents/guardians are not involved or participate because they are not Christians themselves and, therefore, do not understand the role of guiding students in a discipleship journey. Finally, some of these parents/guardians are not that involved in the life of the church. The goal for this group of parents is to aid them and empower them to walk alongside their students on this discipleship journey by showing the role they play in their students' lives.

Each participant, with their formal letter of participation, received a commitment covenant that included all requirements during the study. This covenant was to be signed by the participants and their parents/guardians and brought to the first meeting. The participant's consent was gained through the signing of the mailed covenant. The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) provided all letters, consent forms, emails, and forms as templates for this study (See Appendix).

Additional resources necessary for the study's success included assessments and quizzes, an initial survey, and a final survey. A computer cellphone/tablet with internet access and an online meeting application could be used if the need arises due to external factors requiring online meetings. A printed Bible or electronic Bible, as well as a journal or paper, was used during the "28 Days of Discoveries" guide during participants' time of personal study.

In the first prescheduled meeting, the researcher collected all signed covenants. After receiving the covenants, the researcher reiterated and explained guidelines for the study to the participants. During that meeting, the students were assessed on their level of biblical knowledge via a biblical knowledge quiz (See Appendix A). The quiz was used to understand how much Bible knowledge each student had. The quiz contained multiple-choice questions covering basic

knowledge a student should have learned in Sunday school, Bible studies, and/or sermons preached in the church. Some of the questions were “Who wrote the first four books of the New Testament?”, “Who was Jesus’s cousin that proclaimed His coming?”, and “How many men did king Nebuchadnezzar see in the fiery furnace?” The students also received an assessment to gauge their understanding of biblical servanthood (See Appendix A). The biblical servanthood assessment was sixteen questions long. This assessment is in more detail and requires the students to write out their answers. Some of the questions are “What does the Bible say about servanthood?”, “What does Jesus say about service?”, and “How do you serve others?” This assessment served as a baseline for measurement of the increase in biblical servanthood knowledge that was to occur throughout the study. The assessment contained key questions used to determine the student’s perception of service within the church and their daily lives. Next, a spiritual gift assessment was administered for every participant to become aware of his/her individual, specific gifts. The gift assessment later served to place participants into a ministry and service role in the church. The key to the success of the project is helping the student understand how he/she can use their gifts for God’s service. The spiritual gifts assessment chosen for this study was the LifeWay spiritual assessment (See Appendix C). Although the LifeWay assessment was used, several other assessments could be used to assess spiritual gifts. Another useful spiritual gift assessment is in *Student Leadership Starts Here* by Doug Franklin, which is designed for students to discover their gifts and place them to work as they lead their peers. The researcher chose the LifeWay assessment because it was more encompassing and is widely available at no cost. Finally, a spiritual self-analysis investigated the participant’s spiritual disciplines. The assessed spiritual disciplines include daily quiet time, use of the Bible and devotions, prayer, and worship. The participants were guided to think about questions like,

“What is your perception of what a quiet time is or should be?” and “Based on your perception, how are you doing?”

After the initial meeting, additional training meetings were scheduled. During these meetings, the participants used the “28 Days of Discoveries” material, a self-guided devotional strategy designed to lead students through biblical devotion and help them understand biblical servanthood in a practical way. The goal is for the “28 Days of Discoveries” devotion to help students understand how they serve and where they serve are different for each person. God created each one of us to be unique. He gifted each of us differently so we might all make up the body of Christ in the local church. These principles of servanthood are foundational to the Bible and must become foundational in the life of each student. Through this material, students encountered personal challenges, were forced to deal with and seek answers to hard questions, and engaged in a guided Bible study that required time, discipline, focus, and priority.

For the 28 days of the material, students went on a journey of discovery where they learned about their identity in Christ, what biblical servanthood looks like, where they fit into God’s Kingdom, and how to keep their focus on the truths of God’s Word as they put everything together to finish the race strong. Students explored how to cultivate a deep and meaningful relationship with God and how to live a life of faithfulness and obedience to Him. They learned how to use their spiritual gifts, how to serve others, and how to share the Gospel.

The researcher planned for the study to take 28 days because, according to studies, on average, it takes two months or, to be more exact, sixty-six days before a new behavior becomes automatic. Those behaviors begin as habits, and to form a habit only takes 21 days. That means if a person commits to a goal for 21 days, it will become a habit. Working through that habit for 66 days, that habit will become a part of the person’s lifestyle. This study lasted 28 days, seven days

more than 21 days, to ensure the participants turned the goal of spiritual growth into a habit and, hopefully, a lifestyle.

In the “28 Days of Discoveries,” students learned to establish and maintain a quiet time. During this time, students learned to ask questions of the Bible and find answers so they can continue to study God’s word long after the 28-day study is completed. Participants were given the study material during the first training session. The material was self-guided with the oversight of a mentor. The material was also used in large group, weekly sessions. Following the weekly sessions, participants completed a personal discovery page on their own. Although the material was not intended to be used in this way, the information learned during the study could benefit others in that setting.

One goal of developing the “28 Days of Discoveries” was to create a personal, at-home study to aid the participants in developing an understanding of biblical servanthood and how it is exemplified in the Bible. Each at-home session builds upon the previous lesson, increasing the knowledge of biblical servanthood. This at-home study aids participants in disciplining themselves to spend personal time with God daily, a key component of any personal discipleship journey.

Once the 28 days of training ended, participants applied what they learned in a real-life ministry setting. It is of paramount importance that newfound knowledge and understanding be applied in day-to-day life. With each student’s newfound knowledge about biblical servanthood in hand, each participant served in different areas of Macland Baptist Church. Avenues for servanthood were developed coinciding with each student’s spiritual gift. For example, if a participant had the gift of “hospitality,” then that student received an orientation on how to use this gift in ministry and in the lives of others and was then placed on the church’s hospitality

team. If the participant had the gift of “teaching,” that student was placed in a class where they could teach alongside a mentor. The effectiveness of this study is evident, with participants getting placed in a service or ministry area. Each participant was placed under the supervision of a mentor within a service or ministry area. The mentor continued to train, invest in, guide, and demonstrate how to apply what the student learned in real-life ministry settings. Placing a mentor with a student demonstrates the biblical principle that older, more experienced mentors should instruct students, aiding and teaching them to replicate a desired behavior for the next generation.

To address the stated problem of this thesis, the intervention helped students learn and apply the principles of biblical servanthood. This intervention helped students develop a greater understanding of the Bible and how to serve others according to its teachings. It provided a framework for students to apply those principles in practical ways. As students serve in church ministries, they learn the value and fulfillment received from serving the Lord and others. By opening these opportunities for service, the researcher expected these students would perceive ministry as something to be done rather than to observe. Indeed, ministry is participatory rather than for personal consumption. The researcher believed that once the students saw how ministry occurs outside of the student department or their areas of focus, they would become more inclined to continue to serve after graduation because they know where they fit in and how they can serve in their church. The researcher believed students would not only gain critical knowledge of servanthood but practical experience, resulting in a sense of satisfaction, belonging, and value within their local church.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The research part of this project was not started until it was approved by the IRB. The IRB is an administrative body established to protect the welfare and rights of human research

subjects recruited to participate in a study or research activities conducted under the auspices of the institution with which it is affiliated.

The IRB has the authority to approve, disapprove, monitor, and require modifications in all research activities that fall within its jurisdiction, as specified by federal regulations and institutional policy. The IRB has the authority to suspend or terminate research if it deems the research is not conducted in accordance with its policies and regulations. The IRB is responsible for providing guidance to ensure research is conducted ethically and responsibly. The IRB reviews research protocols to ensure all potential risks to participants are properly identified and minimized. The IRB has the authority to ensure all risks to participants are reasonable and appropriate and that the informed consent process is adequate to protect the rights of participants.

With IRB approval granted on January 10th, 2022, the study project began on Wednesday, April 13th, 2022 at Macland Baptist Church. The timeline was chosen for the project because it would coincide with senior graduation in May. In the months following IRB approval, the researcher gathered and printed all documents related to the study to be distributed to the participant students and parents. Due to the age of some of the students, parental consent and child assent were necessary. Therefore, a parental consent form and a permission request were created and distributed to parents along with the information forms about the project, including an email, letter, and verbal script. Also, in the interim, the biblical knowledge assessment, Spiritual gift assessment, and biblical servanthood assessment were printed and prepared to be distributed to the participant students. The researcher also completed and prepared the “28 Days of Discoveries” booklet for the start day of the project.

Preceding the start day of the project, several verbal announcements were made with the intent of inviting the students to be a part of the study and explaining the purpose and goal of the

project. On the start date, the researcher made a detailed announcement to the body of students at Macland Baptist Church, asking students from 9th–12th grades to join the study. On Wednesday, March 16th, 2022, each student interested in the project became a participant. The researcher texted and called them to provide information on the study details. During this call, the researcher collected information such as home addresses, parents' names, phone numbers, and email addresses. Also, parents were informed of their need to participate in the upcoming initial “Servants in Training” meeting, along with the date and time for the meeting.

On March 17th, the researcher mailed a formal invitation letter packet to the participants' homes, formally inviting the students to participate. It included detailed information and instructions for participants. The packet included the covenant for the participant and the parent/guardian to sign. The packet included guidelines for the participant to review and a timeline of the upcoming meetings. The packet provided the participant and their parent/guardian a clear understanding of the study, its goals, and the expectations of the participant. The covenant provided an agreement between all parties. The guidelines provided basic information about the study, and the timeline indicated the milestones to be met. The packet was designed to ensure all parties were aware of the details of the study and were in agreement on goals and expectations.

On March 28th, the researcher called the parents/guardians to inform them about the intent and spectrum of the study. Parents/guardians were informed of the decision made by their student(s) to participate in the study. Finally, they were given an orientation about the packet of information that had been sent to their home for review. During the call, the researcher requested the parent/guardian's involvement in holding the student accountable for the self-guided work to be completed at home. This was done to ensure the student was held accountable for the self-guided work and to ensure the parents/guardians had adequate information about the study. It

also ensured the parents/guardians were aware of the student's decision to participate in the study.

On March 28th–29th, packets arrived at the participant's home via USPS, but some were delayed due to shipping issues. Despite the delays, all participants received their packets promptly. For example, the participant who received their packet on March 28th received it three days after it was shipped. Overall, the delay in shipping was minor and each participant was able to receive their packets safely and on time.

On March 30th, the researcher made a follow-up phone call to confirm the receipt of the package and answer any questions the parents/guardians or participants still had. In the call, the researcher reminded parents/guardians and students of the upcoming meeting and the necessity of their attendance. The researcher also reminded the parents/guardians and participants of the importance of their participation and that their absence could affect the results of the study. The researcher ended the call by thanking them for their time and noting looking forward to their meeting. Thus, the call successfully conveyed the researcher's message, and all participants were informed of the upcoming meeting and the importance of their attendance.

On April 7th, parents/guardians and participants received a reminder text for the upcoming "Servant in Training" meeting. The meeting was scheduled for April 13th, from 5 pm to 7 pm. Parents/guardians were asked to make sure their children were present with their signed forms, arriving at least 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. Arriving on time enabled participants to review the agenda, be prepared to participate, have a better understanding of the meeting, be ready to ask questions, and more easily participate in the discussion. The researcher reviewed the meeting agenda before the beginning of each meeting. Participants were

encouraged to ask questions to ensure all parents and guardians received clarity on any issues they may have had.

On April 13th, the first meeting, “Servants in Training,” kicked off the project. At this meeting, the researcher collected the signed covenants and reminded participants of the unique importance of being in a covenant with the project director and with one another. After collecting the covenants, the researcher reiterated the guidelines for the study. During this meeting, the participants were assessed on their level of biblical knowledge via a Biblical Knowledge Quiz. Due to time constraints, students were not able to receive an assessment to gauge their understanding of biblical servanthood. The biblical servanthood assessment was administered the following week, on April 20th. The spiritual gift assessment was placed on day one of the “28 Days of Discoveries” booklet as part of week one “discovering my identity.” The spiritual gift assessment was to be completed at home by every participant to discover their individual gifts that later would serve to place them into a role of church service. On the days following the spiritual self-analysis test, the participants were to continue on their own for 27 days of study. The study was subdivided into four weeks. The “28 Days of Discoveries” was designed to guide the student in developing spiritual disciplines in their lives, such as daily quiet time, prayer, and worship. Each week built on the previous week’s study. For example, week one guided the student to understand his or her identity in Christ and was followed by understanding biblical servanthood in week two. In week three, students discovered their place in the kingdom of God, with the last week of helping students keep the focus on serving and following through with their daily quiet time, prayer, and ministry. The last day for the “28 Days of Discoveries” was May 17th. At this point, the researcher expected students to recognize places of service where they should feel comfortable serving and practicing their spiritual gifts.

The intent of the research was for participants to follow the “28 Days of Discoveries” biblical material, which includes at-home daily devotionals/training geared toward servanthood. Following the “28 Days of Discoveries,” the intent was to enroll every participant student in a program called “Servants in Training,” designed as a hands-on ministry training event for the student.

During the “Servants in Training” continuation program, participants were encouraged to serve for four more weeks, totaling eight weeks of training. The researcher followed each participant to see if they continued to serve in the areas previously assigned. Following the progress of each student yielded data that helped evaluate the areas of success and the areas in the program that needed improvement.

The intent of the “Servants in Training” program was to continue as a class that took place weekly after the end of the “28 Days of Discoveries” material. The classes would address concerns, answer questions, and teach each student leadership skills they could apply in their area of service and everyday life.

On February 8th, the researcher began to find service areas within the church that would match the participant’s spiritual gifts and discussed the program idea/method with the potential mentors. On February 11th, an interest meeting about the “Servants in Training” class was to take place. At this time, potential mentors would be acquainted with the “28 Days of Discoveries” material and the intent of the plan to teach the students who would participate in the program. The goal was for the mentor to teach the students to serve in the areas assigned by their spiritual gift test results that way, being able to serve and use their gifts to glorify God.

On February 20th, mentor training occurred for the “Servants in Training” class. During the training, mentors were encouraged to take a spiritual test so that they would be better paired

with the gift of the participating students. The training for the mentors was simple since they were already serving in the church. The training material for the mentor was in the theological principles of intergeneration ministry found in Deuteronomy 6:4–9. This chapter reveals principles that should be applied in the “Servants in Training” class. According to Deuteronomy 6, parents and adults are expected to demonstrate what a fully devoted follower of God should look like and are responsible for teaching and guiding students in spiritual formation.

Mentors who chose to participate trained the participating students in hands-on training in assigned areas that matched the mentor’s and student’s spiritual gifts. Students and mentors served together for four weeks during the “Servants in Training” class.

On May 18th, participants started week one of “Apprentice Service Training” with their assigned mentor in the areas that matched their spiritual gift, while May 17th marked the end of the “28 Days of Discoveries” material. The 28 Days of Discoveries material was designed to help participants recognize their spiritual gifts, understand how to use them, and develop confidence in their God-given abilities. The Apprentice Service Training was the next step in the learning process, allowing participants to put what they learned into practice.

On June 8th, which marked the end of “Servants in Training,” participants completed another self-assessment to measure their new level of understanding of biblical servanthood. On that day, graduating participants received a certificate of completion and a unique “Servants in Training” completion t-shirt. The ceremony was followed by a fellowship.

A lifetime of service was supposed to be the litmus test of this program, but this project’s time constraints made it impossible. Despite the time limitations, the true measure of success for this project was its ability to provide lasting change for the participating students. A fair assessment of the desire and growing enthusiasm to serve during and after the trial period for this

intervention will be seen throughout a student's life following high school. It would take more time for the researcher to observe and evaluate whether biblical servanthood training was effective than the allotted time for this project.

The ideal outcome of the project was for the participants to display characteristics of servanthood and demonstrate a desire to serve. If the intervention is not effective, the researcher expected to see a decline in servanthood during the ninth week following the ending of the project, measurable through the participants' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. In such cases, the data gathered from the project could be used to determine whether the intervention was successful. If not, further measures could be taken to ensure the desired outcome is achieved. By monitoring the participants' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, it is possible to identify changes in their servanthood. If the intervention was not effective, the researcher expected servanthood to decrease, which can be measured by the data collected. If the intervention was found successful, further measures could be taken to ensure the desired outcome is achieved.

This data can be used to identify potential issues or shortcomings with the intervention and make changes and adjustments, as needed. This data can also inform future decisions related to servanthood. It is like having a roadmap to a destination. The data acts as a guide, showing whether one is on track or not. If not, the data allows one to make adjustments and get back on track. This information can help one make informed decisions about where to go and how best to get there. Therefore, it is essential to measure the effectiveness of the intervention to evaluate if it is achieving the desired goal.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the findings and outcomes of the implemented intervention plan. This chapter presents a summary of the results derived from the data collected during the intervention detailed in the previous chapter and the impact the intervention had on addressing the problem. The fourth chapter moves beyond presenting facts and numbers, as Tim Sensing recommends that as well as providing the reader with an explanation of why the study is relevant, it should also offer the reader a compelling narrative.¹²⁹ The researcher uses statistical representations to demonstrate the changes that resulted from the implementation of the project. The results presented in the fourth chapter, therefore, serve to illustrate how the project has been successful in achieving its objectives. Any significant changes observed are highlighted and discussed in detail. Limitations and unexpected results are discussed in this chapter. In addition, this chapter provides a story of how the project impacted the lives of its participants and provides a conclusion on the effectiveness of the intervention in addressing the problem. For this project, the sample group consisted of students from Macland Baptist Church. The data came from survey responses submitted by the participants. In addition, the results may be biased since the participants were aware they were being evaluated for the success of the project.

The project is intended to encourage high school graduates to stay involved in a local church and to serve God and others after graduation. To that end, the project seeks to provide tangible opportunities for young people to continue their spiritual growth and use their gifts to serve within the church and their community. This project developed an intervention plan for 9th–12th-grade students at Macland Baptist Church that assessed, informed, transformed, and

¹²⁹ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 19.

applied all the information learned. Students were encouraged to follow the command given in 1 Timothy 4:7 to “train yourself to be godly” while living out Ephesians 4:16 where it says, “From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” This next generation of students is the now generation. They are not just the future of the church but are the church of today. With Gen Z being the least religious generation to date and considered an unreached group by a Barna Group study in partnership with Impact 360 Institute, there is a paramount need to teach this generation, train, and empower them to serve and be the church.¹³⁰

The church and its leadership must provide them with resources and opportunities to develop their spiritual and leadership gifts. The church must help them understand the importance of the part they play in the mission of the local church. Thomas Koulopoulos argues this generation is already too inundated with information and too distracted to lead and serve effectively in the church.¹³¹ Still, others like Paul Roberts argue this generation is more interested in entertainment and immediate gratification than in developing the spiritual discipline and knowledge necessary to lead in the church.¹³² While these arguments may be true to a certain degree, the church has always relied on the example of older generations to guide the younger generations. By providing students with the resources and opportunities to develop their spiritual and leadership gifts, the church can ensure that the younger generations are equipped to take on the mantle of leadership and continue to move the church forward.

¹³⁰ Barna Group, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2017), 33.

¹³¹ Thomas Koulopoulos, and Dan Keldsen, *The Gen Z Effect: The Six Forces Shaping the Future of Business* (New York, NY: Bibliomotion Inc., 2014), 167.

¹³² Paul Roberts, *The Impulse Society: America in The Age of Instant Gratification* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 78.

According to Shane Pruitt, this next generation wants to be a part of “doing” something that matters.¹³³ Therefore, the church is presented with an opportunity to move forward with creative ways to engage Gen Z and help them discover their purposes within the mission of the church.

This project focused on one of several aspects of discipleship, which was seeking to equip students to recognize their calling and develop the spiritual disciplines necessary to live out their calling. This project provided a comprehensive approach to students who were able to gain a deeper knowledge of biblical service. This included students discovering and understanding their spiritual gifts and how to apply these gifts in their lives for the glory of God. During their training, the students were taught about several aspects of servanthood and were given the opportunity to demonstrate what servanthood looks like in the Bible. The hope was that after receiving the training, every participating student would be transformed by the truth of Scripture, would come to have a better understanding of God’s purposes for their lives and be empowered to put into practice this understanding in serving God and others.

What was discovered through evaluation was that not every student benefited from the training. Some students found the training too intense and tedious, while others excelled. Even though all students agreed with the scriptural truths being taught, not all were disposed to practice them. Still, others were transformed by the experience and found the process beneficial and life changing.

The researcher set out to assess the effectiveness of biblical servanthood as an intervention for students. Through qualitative research, the researcher discovered biblical servanthood had a significant impact on increasing biblical knowledge and the engagement of

¹³³ Shane Pruitt, *Six Common Traits of Gen Z*.

spiritual gifts among the participants. After comparing pre-test and post-test results, notable changes were observed in levels of biblical knowledge and the ability to exercise and use spiritual gifts among the participants.

Biblical servanthood served as a valuable discipleship opportunity for students. Participants reported feeling more empowered to serve their communities with renewed faith, biblical understanding, and spiritual aptitude. By providing practical theological instruction, biblical servanthood provided an avenue for students to grow spiritually while cultivating emotional maturity and social responsibility.

These findings suggest biblical servanthood is a powerful tool for Christian students to gain biblical knowledge and use spiritual gifts to serve God and others. Therefore, biblical servanthood proves an effective form of discipleship for student ministry at Macland Baptist Church. The researcher also found biblical servanthood is an invaluable discipleship tool in student ministry, as it promotes biblical knowledge in coordination with the deployment of a participant's spiritual gifts. The participants learned more about a biblical worldview, and how they can use their faith to serve God and others. The result was the development of a lasting desire to be involved in the ministries and mission of the local church even after graduation from high school. The biblical instruction of the program provided students with the opportunity to grow in their personal relationship with God and deepen their knowledge of His Word. The researcher found biblical servanthood training had a positive influence on the students, enabling them to live out the values of Christianity more effectively in their homes, schools, communities, and church.

The biblical servanthood training equipped young people to prepare for life's challenges, teaching them to apply biblical principles to their daily lives, changing their circumstances in a

rapidly moving world. Through this training, students are given the opportunity to explore their spiritual gifts and talents, gain biblical knowledge and grow in personal discipleship. All these factors help foster a deeper understanding of biblical teachings and a biblical worldview while providing a stronger foundation for the future as active members of the local church.

The results of the study showed that biblical servanthood training had a positive effect on the participants at Macland Baptist Church. The training process provided students with practical tools to live out biblical values, increased their understanding of God's will as found in Scripture, and inspired them with a greater desire to engage in the ministry and mission of the church after graduation. Through instruction on servanthood, churches can equip young people with the skills they need to lead lives based on Christian principles.

The Importance of Service in Church

Service is a critical aspect of the Christian faith and plays a major role in the growth and development of individuals in the church community. Service provides an opportunity for individuals to use their gifts and talents to serve others and to glorify God. When an avenue of service is removed from a student, the consequences can be far-reaching and have a significant negative impact on the student's faith journey.

A key component of the Christian faith is service. Serving God and others plays an important role in the development and growth of individuals in the church body. Service provides individuals with the opportunity to use their gifts and talents for the benefit of others and for the glory of God. We must acknowledge that when a student is not allowed to deploy their gifts and abilities in the local church setting, such a denial of ministry has negative consequences for the spiritual life of the student in the present and the future. For this reason,

providing opportunities for service is essential, not only for the practical and relational benefits of students but also to encourage their spiritual growth and foster a deeper relationship with God.

Christian service should be at the core of church life and the center of everything a Christian does. In the context of a church community, serving others through acts of kindness, compassion, and love can have an incredibly positive effect on individuals relationally, emotionally, and spiritually. Furthermore, ministry brings people together which creates a stronger bond in the church community.

Another benefit of engaging in ministry is the opportunity to bring glory to God as students live out the teachings of Jesus in practical and relevant ways. Ministry and serving God and others not only allows people to express their gifts and talents but also becomes a powerful reminder to those involved that they are part of something larger than themselves.

In the absence of service opportunities, members of the church, especially students, may miss valuable experiences that could enrich their spiritual journey. Therefore, church leaders and parents must encourage students to participate in service and ministry opportunities, as it promotes unity and allows for growth and learning. Additionally, service and ministry allow students in the church to express their faith and lead others by example.

Of the impact participation in service and ministry had on students at Macland Baptist, when students had an avenue of service available, they were more likely to serve others in their church community. This strengthened the bond between members of the student ministry and helped them form meaningful relationships with other church members. These meaningful relationships helped foster a sense of belonging and purpose. Furthermore, those students who actively served God and others reported feeling closer to God and having a greater sense of purpose than those who did not participate in any form of service. Ministry provides an

opportunity for students to put their faith into action and connect with God on a practical, relevant, and deep level. Ministry participation gave students a chance to make a measurable and felt difference. The experience resulted in a deeper connection with others and with the Lord. Perhaps for the first time, students built genuine, lasting relationships in the church community, further motivating them to serve and providing a sense of responsibility.

The importance of ministry cannot be underestimated when it comes to student ministry or any other type of religious organization. Providing practical avenues and opportunities for students to engage in acts of service helped create a sense of community within the dynamics of the student ministry group, as well as a stronger bond between students. A new sense of belonging deepened students' understanding of biblical teachings, strengthened their faith journey, and allowed them to live out the example set by Jesus. Therefore, service should be a part of any church or religious institution's student ministry strategy. Church leadership must ensure students have access to opportunities to serve so they can continue to grow and develop spiritually.

While conducting the study at Macland Baptist, the researcher surveyed students on how well they understood biblical service. Although the survey was carried out on a small sample size of 15 students from Macland Baptist, it reflects what is happening in other churches in the surrounding area, according to an interaction with the local student pastors in a round table meeting. The researcher designed the survey to give a comprehensive overview of the church's views on a particular topic, so the fact it was conducted on a small sample does not mean it is not representative of other churches. It can be used as a benchmark to compare with other churches, and the conclusions drawn can be applied to a broader population. Their responses showed a lack of understanding of the subject and its importance. Responses provided a piece of valuable

information about a student's knowledge and attitude toward serving God and others, which gave answers as to why students are not engaging in service and ministry opportunities in the local church.

The study highlighted the need to develop and maintain opportunities for practical service within and through the church. The hope of the project was that through the 28 Days of Discoveries curriculum, students would learn biblical principles of service and ministry. A deeper understanding of the subject would help students apply these principles and understand the benefits and blessings of serving others in a meaningful way.

The 28 Days of Discoveries curriculum focuses on the development of a student's understanding of biblical servanthood and provides practical examples for them to apply in their lives. Also, the curriculum included hands-on learning activities.

Mentorship is an imperative characteristic for the students involved in servanthood. Mentors helped the students grow and mature spiritually in an accountable setting while learning how to discover and deploy their spiritual gifts in the local church.

By implementing this paradigm of ministry and servanthood among students at Macland Baptist, participants discovered how to use their spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities as they served God and other people. The students were empowered to understand biblical service and apply this knowledge meaningfully. For the first time, many students were living out Bible principles. A culture of service was developed within Macland Baptist Church's student ministry. This culture shift encouraged students to use their spiritual gifts to bless others and make a difference in their lives. As they served, students were equipped with the tools they needed to become effective agents of change in their communities.

When the researcher asked students what the Bible says about servanthood and ministry, responses varied depending on their exposure to and interpretation of the Scriptures. Some students pointed to verses such as Matthew 20:26–28, “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This passage emphasizes the importance of humility and putting others’ needs first.

This time of discovery helped students and student leaders recognize that many students could cite Scripture without understanding the passage. Students were often unable to appreciate the author’s intent of the written Word and missed the lessons the passage had to offer. Furthermore, students were unable to draw connections between the passage and their own experiences. Without understanding the underlying meaning of the passage, they not only failed to recognize its value but also failed to gain personal insight and connection to their lives.

An overwhelming number of students understood the need to serve and minister to others, but students could not articulate how the Bible commanded them or equipped them to do so. One student believed serving meant following and listening to instructions. The student was confusing service with chores and duties to perform instead of the pleasure of serving the One who gave His life for them. We must remind students that service and ministry are not just duties to carry out but acts of love flowing from a thankful heart for all that God has done for them. We encouraged these participants to serve out of love, not obligation. This is an ongoing lesson that must be taught to students on a regular basis in a world that focuses on self-centeredness and self-realization within the context of a selfish culture.

During this process, many students emphasized humility. They wanted to bring out the selfless nature of servanthood and put the needs of others ahead of their own. They pointed to the

example set by Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples and taught that the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are those who serve others (John 13:1–17; Matthew 18:4). This attitude of humility was reflected in the actions of many students as they sought to help each other, support those in need, and serve their community. Humility is an attitude seen as a sign of true leadership and a model of what it looks like to live a life of service.

While not wrong, some students when asked the same question about servanthood, answered with a more evangelistic response stating, “biblical servanthood is to lead others to Christ by sharing the Gospel.” This answer may have been derived from one of the core principles of Macland Baptist student ministry, the mission of leading others to Christ. The mission of Macland Baptist student ministry is to equip students to reflect the character of Jesus in their lives and to share the Gospel with their peers. The evangelistic response given by the students was evidence that the ministry was succeeding in communicating its mission, as the students embody and share the values of the ministry.

A small minority of students did not know how to answer the question of what the Bible says about servanthood. This minority of students, however, were recently converted students who had not developed biblical knowledge to understand the need for service. During this study, one of these recently saved students had the opportunity to be mentored and disciplined. Mentoring allowed this student to get involved and serve. This student proved himself an excellent example of the effectiveness of discipleship. He became a testament to the effectiveness of the curriculum because of the transformation observed in his life. This student became a leader in the ministry and encouraged other students to be engaged. He was a prime example of the power of discipleship through biblical servanthood and mentorship. His story is an encouragement to everyone to get involved in ministry and make a difference.

However, not every student felt ministry participation is significant or meaningful. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that they did not have a clear understanding of biblical servanthood. Some students believed they should be focused on their own needs and goals first. Others believed service is something that should be done out of a sense of duty or obligation, rather than as a voluntary act of kindness to others and love for the Lord. Still, others may have felt they did not have the skills or knowledge to be of service to others. Therefore, it was important to create an environment that encouraged students to engage in service-related activities. This included providing resources, support, and incentives to students who participated in service activities. Additionally, providing service-learning opportunities helped students gain the knowledge and skills they needed to serve others.

The Bible teaches that servanthood is a vital aspect of the Christian life, emphasizing humility, selflessness, and putting others first. Whether through serving the needy, volunteering in the church, or showing kindness to those around us, Christians are called to follow Jesus' example of serving others with love and compassion.

The participating students from Macland Baptist were asked to reflect on what they would consider key characteristics of a successful servant. In other words, they were asked to describe the characteristics of a Christian who possessed a willingness to serve in the church and the need to use their gifts to carry out such tasks. The question was designed to identify the qualities the participants viewed as necessary for a successful servant of God in the church. The responses showed the students viewed the qualities of humility, obedience, and selflessness as essential for being a successful servant in the church. They also expressed the importance of having a good attitude and being willing to put others first. As part of this reflection, the students considered various qualities such as truthfulness, loyalty, honesty, selflessness, honor, kindness,

generosity, outgoingness, boldness, and understanding. The students concluded that a true servant of the church needs to embody these qualities to have a positive impact on the community and be successful in their role.

Some students noted the ability to be outgoing was a positive quality. Being outgoing or an extrovert was identified by students as an essential characteristic because it allowed the person to easily connect with people in the church and communicate tasks more clearly. It was also considered a way to create a sense of trust between the servant and the people being served. This quality was seen as an asset to have to build meaningful relationships with others. Students thought being extroverts would allow them to showcase their unique skills and abilities. This was a surprising conclusion in that putting oneself “out there” is a challenge for students. To be more outgoing requires students to step out of their comfort zones and be more open to interacting with others. As a result, those students who believed they did not possess this characteristic proved to be unable to serve in a meaningful way.

The students who thought they were not outgoing were hindered by their feelings of inadequacy during the mentorship process as well. They did not have the same influence on their peers as those who possessed this characteristic. As a result of this feeling of inferiority, the students did not take advantage of opportunities to serve and lead. Additionally, they did not develop the skills they could have developed. Regardless, this process showed how the students who thought they were not outgoing still made an impact during the mentorship part of the program. They may not have been as vocal or as assertive as the other students, but nevertheless, they contributed in their own way. As a result, they developed valuable skills and gained insights from the mentorship experience.

The researcher noted the importance of assessing each person's willingness to serve, capability for service, and their perception of oneself and place in the body of Christ. Through these assessments, it is possible to determine the best-suited individual for a particular task or ministry. Such knowledge can help to ensure that the body of Christ is working together in unity and that each person is used to the fullest capacity of their potential and abilities.

The Removal of Service Opportunities and its Impact on Students

Service is an integral part of the Christian faith, providing individuals with meaningful opportunities to use their gifts and talents for others and for the glory of God. When service opportunities are taken away from students, it can have serious repercussions on their spiritual journey.

The willingness to serve is a crucial part of being a Christian, as it requires one to put others before themselves. Without this willingness, the individual may struggle to continue growing and deepening their faith, no longer being able to contribute or experience the joy of self-sacrifice through serving. This lack of willingness could lead to feelings of guilt or inadequacy due to an inability to fulfill one's calling. Serving others is an act of love and faith, showing a person is willing to go beyond their needs to meet the needs of others. This willingness demonstrates a devoted commitment to faith and a readiness to make sacrifices for the well-being of others.

Individuals may also feel limited in their capabilities when service opportunities are removed or are absent. Without these experiences, they lack the skills to serve and make an impact on those around them. Such a development can lead to feelings of powerlessness or frustration because they no longer have a way to express their faith and be an active part of God's work in the world. For this reason, Christians must recognize the importance of having

access to service opportunities and ministry, as they hold immense value for an individual's discipleship journey and spiritual health. Therefore, believers should strive to provide many different avenues for others to serve and do ministry so all may experience God's rewards and blessings at every stage of life.

All participants in the study expressed an initial desire to serve and stated in response to a question that they considered themselves God's servants. Eight of ten students stated that they did not know where to volunteer in or out of the church. The remaining two students had a clear idea of how they wanted to contribute and were actively engaged in assisting in a ministry at Macland Baptist. The study concluded that having a clear idea of how to serve and a way to understand where to start in participating in one of several ministries at the church was beneficial to the student's sense of purpose and motivation.

The removal of an opportunity to serve can have a significant impact on a student's faith journey. It can result in a loss of interest and desire to serve, a departure from ministry and the church, disappointment with leadership, and filling the void with other activities. Leaders must recognize the importance of service and provide opportunities for students to participate in a meaningful and fulfilling way. Proper training and support are critical to ensure that students feel valued and appreciated in their role and continue to grow in their faith. It is through the provision of opportunities for students to serve that leaders can enhance their effectiveness.

The Importance of Proper Training and Support

For students serving in ministry roles to be successful, they need proper training and support. This helps to ensure they feel valued and appreciated in their role and can grow in their faith. Equipping them with the knowledge and resources necessary to excel in their positions helps create an environment where students can thrive. This can help foster a vibrant and healthy

ministry culture. The study showed when students are properly trained and supported, they will be able to use their knowledge and skills to thrive in the ministry. This provides them with a sense of purpose and value, enabling them to confidently serve in their role. As students grow in their faith, they will also be able to share their knowledge and experiences with other students, helping to create an atmosphere of growth and community. This will result in a stronger, more connected ministry culture.

There is a word of caution. When some students feel pressured to serve in a certain way or to live up to the expectations of others, the pressure can lead to burnout and a sense of disillusionment with the church. A leader must understand the critical nature of striking a balance between providing guidance and allowing students the freedom to explore their interests and talents. According to Steven Zauderer, 45 percent of high school students report being stressed almost every day.¹³⁴

During the study, the researcher discovered that when an opportunity of service is removed from the student, he or she will lose interest and desire to serve. Therefore, it was important to give students the resources and guidance they needed to succeed in their roles. By removing the avenue of service, the student lost focus and stopped serving in the ministry. In some cases, the student became likely of leaving the church altogether.

Investing in students is essential to ensure the future of the church. Leaders should work to develop students into responsible and capable members of the church and equip them with the necessary skills to serve and be successful in their endeavors. Leaders should create an

¹³⁴ Steven Zauderer, *47 Student Stress Statistics*, accessed March 10, 2023, <https://www.crossrivertherapy.com/student-stress-statistics>.

environment that encourages students to serve and make a difference in their community. This helps foster a sense of purpose and fulfillment in their faith journey.

When the student is no longer able to volunteer, they feel disappointed with church leadership. Disappointment or disillusionment causes a student to lose interest in the church and the practice of organized faith. This disappointment can be a difficult obstacle to overcome and can create a lasting impact on the student's faith journey. Often, the student will eventually fill the void left behind by not having a place to serve in and through the church with other activities which will then consume their time. The student will then express the excuse, "I am too busy." The excuse of being busy is the most common side effect of a student who has had an opportunity to serve but lost the opportunity, had the opportunity removed, got hurt, pushed out, or did not feel appreciated. For instance, a student who has been serving in the children's ministry for 5 years may feel discouraged and replace that service with joining a club or taking on extra classes, which will then consume the time that was once dedicated to serving in the church.

During the research, there were a few cases among students where their parents were responsible for the lack of involvement of their students. The parents' lack of desire to encourage their children created a feeling of disconnection between the student and the church body, which led to a notable decrease in motivation and participation in ministry. For example, one of the students was prohibited by a parent from participating in activities in which he had previously volunteered. This parent did not understand the imperative of fostering the relationship between students and the church to keep them involved and engaged.

There is a risk that students may lose their interest and desire to serve if they are not provided with the opportunity to serve and the opportunity to serve is not provided to them. A

strong correlation exists between a student who has a strong sense of purpose and a passion for serving others being more likely to become engaged with their faith and to become invested in it. As a result, the student is passionate about serving others. However, if they are removed from their avenue of service, they may feel a sense of disappointment or frustration, leading to a lack of motivation to continue serving. This can result in a decrease in their level of involvement in the church and its fellowship. When a student loses their sense of belonging in the church, they may also lose their sense of belonging in life. The result can be feelings of isolation and a lack of engagement with the church and its members, as well as others.

On the other hand, being a part of a church community has many benefits. Churches can provide a sense of community and belonging for its members. Churches can also offer support and guidance during difficult times. In addition, churches can be a source of social and recreational activities for its members.

The Role of Leadership

In this study, disappointment with leadership was the result of having an opportunity to serve removed. One student felt his contributions were not valued or appreciated. These feelings left the student with a sense he was no longer welcome and unwanted at the church since he could no longer serve in his role. This led to loss of trust in leadership and disillusionment with the church. The lesson learned in this incident at Macland Baptist Church is that some students may feel unappreciated or unfacilitated in their role if their time and efforts are not appreciated.

In another case, a layperson at the church berated a student as immature and unreliable to serve. Instead of mentoring the student, teaching the student, and holding him or her accountable, the lay volunteer took the easy way out and removed the student. This volunteer believed in the old saying that “the youth are the future of the church” and not the church of now. This approach

was not only misguided but was also detrimental to the growth and development of the student and the church. This approach sends a message to the student that he or she is not valued or respected and that his or her contributions are not valued. This type of failure and loss of opportunity to lead the student to maturity diminished the ability of the church to point the student toward God. Additionally, the failure of this volunteer to be kind and patient and understand the role of a mentor caused a divide between the student and the church. Consequently, the student left the church because of this incident. Student ministry leaders had to strive to restore trust between the student and the church to keep the student engaged and connected.

Finally, without access to service opportunities, students can become isolated from other mature believers that may empower a consumeristic view in the church. This loss of opportunity to serve can cause loneliness and or stagnation in a student's personal faith journey as they no longer have fellowship with like-minded people who encourage growth in knowledge and understanding of God's Word.

Empowerment From Home

Parents play an integral role in fostering a willingness to serve in the church among their children. As a result of empowered homes, students can receive guidance from their parents in personal spiritual growth and development. Parental guidance, direction, and encouragement can help students succeed in a spiritual context. Parents who support their students' willingness to serve in the church provide them with tools that will prove useful throughout their lives. Parents must create home environments that facilitate learning and spiritual development, as these are essential components of Christian living. The value of serving should not be underestimated; it

can provide individuals with confidence and strength while helping them develop a deeper connection with God.

Biblical servanthood lessons are learned as to how serving others leads to personal growth and spiritual maturity. In an empowered home, students are provided with a wide range of opportunities to put these principles into practice. By receiving guidance from their parents, students can gain an understanding of how to make the right decisions, face the uncertainties of life, and develop a desire to serve God and others. As they learn the importance of prioritizing others, students can learn how to think outside of their own needs and develop a sense of selflessness to help them contribute to their community and make a positive impact.

According to the findings in this study, empowered homes foster students' readiness to continue to serve after they graduate, which has a significant impact on their future. Parental engagement in meaningful conversations about spiritual topics benefits children well beyond their school years. The findings of the study indicate that the two families in the student ministry genuinely empowered their students and provided them the tools to encourage their Christian values of servanthood. As the study progressed, these students grew exponentially more than other students who did not have supportive homes. Unfortunately, not all students have supportive homes. In fact, many students at Macland Baptist come from homes with little valuable parental involvement. The takeaway from this study proved how empowered homes facilitated students to grow spiritually and continue serving after graduation, thereby enabling them to make a meaningful impact in the church and in the lives of others. This research provided evidence of the importance of parents cultivating a willingness to serve alongside their children. Home-based mentoring and modeling and accountability provided students with the

opportunity to receive guidance from their parents in important spiritual matters, enabling them to lay the foundation for ministry effectiveness for the future.

According to the study, empowered homes were essential to fostering a willingness in students to serve in the church. Parents who engaged their students in meaningful conversations about spiritual topics helped foster an environment conducive to servanthood and continued ministry participation after graduation. Homes that empower their students to serve played a critical role in providing students with the tools they need for personal growth and development.

Empowerment From Church

Biblical servanthood is powerful and transformative. Servanthood can shape young people into impactful members of their churches now and into the future. The researcher noted when students experienced additional empowerment from church leadership, they were much more likely to participate and become more effective as a follower of Jesus. Not only did this become valuable in the lives of individual students, but it also meant the church had an opportunity to influence those who eventually become mentors and pastors themselves. With the right strategy in place, home and church can work together to ensure that high school graduates continue their service-oriented path as they move forward in life. To do this, churches should provide biblical-based empowerment for ministry, mentor students regularly, and involve church members in the lives of young people. Doing so has the potential to create a powerful legacy that will shape future generations.

Biblical servanthood is essential for nurturing young people into active supporters, not only of their church's ministries but also in the life of their communities. When combined with the right kind of support from church leadership, such as biblical-based empowerment for ministry, mentorship, and regular involvement from church members, students stand a greater

chance of continuing their service after graduating high school. By leveraging the influence of home and church, this strategy can lead to lasting change throughout society, providing an invaluable legacy for future generations. Through the biblical principle of servanthood and effective ministry support, churches can equip youth to become powerful agents of transformation in their communities.

These strategies provide an opportunity for the church to invest in the success of today's students. Such an investment will help ensure churches have the foundation and sustained support needed to continue effective ministry long after the graduation of her students from high school. The long-term impact this kind of investment will have on future generations and society cannot be predicted by the scope of this project. However, the short-term empowerment of students with a biblical servanthood model was the priority of this study so a baseline could be created to allow a foundation for meaningful steps to influence tomorrow's leaders, pastors, and mentors. Because of this foundation, Macland Baptist could ensure her ministry continues, volunteers are plentiful, and ministry is effective. The study showed it is possible to bring about lasting change and create an environment of meaningful ministry and service when conducted correctly.

In the study, participants were empowered and encouraged to serve with humility and integrity while recognizing the worth of each person they encountered as they served. In addition, the church provided students with opportunities to learn and apply practical leadership skills, such as communication and problem solving. These skills helped the participating students develop personally and spiritually. Finally, the church provided students with access to biblical guidance and advice from trustworthy mentors. With these tools in place, Macland Baptist can ensure their students continue to flourish for years to come.

Because of the environment for ministry and servanthood laid through this project, nine out of ten participating students said the investment made in their lives would help them succeed in and lead in today's church and ensure they leave a lasting impact on future generations. This investment enabled Macland Baptist to make a tangible difference in the lives of students while ensuring the future of their ministry. The results of this program were extremely positive, and at the conclusion of the project, the church looked forward to the further growth and success of the students in their ministry.

The findings of this research are clear: When home and church work together, young people stand a greater chance of staying connected and serving after graduating high school. The majority of students, seven of ten, indicated they wished to continue serving in the local church having had this experience of ministry. Students said a result of this project was their resulting knowledge of biblical principles, leadership skills, communication strategies, and problem-solving abilities gave them more confidence to meaningfully interact with adults at church. Also, students perceived they developed a stronger foundation in ministry and serving after participating in the study, indicating they can continue to build on this newfound knowledge.

By using this discipleship strategy, five of ten Macland Baptist students reported they could make an invaluable contribution to their church and community. This is why biblical servanthood and empowering students to do ministry should be a priority for all churches. With the right discipleship strategy in place, Macland Baptist can equip tomorrow's leaders with the necessary skills and solid foundations to serve others effectively.

Through mentorship programs, participating students learned the importance of service and developed a heart for helping others. Several students mentioned that learning the role of a servant was a major takeaway from the program. They saw firsthand the impact service can have

on people and the church. This newfound appreciation for service will stay with them for a lifetime.

Four participants said their level of devotion to God increased during their participation, inspiring them to become more active in other ministry areas in the church. They committed to volunteering and leading in some of these other areas of ministry after the study ended. This was a drastic change from before the study when the students only attended service when possible. The study opened the students' hearts and minds to a new level of faith and devotion. They were inspired to serve God and their church in any way they could. Eight of ten students shared their experiences with others to spread the importance of serving. One post-study discovery was that by directly and intentionally cultivating these new servanthood values in students at Macland Baptist, these students had a lasting impact for the Kingdom of God. Now, the church plans to incorporate more service-oriented activities into its curriculum based on biblical servanthood teachings for younger students.

To summarize, biblical servanthood can help churches equip high school students with the skills they need to succeed in life and grow spiritually. As a result of biblical teachings and skill-building opportunities, students are empowered to think beyond themselves while developing essential life skills. Church leadership and ministries must partner with parents to help high school graduates move forward on a path that includes biblical service as they progress through life.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This project addressed a crucial issue facing the church today: high school students leaving the church after graduation. The researcher provided a well-structured intervention plan for high school graduates, encouraging them to stay involved in a local church and continue their spiritual growth and service to God and others. The study gleaned insight into the importance of understanding students' individual needs and interests for them to develop spiritual maturity. The researcher found students thrive in an environment where proper guidance is provided, enabling each student to find their unique identity in Christ. Finally, by emphasizing the importance of biblical servanthood and providing tangible opportunities for young people to serve, this project set the foundation for continued spiritual growth and engagement in the church and community.

The intervention plan developed for this project followed a four-step process of assessment, information, transformation, and application, with a focus on biblical servanthood and the importance of ministry within the entire body of Christ. To ensure the intervention plan was well-rounded and effective, it also incorporated principles of self-care and spiritual renewal, as these are essential components of Christian ministry. The intervention plan developed for this project incorporated these key elements into the 28 Day of Discovery curriculum and provided tangible opportunities for students to serve in the church. The 28 Days of Discovery curriculum used in this study was developed as a comprehensive program designed to enhance students' biblical understanding, discipleship, and readiness for leadership roles. The study consisted of four main components: biblical knowledge and understanding, spiritual formation, leadership development, and service learning. Through this curriculum, students gained a deeper understanding of the scripture and applied what they learned in the curriculum to their lives.

Research Implications

The theoretical implications of this project provide a nuanced understanding of the constructs of biblical servanthood within the broader scope of modern church discipleship. First, the research bolsters the theory that fostering individuality in faith is crucial for sustained church engagement. This theory supports existing models of religious identity development, emphasizing the importance of personal connection and relevance in spiritual growth. Second, the project challenges and extends the traditional conception of biblical servanthood. By integrating servanthood into the discipleship process for youth, the study suggests a dynamic, active model of servanthood that encourages continued church participation. This further contributes to the discourse on the role of active service and community engagement in faith retention among young adults. The findings signify that biblical servanthood and discipleship are not isolated constructs but interlinked in a holistic process of faith development. Therefore, this research drives theoretical progression in understanding how contemporary church practices can be adapted to meet the needs of the youth and reduce attrition rates.

The fruit of biblical servanthood forms a robust foundation for church health, church development, and effective discipleship. This research further establishes biblical servanthood as a catalyst for fostering an environment conducive to spiritual growth and resilience. As presented in the study, the emphasis on servanthood fosters a vibrant church community, largely due to the engagement and active participation of its members. Biblical servanthood serves as the cornerstone of a thriving church community, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose among members. The active involvement in service propels individual spiritual development, reinforcing discipleship.

This study underscores the role biblical servanthood plays in church development. By promoting a culture of active service and discipleship, churches can retain younger members and attract new ones, leading to growth and sustainability. Hence, these findings present biblical servanthood as an instrumental strategy for church development, creating a cycle of growth and discipleship that perpetuates church health. The study emphasizes the interconnectedness of biblical servanthood, discipleship, and church health, suggesting the true fruit of servanthood lies in fostering a thriving, resilient, and growing church community.

A true biblical servant, embodying the principles and teachings of Jesus, personifies the impact of effective discipleship in furthering the Great Commission. The essence of servanthood lies in selflessly serving others and striving for the growth of the church, mirroring the discipleship model demonstrated by Christ himself. The servant-leader invests in nurturing and developing others, contributing to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The research implications of this understanding underscore the effectiveness of integrating the principle of biblical servanthood into the process of discipleship. It outlines a model that propels the mission of the church: to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all commands as mandated by Jesus Christ. Effective discipleship, powered by the spirit of servanthood is the driving force in achieving the goals of the Great Commission.

A significant component of this devoted discipleship is servanthood. Servanthood embodies the act of serving Jesus or serving in companionship with Jesus, which is more than just being servants of Christ (1 Cor. 4:1) but also being servants alongside Christ. This manifestation of servanthood calls for a depth of discipleship that exceeds a shallow, superficial, and easily consumable faith. It demands a greater level of surrender, an unwavering commitment to serve Christ and His church, and an unyielding willingness to place the needs of others before

oneself. Just as Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve, so must disciples embody the same spirit of humility and sacrifice. True servanthood is not merely about service; it requires discipleship deeply rooted in the teachings and example of Jesus, reflecting a profound and transformative faith.

As Greg Ogden noted, the model of one-to-one discipleship coupled with mentorship is highly effective. This tailored approach nurtures a deep, meaningful relationship with God, fostering personal growth and spiritual maturity. Mentorship in this context provides disciples with guidance, support, and accountability, which are pivotal in their spiritual journey. By emulating Christ's teachings and actions, mentors serve as a tangible example of biblical servanthood for their disciples. This replicates a Christ-like model of discipleship, where the mentor imparts wisdom and provides spiritual counsel, leading their disciples towards a path of servitude and surrender to God's will. This emphasizes the interconnectedness of biblical servanthood, discipleship, and mentorship. The implications of this can be far-reaching, providing a compelling model for churches to adopt to foster a vibrant, serving, and growing community of believers.¹³⁵

Tan's insights illuminate the depth and commitment required in servanthood. It is not merely a superficial affirmation of faith, but a complete immersion in the teachings of Christ, manifest in every thought, word, and action. This is achieved through abiding in Christ (John 15:5), an intimate, enduring relationship that fosters spiritual growth and transformation. It encourages disciples to adopt the attributes of Jesus—humility, love, and compassion—and apply them in the service of others. As specified by Tan, true servanthood stems from the

¹³⁵ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 9.

understanding that as servants of Christ we are also servants of people (2 Cor. 4:5). In this dual service to Christ and humanity, the true essence of discipleship and biblical servanthood is fulfilled. This concept enriches the discourse on biblical servanthood and discipleship and underscores the importance of these tenets in cultivating a thriving church community.¹³⁶ This perspective on servanthood as described by Ogden draws attention to the demanding nature of true servanthood, which often runs contrary to human nature. It involves a sense of self-sacrifice, a “personal crucifixion,” where one’s needs and desires are subjugated to the welfare and growth of others. In Ogden’s words, “In a biblical sense, anything worthy of the name of servanthood will require some sacrifice on the part of the server. It means doing the thankless job. In other words, servants are not self-absorbed but others-absorbed.”¹³⁷ This demonstrates an essential dimension of discipleship and biblical servanthood—the readiness to undertake “thankless jobs” that may not garner recognition yet contribute to the collective progress of the church community. This paradigm shifts from a self-centered to an others-centered approach, reflecting the transformative journey of the disciple and embracing a spirit of sacrifice and service akin to Christ. This profound understanding of servanthood offers a significant contribution to the discourse on discipleship, highlighting the necessity of personal sacrifice in the journey of a servant and disciple of Christ.¹³⁸

Bill Hull encapsulates the perceived shortcomings of many modern churches, writing, “The crisis at the heart of the church is a crisis of product.”¹³⁹ The product Hull refers to is not a

¹³⁶ Tan, *Full Service*, 16.

¹³⁷ Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 141

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 14.

physical commodity but the spiritually mature disciples that the church is mandated to produce. The crisis lies in the fact that many churches are failing to develop mature disciples who embody biblical servanthood, as exemplified by Christ. Instead, churches have a tendency to foster a culture of nominal, superficial Christianity, lacking the depth and dedication inherent in true discipleship. The implications of this crisis are far-reaching, affecting not only the individuals but also the collective health and growth of the church community. This underscores the urgent need for churches to reevaluate and revamp their discipleship processes, ensuring they are rooted in the teachings of Christ and aim toward nurturing true servants of God. In doing so, churches can address this crisis and work toward fulfilling their divine mandate, the production of fully devoted disciples steadfast in their service to God and humanity.

The findings provide evidence it is feasible to cultivate purposeful ministry leadership among students and adults, given intentional mentorship and adequate resources. The intervention could pave the way to fruitful spiritual growth, active service, and effective leadership for students. The study showed that by captivating the attention and hearts of the next generation with a dual opportunity, not only to foster a new generation of servant-leaders grounded in biblical principles but also to ensure the timeless truth of the Gospel continues to be relevant, engaging, and transformative for the younger generation. This is a critical step to ensure the ongoing vitality of the church and its role in society, fostering a future where biblical servanthood and discipleship remain at the heart of Christian faith and practice.

By exploring biblical servanthood, discipleship, and mentorship from various perspectives, this study highlighted the importance of these concepts in fostering a thriving church community. Not only do they serve as powerful catalysts for spiritual transformation among individuals, they also provide an essential foundation for purposeful leadership within

churches. The findings are not limited to the scholarly realm; by understanding and applying these principles, the church can address the crisis in discipleship and reclaim its divine mandate to produce mature, devoted servants of God. As such, this study adds to the existing body of research on biblical servanthood and discipleship, offering a resource for church leaders and lay believers alike.

This project yielded a significant exploration into the ways Macland Baptist can nurture and support students in their spiritual journey, primarily by introducing them to the principles of biblical servanthood. As students transition into young adulthood, it is paramount they maintain a strong faith. Faith in God serves as the bedrock upon which they can grow into responsible Christian leaders, capable of serving and leading within the church and broader community post-high school graduation. This study underscores the necessity for churches to invest in the spiritual development of their young members, thereby ensuring they mature into spiritually grounded adults, equipped to fulfill roles of leadership and servanthood in their communities.

The transformative power of discipleship is not limited to the disciple alone; it ripples outward, touching and altering the lives of those around them. As individuals surrender their lives to follow Jesus, the true purpose of their existence is restored, aligning with the divine mandate to serve God and humanity. Discipleship, deeply ingrained in scripture, is not an optional endeavor for Christians but is an essential pursuit, a call to embody Christ-likeness, to diminish the self and amplify the divine. A profound grasp of biblical servanthood empowers students to evolve into fervent followers of Christ, using their unique talents and gifts in service to the King. This act of service, more than a mere act of duty, becomes a celebration of their faith and a testament to the transformative power of God's love. The journey transcends the

individual, bringing honor and glory to God while inspiring a chain reaction of faith, service, and transformation in others.

The researcher learned valuable lessons from implementing this project. First, providing opportunities for students to serve in the church and community is an effective way to engage them. These opportunities for ministry will encourage them to remain involved in the church. The researcher found that when students are more actively engaged in the church, they are more likely to develop a positive relationship with God, as well as with their peers. Additionally, students found a place where they belonged and wanted to serve. They get ownership of the ministry, which allows them to take ownership as they produce and keep students connected to the church even after they graduate and move on. Ownership can help them develop a sense of purpose and identity. It can help them become more spiritually mature and have a strong faith in God. Spiritual investment in ministry creates a sense of belonging, builds self-confidence, and nurtures a sense of purpose. Mentorship and leadership development programs are essential for equipping young people with the skills and knowledge they need to serve effectively. Ongoing support and commitment from the church leadership and parents are critical for the continued spiritual growth and engagement of young people in the church and community.

The study highlights the importance of servanthood in students' spiritual formation. This leads to healthier social and emotional development and a stronger sense of faith and connection with God. Servanthood involves humility, obedience, and self-sacrifice. The results of this investigation project are consistent with previous studies and the literature reviewed in this study. The data collected and analyzed in this study demonstrated that students who engage in servanthood are more likely to have positive spiritual formation. The results were reflected in how these students perceive themselves and their relationships with others and interact with their

peers and mentors. Servanthood encourages an attitude of humility, obedience, and self-sacrifice, essential components of spiritual growth. During the implementation of the project, the researcher observed how vital proper performance structures and outcomes are for a successful ministry.

The intervention plan developed for this project followed a four-step process of assessment, information, transformation, and application, with a focus on biblical servanthood and the importance of ministry within the entire body of Christ. To ensure the intervention plan was well-rounded and effective, it incorporated self-care and spiritual renewal principles, as these are essential components of Christian ministry. The intervention plan developed for this project incorporated these key elements into the 28 Day of Discovery curriculum and provided tangible opportunities for students to serve in the church. The 28 Days of Discovery curriculum was developed as a comprehensive program designed to enhance students' biblical understanding, discipleship, and readiness for leadership roles. Four main components were used in the study: biblical knowledge and understanding, spiritual formation, leadership development, and service learning. Through this curriculum, students gained a deeper understanding of the sacred scripture and applied what they learned in the curriculum to their daily lives. With carefully crafted materials and a rigorous curriculum, students engaged in discussions that challenged their thinking and broadened their perspectives. Through this curriculum, students were equipped with the tools to develop their servant leadership abilities and serve their church and student ministry with distinction. This curriculum fostered the development of strong interpersonal skills, a Christ-like attitude, and a commitment to lifelong learning. The curriculum emphasized the importance of applying scriptural principles to life situations, allowing students to live out their faith in a practical manner.

Research Applications

The surveys in the study revealed that engaging in service activities can significantly impact a student's discipleship journey. Not only did it increase their knowledge of the Bible, but it also helped them feel closer to God. Through serving others, students had the opportunity to put their faith into action and become better examples of Christian living. This practical application of their faith had a lasting impact on their spiritual growth and development. From the data collected, service opportunities play a crucial role in students' discipleship journey.

Biblical servanthood and the act of service are fundamental to the Christian faith. Discipleship, or the practice of following Jesus, involves a life of selflessness and a willingness to serve others. Service opportunities provide the perfect platform for believers to implement this faith. By volunteering and serving others, individuals can strengthen their relationship with God and find purpose in their lives. Moreover, serving others can lead to personal growth, spiritual development, and a deepening sense of community. Service opportunities are not only integral to the Christian faith but can have a positive impact on the lives of participants.

Understanding why students leave the local church post-graduation and developing a strategy to retain them was paramount for this study, which uncovered a lack of connection between the church and the students, so a plan was developed to strengthen their connection. With Gen Z being the least religious generation to date, it was imperative that the Church teach, train, and empower students to serve and "be the church." The project provided a well-structured intervention plan for high school graduates, encouraging them to remain engaged in a local church and continue their spiritual growth and service to God and others. Encouraging high school graduates to stay involved in a local church and serve God and others after graduation was crucial to empowering the next generation to serve in the church and the community. High

school graduates received guidance and support encouraging them to stay connected with the church and become involved in church activities. This became an effective way to assist students in developing their faith and creating a meaningful sense of community. Furthermore, the project helped students use their gifts and talents in active ministry settings.

The project aimed to encourage high school graduates to remain active in their local church and serve God and others post-graduation. Remaining active was achieved by providing tangible opportunities for students to continue spiritual growth and utilize gifts to serve within the church and community. Success was achieved and shown by an increased participation of high school graduates in church activities. Those results were beneficial for the students and the church, as they created a stronger sense of community and fellowship. Additionally, positive results were evident in the overall increase in attendance at church events and the heightened enthusiasm of the students to use their gifts in ministry. According to the study, a properly implemented intervention plan needs to be deployed with purpose and direction to be most effective. Although the study only observed and included students from 9th through 12th grades, the researcher observed the implementation of this project could yield significant success if biblical servanthood were introduced to students starting in 8th grade.

The study highlights the importance of servanthood in students' spiritual formation. This leads to healthier social and emotional development and a stronger sense of faith and connection with God. Servanthood involves humility, obedience, and self-sacrifice. The results from this investigation project compare favorably with previous studies and the published work analyzed in the literature review. The collected and analyzed data demonstrates that students who engage in practical service are more likely to have positive spiritual formation. The results were reflected in how these students perceive themselves and their relationships with others and

interact with their peers and mentors. Furthermore, ministry service encourages an attitude of humility, obedience, and self-sacrifice, essential components of spiritual growth. During the implementation of the project, the researcher learned how vital proper performance structure and outcomes are for a successful ministry.

In-depth research and analysis have shown that equipping students with skills such as servant leadership, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving has positively impacted their spiritual growth and overall development. By incorporating biblical servanthood and discipleship into their lives, students gain not only spiritual insights but also invaluable life skills. Servant leadership fosters humility, a desire to serve others, and a commitment to personal growth—essential qualities of a well-rounded individual. Similarly, teamwork and communication skills, honed through the journey of discipleship, promote interpersonal relationships and foster community. Problem-solving, an often overlooked aspect of discipleship, is integral in helping students navigate challenges and obstacles in their spiritual and everyday lives. These skills, combined together, provide a holistic approach to personal development, preparing students for a life of service to God and their community. This illustrates the far-reaching implications of this research, with potential applications not restricted to Macland Baptist Church but extendable to other churches, para-church organizations, and Christian educational institutions aiming to foster servant leaders rooted in biblical principles.

The impact of this project on Macland Baptist Church and its student ministry has been profound and multifaceted. It unearthed vital insights and lessons that can shape the church's approach to student engagement and discipleship moving forward. First, the project confirmed that providing students with opportunities to serve within the church and the broader community is a highly effective engagement tactic. By participating in ministry, students not only contribute

to the church community but also build a stronger faith. The researcher discovered active engagement in the church correlates positively with stronger relationships with God and peers among the participants.

This finding emphasizes the importance of keeping students involved in the church, encouraging a sense of ownership and belonging. It demonstrates the positive effects of engaging students in meaningful service opportunities, fostering their growth in biblical servanthood and discipleship. The experience gained from implementing this project could be a valuable guide for the church and other religious institutions in strengthening their student ministries, fostering the growth of devoted disciples and servant-leaders.

Bill Hull's emphasis underscores the dynamic nature of discipleship and biblical servanthood. He states, "We have chosen the life; we are willing to become servants, to take off the limits of sacrifice. In this frame of mind, we recognize the impulses of God, and we begin to act, to obey the desires He plants in us."¹⁴⁰ This is not a static experience but a dynamic and daily one. Hull's statement profoundly resonates with the concepts this research has explored: the conscious decision to live as servants, the recognition and obedience to God's desires, and the daily practice of discipleship as a dynamic process. This is the very essence of the research applications that have been discussed in this document. This persistent action is characteristic of those who have deeply grasped the essence of biblical servanthood. Therefore, it is critical for the church to incorporate this principle in their discipleship programs, nurturing the members to adopt this ongoing commitment to servitude and obedience to God's will.

As Greg Ogden points out, Jesus used an empowerment model of servant leadership and training. This model starkly contrasts with the modern tendencies of pastors and ministry leaders

¹⁴⁰ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor*, 148.

who often inadvertently foster dependency among their followers through their teaching and care. Jesus, in his divine wisdom, prioritized fostering self-initiating, reproducing, fully devoted followers. Such followers are not merely passive receivers of religious teachings; rather, they are proactive in their spiritual journey, applying the principles of biblical servanthood and discipleship to their lives and influencing others to do the same. This approach underscores the importance of empowering individuals in their spiritual growth, equipping them with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to be independent practitioners and promoters of their faith, thereby amplifying the scope and impact of the church's ministry. This empowerment model can lead to a transformative shift in the church's disciple-making process, resulting in a community of dedicated followers who contribute to their community's spiritual growth.¹⁴¹

The results of this project carry implications for churches, para-church organizations, and Christian educational institutions. By equipping students with skills such as servant leadership, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving, these institutions can foster spiritual growth while providing essential life skills necessary for success in the modern world. This project has highlighted the importance of actively engaging students in meaningful service opportunities, providing a tangible example of biblical servanthood and discipleship. Furthermore, this project underscores the necessity to empower individuals in their spiritual journey, rather than fostering dependency among members of the church community. The implications of this project have far-reaching implications for ministries beyond Macland Baptist Church and can be used as a guide for all those seeking to foster devoted, servant-minded Christian leaders.

John Ortberg emphasizes the consistency of practicing servanthood. He suggests that servanthood is not merely about sporadic acts of kindness but is a lifestyle, a consistent way of

¹⁴¹ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 98.

living that reflects Jesus' teachings. By incorporating acts of service as a spiritual discipline, individuals can cultivate a servant's heart, thereby emulating Jesus in their lives. This could entail serving others in their communities, within their churches, or in their families. Such acts of service, executed with regularity, engrains the essence of biblical servanthood, fostering a life ingrained in discipleship and a continuous journey toward becoming more like Jesus. This perspective, as articulated by Ortberg, provides a deeper understanding of the practical applications of the research findings, emphasizing the role of consistent servanthood in fostering a deeper relationship with God and enhancing the spiritual growth of individuals and communities.¹⁴²

The scope of this thesis project revolved around the exploration and understanding of the influences of biblical servanthood and discipleship on students from the 9th to the 12th grades at Macland Baptist Church. The focus on the decisions these students would continue to make related to their personal church engagement post-graduation. For this purpose, the three distinct yet interconnected areas of biblical servanthood and discipleship—Information, Transformation, and Application—were under scrutiny. The project findings revealed a strong connection between student engagement and commitment to the church, highlighting how ministry involvement can foster spiritual growth. Furthermore, it underscored the importance of equipping students with essential life skills and empowering them in their spiritual journeys. Overall, this project contributes to our understanding of biblical servanthood discipleship and its impact on students, offering valuable insights for ministries seeking to develop dedicated followers of Christ.

¹⁴² John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997).

The findings indicate students found a sense of belonging and developed a desire to serve in their ministry. They took ownership of their roles within the ministry, fostering a sense of stewardship and responsibility. This sense of ownership played a pivotal role in keeping these students connected to the church even after they moved on post-graduation. Beyond ensuring continuity, this ownership helped students develop a sense of purpose and identity within and outside the church. It also facilitated their spiritual maturity, grounding them in a strong faith in God. This spiritual investment in ministry thus created a sense of belonging, built their self-confidence, and nurtured their sense of purpose.

Mentorship and leadership development programs emerged as essential tools for equipping young people with the skills and knowledge they needed to serve effectively in their ministry and community. These programs not only equipped them with practical skills but fostered a sense of personal growth and spiritual development. The participants gained confidence, clarity, and purpose, which allowed them to lead with courage and conviction. Through this program, they developed a sense of ownership and responsibility, enabling them to make lasting impacts on the church. The program provided opportunities for the participants to learn and grow through reflection and meditation as they went through the 28 Days of Discoveries. It gave them the opportunity to build relationships with their peers and mentors and to develop a strong faith foundation. These experiences allowed them to develop a sense of purpose and direction, which enabled them to make meaningful contributions to the local church.

Upon completing the study, the researcher discovered biblical servanthood was essential for the successful discipleship of students at Macland Baptist Church. The study showed how students better understood and appreciated their faith by participating in servanthood activities. The study found students were more likely to stay engaged in the ministry when they felt valued

and appreciated. This emphasized the importance of servanthood in discipleship. It was evident that biblical servanthood was a crucial component of biblical education for students in 9th through 12th grades. The researcher concluded that ministry engagement is an integral part of the Christian faith, which provides a way for individuals to express their love for God and show compassion to those in need. Parents and leaders played a vital role in fostering a willingness to serve among students and created an environment that encouraged them to develop their spiritual gifts. Biblical servanthood can positively impact individuals by bringing them closer to God and giving them a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Therefore, churches must prioritize teaching biblical servanthood in discipleship while creating service opportunities and investing in the next generation.

Being a Christian goes beyond believing in God and attending worship. The Christian life involves serving others. It can be challenging for students to find time to serve in today's fast-paced world. However, serving others is crucial to growing and maturing in the Christian faith. Churches should foster an environment that encourages students to serve and develop their spiritual gifts. Understanding the value of serving others contributes to fostering a more profound comprehension of faith and enables students to stay engaged in ministry. Why? Ministry engagement promotes ownership. A sense of ownership for students enables them to take an active role in their discipleship. They also understand biblical principles, which activate them in their everyday lives. Personal ownership helps create an atmosphere of trust and belonging, which fosters more profound relationships with peers and mentors. This leads to a more interconnected and welcoming community, encouraging spiritual growth and accountability.

Ongoing support and commitment from church leadership and parents were critical for the continued spiritual growth and engagement of these young people in the church and the

broader community. This support reinforced the teachings of the church, providing a spiritual foundation upon which these individuals could build their faith and mature spiritually. Parental or leadership involvement creates a solid foundation preparing them to serve effectively in their church and community, thereby becoming living testimonies of the transformative power of biblical servanthood and discipleship. This support provided encouragement and assurance that they were not alone in their faith journey and gave them the ability to connect with like-minded individuals. It also gave them the opportunity to ask questions and receive guidance, deepening their understanding of their faith and building spiritual maturity. This support was invaluable, as it provided a safe space for the students to grow together in faith and gain a deeper understanding of the teachings and principles of their faith.

Research Limitations

Although the study was limited to a single church in an affluent suburb of Atlanta, the conclusions are applicable to students from less privileged backgrounds or other social contexts and rural areas. The results of this study cannot be generalized and are specific only to the study sample. Thus, further research needs to be conducted to explore these concepts from a more comprehensive perspective and with greater applicability across contexts. Additionally, the scope of this project was limited by available resources, time constraints, a global pandemic, and the 9th–12th grade students from Macland Baptist Church. The sample size used for this project was small, and thus the results should not be considered generalizable beyond Macland Baptist Church.

While the findings suggested a successful engagement between students and their Church, it was apparent Macland Baptist Church was not engaging the students in a comprehensive discipleship process. To rectify this deficiency, the study recommended the

church implement more effective performance structures and outcomes. The necessity of a more intentional, holistic strategy to reach and engage these students was underscored.

The researcher thus proposed a strategic plan to bridge the gap. The vision was to craft a program that would assist students in their transition from high school to church ministry, thereby fostering an environment that cultivates spiritual growth. This recommendation was not without its detractors. Some church members argued the perceived lack of spiritual growth and engagement was not a result of the church's youth ministry practices but lay with the students.

The study proposed a counterargument: The church, as a spiritual institution, could play a more proactive role in engaging with these students. By creating an environment conducive to discipleship, the church could mitigate the risk of students departing from the faith. The study suggested that teaching biblical servanthood could play a key role in this respect. The focus was on the provision of more youth-oriented service activities and programs, which could help foster a sense of ownership of their faith among the students. The goal was not merely to retain these young members within the church, but to help them transform their mentality from passive consumers of spiritual services to active, engaged contributors to their faith community.

Therefore, the paramount issue of spiritual growth lies with the church and not the students. If the church cannot foster an environment that encourages students to bear fruit, to serve, to volunteer, how can it be expected that students will remain engaged post-graduation? The principles of biblical servanthood could provide a solution to this predicament and create a pathway to retain students in Macland Baptist Church.

The church must establish deeper relationships with its students by fostering an environment that supports fellowship and service. This transformative shift could cultivate a sense of belonging and connection to the church that perseveres beyond graduation. The church

should prioritize equipping students with the biblical knowledge and skills required to serve the church and the wider community.

The impact of service activities on individuals has been observed to be significant when students participate in them. Service activities foster a sense of community, spiritual growth, and have the potential to create a powerful impact on the lives of those who take part in them. The surveys in the study showed that students who engaged in service activities increased their biblical knowledge, felt closer to God, and became better examples of Christian living. Additionally, service can have a positive effect on individuals' mental and emotional well-being by providing a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Through active ministry, individuals can develop social skills, build relationships with others, and gain a sense of community and belonging. Students need mentors, proper training, and support to experience the full, rewarding effects of being a servant and disciple to others. By providing these opportunities, the student ministry at Macland Baptist Church empowered students to become better equipped for congregational service. It is imperative to recognize not everyone knows where or how to serve. Ministerial leaders should create an environment conducive to learning and growth by providing support and guidance for students to experience the full rewards of servanthood. Through understanding biblical servanthood, discipleship, and the use of proper training resources, mentors can help students gain insight into their servant roles. Additionally, mentors strengthen outcomes through ministry performance structures, ensuring all members are empowered to be effective servants in the church setting.

An advantage of smaller student groups is their agility and adaptability. They have a more flexible and dynamic set-up, allowing for nimble course correction as circumstances demand. From the perspective of biblical servanthood, smaller groups can foster community and

discipleship. In these close-knit groups, individual members are more likely to feel seen and heard, promoting their participation and engagement in servanthood practices. They can more readily tailor their approaches to discipleship, implementing the principles of biblical servanthood in ways that resonate with the unique needs, interests, and aspirations of their students. Larger student groups may struggle with responsiveness due to their size and inherent complexity. By subdividing into smaller groups, larger churches can engage their students in a more intimate way, providing personalized attention, fostering deep connections, and facilitating an interactive learning environment. Students can feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas, leading to richer discussions and a greater sense of belonging in the classroom community. While larger groups have their strengths, the inherent mobility of smaller student groups studying biblical servanthood and discipleship should not be underestimated.

The study revealed that smaller groups, when equipped with appropriate resources and means, can create a significant impact by facilitating active servitude among students. These groups can offer a tailored, individualized approach to discipleship, leading to a heightened sense of belonging among students. By providing opportunities for active service, they can foster a transformative shift from passive faith observers to dynamic contributors. This not only enhances their spiritual growth but strengthens their connection with the church community. Therefore, it is essential for smaller groups to have access to necessary resources, as this can strengthen their efforts to instill the principles of biblical servanthood in their students; unfortunately, that is not the case for smaller churches in rural areas.

The research project illuminated the importance of fostering an environment conducive to discipleship through biblical servanthood. The study highlights how such an atmosphere can help sustain spiritual growth in churchgoers and foster a stronger connection with the church. It also

underscored how smaller student groups can empower students to become engaged, active faith community members.

Assessment is the initial step in creating an intervention plan. Positive reinforcement can motivate others to find ways to serve. Positive reinforcement helps build relationships and foster a sense of community in the church. Encouraging students to serve others in practical ways inspires them to become more active in student ministry. Church leaders should create an age-appropriate plan for helping students get plugged in and serve according to their skill level. The plan should include spiritual, educational, and social goals.

The researcher conducted this study in an affluent suburb of Atlanta, and the external factors affecting the study's student sampling should be considered. For example, students who relocated due to parental job changes or other reasons could not complete the training, thus affecting the study's outcomes. Similarly, if students moved to another church during the study period, they might not have been able to finalize the training. The plan involved identifying the needs and desires of the target group, in this case, 9th–12th grade students at Macland Baptist Church in Powder Springs, Georgia. Through various forms of assessment, such as surveys, focus-guided Bible studies, and mentoring, the project gained valuable insights into these students' interests, concerns, and motivations. The researcher implemented the plan with positive results. The assessment allowed the project leader to better understand the group and tailor the intervention plan to meet their needs and interests.

Service is a vital aspect of the Christian faith, as Jesus served others and instructed His followers to do the same (Luke 19:10). Serving others allows individuals to express their love for God and show compassion for those in need. Service is essential for Christians to demonstrate their faith and commitment to Christ, as it reflects Jesus' selfless love for others. By serving

others, Christians follow Jesus' example and show compassion and love to those around them. Service allows individuals to use their unique gifts and talents to impact the world. Through service, individuals gain a sense of purpose and fulfillment and have their faith strengthened by seeing God's work in the lives of those they serve. Students must recognize the value of service at a young age. Parents and leaders must cultivate an environment where children can learn the importance of service and use their unique talents to make a difference in the world. Investing in the next generation and encouraging them to serve can leave a lasting impact on future generations and spread God's love and compassion to those around the local church.

The small congregation size at Macland Baptist Church restricted the volume of students available for the study. This limitation could have a significant impact on the overall representation and scalability of the research findings. Another constraint was the time allocated for the research, which may have reduced the sample size of the graduating class and skewed the results. These limitations must be considered when interpreting the study's findings and considering its wider applicability, especially concerning the principles of biblical servanthood and discipleship.

The success of this project depended on the ongoing support and commitment from the church leadership, mentors, and parents that ensured these students were equipped to serve others and live out their faith in every aspect of their lives. The church also provided resources such as mentorship, financial support, and spiritual guidance to ensure the students had the necessary resources to succeed. This enabled the students to make a positive impact on the lives of those around them and to be an example of God's love.

To ensure long-term success, the church should continue investing in student-focused initiatives that promote service and mentoring. Another insight gained during this study was the

importance of understanding students' needs and interests in the development of spiritual maturity. In addition, it was essential to create a variety of ministry opportunities. The wide availability of these opportunities promotes new areas for ministry engagement by more students. To ensure these initiatives are effective, creating a culture of appreciation and trust between the student ministry leadership and the students is essential to establishing positive mentoring relationships. Students thrive when they receive proper guidance, enabling them to find their identity in Christ and their place in the Kingdom.

Parental involvement in discipleship plays a pivotal role in creating an environment conducive to spiritual growth. Parents can encourage children to embrace biblical servanthood as an integral part of their Christian faith as they serve. Children are more likely to internalize the value of ministry and understand the importance of serving in their faith when they see their parents modeling service. Furthermore, children will be empowered to make meaningful and responsible decisions as they serve God and others. The home is the first environment where children develop an understanding of personal faith and the church. Parents who foster a willingness to serve in the church among their children by modeling a life of discipleship, praying as a family, and prioritizing church attendance will positively impact their children's spiritual development. Parents have the privilege and responsibility of leading their children to follow Christ. When creating opportunities for children to learn, experience, and serve in the church, a parent sets them up for a lifetime of spiritual growth and service to others.

Church leaders play a crucial role in encouraging young people to serve. Church leadership should provide guidance and resources for parents to raise their children in the faith. Church leaders should create a welcoming environment for families so children can feel accepted and supported in their faith journey. This acceptance begins by equipping leadership with

resources to address students' and families' needs. Leaders should provide opportunities for families to serve together and create mentoring opportunities to aid children in learning and growing in their faith. Leaders must invest in students and provide guidance, training, and support so they can express their faith in practical ways. By offering a variety of opportunities, leaders can help students discover their unique talents and gifts and provide opportunities to use them. Leaders can encourage and recognize the efforts of students who serve, helping them build confidence and a sense of purpose.

Further Research

The study of biblical servanthood and discipleship in the context of smaller church groups is vast and multidimensional. The preliminary exploration provided in this research opened up insights, offering a stepping stone to further study. Indeed, many areas need further examination, investigation, and discussion. This section highlights avenues of future research that could further our understanding of biblical servanthood and discipleship, particularly in small church communities. These directions are not exhaustive but represent areas that warrant continued scholarly attention to enrich and expand this field of study.

To advance research in this area, it is essential to consider the implications of ministry activities for different contexts and churches. Researchers should examine how various types of service activities affect individuals in different settings. Longitudinal studies could explore outcomes over time, such as the impact of ministry leadership on individuals' spiritual growth and discipleship. Future research should explore attitudes toward biblical servanthood and its effects on an individual's decision-making process. Comparing results from previous studies with those obtained during the project can provide insight into how servant leadership affects an individual's spiritual life. For instance, analyzing whether there are any differences between

students who engage in active ministry more frequently as opposed to those who are less involved can improve our understanding of the impact of servanthood.

Research on the impact of smaller church groups and their approach to discipleship in different cultural contexts is vital. As culture plays a significant role in shaping beliefs and values, it is essential to examine how different cultures may respond to biblical servanthood principles and discipleship strategies. This would provide valuable insights into tailoring approaches to effectively engage individuals from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, exploring how smaller church groups in rural areas or developing countries navigate their limited resources to foster servanthood and discipleship among their students would be a valuable area for future research.

It would be worthwhile to investigate the role of technology and social media in promoting biblical servanthood and discipleship within smaller church groups. With the rise of virtual communities and online ministries, it is essential to understand how these platforms can be used to engage and disciple individuals, especially in smaller church settings. Exploring the impact of social media on individuals' spiritual growth and discipleship could shed light on challenges and opportunities for smaller church groups in using technology as a tool for ministry.

This project has explored the concept of biblical servanthood and its effects on an individual's spiritual growth and discipleship. By analyzing existing literature, conducting surveys, and interviewing participants, this researcher has shown service activities profoundly affect individuals. The results suggest that ministry participation can positively influence mental and emotional well-being, provide a sense of belonging, create stronger relationships with God, and lead to more significant spiritual growth. This study highlighted how attitudes toward service may impact an individual's decisions regarding their beliefs and values. The results of this study

suggest a need for further education and understanding of biblical servanthood to foster an environment of discipleship, effective ministry leadership, and service.

Future studies should focus on performance structures and outcomes related to different approaches to servant leadership development and the integration of biblical servanthood principles. The results of this study project have provided tangible evidence that the understanding and incorporation of biblical servanthood is essential to fostering an environment of discipleship and effective ministry leadership. Future studies should focus on performance structures and outcomes related to different approaches to leadership development using biblical servanthood as a guiding principle. Such a study could provide insight into how servanthood is applied in various settings. The study project results of biblical servanthood and discipleship demonstrate that teaching by example and practice are the best methods for learning one's spiritual gifts. The conclusions drawn from this data are consistent with previous studies and published works analyzing the effect of spiritual gifts on individuals and communities. This research showed that those who discover and deploy their spiritual gifts are more likely to deepen their relationship with God than those who do not.

Further studies should compare the results of this project with previous studies or published works analyzed in the literature review. Such comparisons would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how servanthood is applied in different settings and contexts. Conducting a follow-up study based on insights from this study would be beneficial. For example, further investigations could develop strategies that encourage less outgoing students to engage in meaningful service opportunities. Such research can support church leaders by providing evidence-based approaches toward effective ministry leadership through biblical

servanthood and provide insight into how servanthood is applied in various settings.

Additionally, research can be conducted based on any insights from this study.

In conclusion, church leaders must understand the significance of creating and maintaining a culture where servanthood is embraced by all members of the faith community. Such a culture allows for an effective, unified ministry with a stronger connection to God as its ultimate goal. Thus, understanding how to apply the biblical principles of servanthood is a critical component of effective Christian leadership. Through this study project, the researcher revealed the students at Macland Baptist Church now have a strong understanding of what servanthood entails and how to apply those principles. The results suggest more research is needed on how to incorporate servanthood within other church settings and analyze how it impacts one's spiritual journey. This understanding will empower Christian leaders to lead by example as they serve others. Embracing biblical servanthood can lead to greater discipleship and strengthen the faith community.

Jesus was a servant who humbled himself and became an example of selfless love and compassion, teaching us to put others' needs before our own. Similarly, this project is valuable in showing how biblical servanthood and discipleship can be used in personal spiritual growth and becoming a greater example of Christian living. The researcher hopes this information leads to further study of the implications of spiritual gifts for ministry leadership, education, outreach programs, and other contexts where biblical servanthood is taught or developed. By looking at Jesus' example, one can recognize the power of selfless love and compassion and strive to follow him in putting others first. This knowledge can expand one's understanding of spiritual gifts and their applications to ministry, education, and outreach.

The results of this project can be applied to other ministry settings by adapting the intervention plan to fit the needs and contexts of different churches and communities. This adaptation will maximize the impact and relevance of the intervention plan. It will ensure the intervention plan is tailored to the needs of a given church or community. The focus on biblical servanthood, mentorship, and leadership development can be implemented in a variety of ways, such as student ministry programs, community service initiatives, and leadership training workshops. By creating a new culture, the church and community will have a lasting impact on ministry effectiveness, mentoring, and leadership. With the conclusion of this research project on encouraging high school graduates to stay involved in the local church and serve God and others after graduation, it is crucial to consider where research regarding this problem should proceed from here. This project provides a solid foundation for future research and interventions aimed at addressing the challenges faced by students in remaining engaged in the church and serving the local church after high school.

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APPENDIX I

IRB Approval Letter

January 24, 2022

Carlos De Freitas
Michael Eiras

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-606 Retaining Students After Graduation with Biblical Servanthood

Dear Carlos De Freitas and Michael Eiras,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

(2) Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not “designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge” according to 45 CFR 46. 102(I).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application’s status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX A

Biblical Servanthood Assessment

These questions are designed to assess your knowledge of Servanthood. Answer them as well as you can. Please do not skip over any; if there is a question you think you do not know, answer the best you can.

What the Bible says about servanthood?

In your opinion what are some characteristics of a good servant?

What is your understanding of servanthood?

How can I be a good servant of God?

What does Jesus say about service?

How do you serve others?

1. Work at events. ...
2. Drive for others. ...
3. Visit those in need of company. ...
4. Help outdoors. ...
5. Give food. ...
6. Offer your skills to others. ...
7. Build a home. ...
8. Spring clean.

What is the role of a servant?

According to your knowledge, what are the four main principles of servant leadership?

Who do you know that is a good example of a servant leader?

What does the Bible say about service?

Why is it important to serve others?

What does service mean in Christianity?

What makes a servant leader?

What is the biblical definition of servant?

What is the true meaning of service?

Bible Knowledge Assessment

Test your knowledge of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, *this simple quiz* of short questions and multiple-choice answers *examine some of the key doctrines and events of the Bible*. It will give you a good feel of how well you know general questions about the contents of the Bible.

1. In which of Paul's letters is the story of a man in sexual immorality with his father's wife?

- Colossians
- 1st Corinthians
- 2nd Corinthians
- Ephesians

2. What book follows Song of Solomon?

- Ezekiel
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations

3. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" appears in which book?

- Romans
- 1st Corinthians
- Galatians
- 2nd Corinthians

4. Who was a ruler of the Jews who came to visit Jesus at night?

- Caiaphas
- Simon of Cyrene
- Nicodemus
- Gamaliel

5. The Book of Genesis largely revolves around which character?

- Noah
- Moses
- None of these
- Joseph

6. Which biblical character was a Tishbite?

- Joshua
- Jesus
- Elijah
- Moses

7. The "Suffering Servant" prophecy is in which Major Prophet book?

Isaiah
Nehemiah
Ezekiel
Jeremiah

8. Amos is from _____ .

Galilee
Tekoa
Jerusalem
Nazareth

9. Paul encountered Christ on the road to _____ .

Antioch
Ephesus
Damascus
Galatia

10. In which book is the story of Balaam's donkey?

Numbers
Exodus
Leviticus
Genesis

11. Whose servant was Gehazi?

Elisha
Elijah
Daniel
Moses

12. Which was a wife of David who complained about his dancing?

Bathsheba
Abigail
Ruth
Michal

13. The Book of Revelation was written by:

John
Paul
Jesus
Peter

14. Which book contains a reference to a monument to "an unknown god"?

Luke
Matthew
Acts
Revelation

15. **Jesus was born in _____ .**

- Bethlehem
- Galilee
- Jerusalem
- Nazareth

16. **The phrase "Vanity of vanities" is from which book?**

- Ecclesiastes
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Job

17. **Who was Jesus' cousin who proclaimed his coming?**

- Simon Peter
- John the Baptist
- Simon the sorcerer
- Simon of Cyrene

18. **Before Defeating the Midianites, God whittled down _____ army to 300.**

- Samson's
- Deborah's
- Gideon's
- Balek's

19. **Which book contains the words, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau I hated"?**

- Phillippians
- Romans
- Genesis
- Galatians

20. **"...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you: yet do it with gentleness and respect," appears in which book?**

- 1st Peter
- 1st John
- 2nd Thessalonians
- 2nd Peter

21. **Who wrote the first four books of the New Testament?**

- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
- Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul
- Moses, Matthew, Paul and John
- Moses, David, Solomon and Luke

22. **What are the Ten Commandments?**

23. Which one is NOT a fruit of the Spirit? (Galatians 5: 22-23)

Faith
Longsuffering
Strife

24. What is the Golden Rule?

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” (Matthew 7:12)

25. What is the root of all kinds of evil?

The love of money. (1 Timothy 6:10)

26. How did sickness and death enter the world?

Romans 5:12 says that sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. The fall of man is recorded in Genesis 3, where God’s perfect creation was spoiled by Adam’s sin.

27. How many people were on Noah’s ark?

Eight: Noah and his wife, his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. (Genesis 7:13, 1 Peter 2:5)

28. What happened to the Lord Jesus 40 days after His resurrection?

He ascended bodily into heaven. (Acts 1:9-11)

29. How did the universe and world get here?

Genesis 1:1 tells us, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” We are told further in Colossians 1:16 and 17 that the Lord Jesus Christ was the one who did the creating.

30. Which one is NOT a gift from the Spirit? (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

Knowledge
Talent
Prophecy

31. Who directed the writing of the Bible?

The Holy Spirit. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21)

32. What did God give the Israelites to eat in the wilderness?

Manna and quail. (Exodus 16)

33. How many people were aboard Noah's ark? (Genesis 7:13)

Eight
Seven
Nine
Four

34. What is the name of the brother of Moses? (Exodus 4:14)

- Aaron
- Joshua
- Jethro
- Isaac

35. How many years will Satan be imprisoned for? (Revelation 20:7)

- He will never be free
- He won't be in prison, God will kill him
- For 1000 years
- He is already in prison

36. How many men did King Nebuchadnezzar's counselors see in the fiery furnace? (Daniel 3:25)

- They couldn't see any because of the flames
- Four
- Three
- Five

37. What did Delilah do to Sampson to take his strength from him? (Judges 16:1-22)

- She bound him with seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried
- She called a man to come and shave off the seven locks of his head
- She bound him with seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried

38. What is our best defense against Satan? (Ephesians 6:10-17)

- Putting on the whole Armor of God
- Confessing sin to your pastor or priest
- Praying and fasting

39. Why should we forgive others? (Colossians 3:13)

- To make the other person feel better over what they have done
- To be able to move past the situation by letting it go
- Because Jesus Christ forgives us

40. Where did Joseph take Mary and Jesus to when they were told Herod was killing all children under 2 years old? (Matthew 2:14)

- Nazareth
- Egypt
- Jerusalem
- Bethlehem

APPENDIX B

Permission letter template

Recommended information is included in brackets. Please select the desired information, remove the brackets, and remove the instructions and information that does not apply to your request.

[Insert Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Researcher's Name]:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled [Title of Research Proposal], [I/we] have decided to grant you permission to **Select the appropriate phrase:** [access our membership list/contact our faculty/staff and invite them to participate in your study]—OR—[conduct your study at [name of district/school/facility]]—OR—[receive and utilize the [name/description of archival data] for your research study]—OR—[other].

[Retain, delete, modify, or add to the below options as applicable to your study.] Check the following boxes, as applicable:

[The requested data WILL BE STRIPPED of all identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.]

[The requested data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.]

[Add applicable option or delete check box.]

[Add applicable option or delete check box.]

[I/We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.]

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Your Company/Organization]

Permission Request Template

Recommended information is included in brackets. Please select the desired information, remove the brackets, and remove the instructions and information that does not apply to your research.]

[Insert Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the [___ department/School of ___] at Liberty University, **Select the appropriate sentence:** [I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a ___ degree]—**OR**—[I am conducting research to better understand ___]. The title of my research project is [Title] and the purpose of my research is [Purpose].

Select the appropriate phrase: I am writing to request your permission to [conduct my research in/at [school district/school name, church name, business name, organization name, etc.]]—**OR**—[utilize your membership list to recruit participants for my research]—**OR**—[contact members of your staff/church/organization to invite them to participate in my research study]—**OR**—[access and utilize student/staff test data/records].

Select the appropriate sentence: [Participants will be asked to [go to [webpage] and click on the link provided/complete the attached survey/contact me to schedule an interview/etc.]]—**OR**—[The data will be used to [include explanation here]]. **Remove the following information if you are only requesting access to records:** Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Select the appropriate options. For education research, school/district permission should be on approved letterhead with the appropriate signature(s): Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, [please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval]—**OR**—[respond by email to [researcher's email address]]. **Include the following sentence if you will complete the IRB's permission letter template and provide it to the official(s) from whom you are seeking permission to facilitate his/her/their response:** [A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.]

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

Permission Request

Recommended information is included in brackets. Please select the desired information, remove the brackets, and remove the instructions and information that does not apply to your research.]

[Insert Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the [___ department/School of ___] at Liberty University, **Select the appropriate sentence:** [I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a ___ degree]—**OR**—[I am conducting research to better understand ___]. The title of my research project is [Title] and the purpose of my research is [Purpose].

Select the appropriate phrase: I am writing to request your permission to [conduct my research in/at [school district/school name, church name, business name, organization name, etc.]]—**OR**—[utilize your membership list to recruit participants for my research]—**OR**—[contact members of your staff/church/organization to invite them to participate in my research study]—**OR**—[access and utilize student/staff test data/records].

Select the appropriate sentence: [Participants will be asked to [go to [webpage] and click on the link provided/complete the attached survey/contact me to schedule an interview/etc.]]—**OR**—[The data will be used to [include explanation here]]. **Remove the following information if you are only requesting access to records:** Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Select the appropriate options. For education research, school/district permission should be on approved letterhead with the appropriate signature(s): Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, [please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval]—**OR**—[respond by email to [researcher's email address]]. **Include the following sentence if you will complete the IRB's permission letter template and provide it to the official(s) from whom you are seeking permission to facilitate his/her/their response:** [A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.]

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

APPENDIX C

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