

A STRATEGY FOR RECRUITING AND MATURING DISCIPLES
AT GAINESVILLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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**A Strategy for Recruiting and Maturing Disciples
at Gainesville Seventh-day Adventist Church**

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The purpose of this ministry focus paper is to provide a contemporary strategy to help the people at Gainesville Seventh-day Adventist Church experience genuine discipleship and to aid them in reaching out to make more authentic disciples. Through a systematic approach of helping believers practice Christian community, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual gifts, they will grow as authentic Disciples of Christ. By experiencing this approach, disciples learn to simplify and make time for the important relationships which will transform their lives, their family, the church, and the World. These relationships are with Deity, family, church family, and the lost.

Through an examination of Scripture and Christian literature this ministry focus paper identifies the key theological principles of discipleship and recruitment of disciples. Included are biblical definitions and theological discussion of conversion, discipleship, the role of the clergy, the role of the laity, spiritual formation, evangelism, and organizational dynamics. The discipleship and evangelistic practices which St. Paul and Jesus had in common are also discussed.

This ministry focus paper concludes with a strategic plan for the Gainesville Seventh-day Adventist Church. A discipleship formation cycle which helps disciples learn and experience the key areas of discipleship is developed. The pastor's role as a change agent is examined and specific principles are recommended. This ministry focus paper envisions that the Gainesville Adventist Church leadership will adapt this study in order to lead the Church into a bright future.

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INTRODUCTION

Dissatisfaction is a very descriptive and powerful word. The reason that men and women become dissatisfied is that they believe there is “something more” that they can have or achieve. A woman may become dissatisfied with her living room decor because she thinks she could achieve “something more” with it. A man can become dissatisfied with his motor vehicle if he believes that he can have “something more.” Business companies that play on such dissatisfactions can make millions of dollars. Yet dissatisfaction is much more than a clever marketing tool; it can provide a powerful motivation for positive change. Catherine Marshall, in her book entitled *Something More*, movingly argues that what is true in the secular world can also be true within Christianity: that many believers are dissatisfied with their spiritual journeys and are looking for “something more.”¹

In the counseling room, through personal interviews, as well as in numerous conversations, many of my parishioners have told me that there is for them also a sense of dissatisfaction. It is a spiritual dissatisfaction; they had hoped for “something more.” There is a heart longing for an authentic, personal, transformational walk with God. This sense of dissatisfaction and longing has guided me to an in-depth study of genuine, spiritually transforming discipleship and a quest for “something more” for myself as well as my congregation.

¹ Catherine Marshall, *Something More* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974).

Ministry Need

Gainesville Seventh-day Adventist Church, hereafter GVSDA, is a church of approximately 350 members in North Central Florida. It is a busy faith community and while many congregants are active in the church, their comments to me indicate that they are not experiencing the spiritual transformation that should be evidenced in the life of an authentic disciple. As a leadership group at GVSDA, we have come to a realization that we have made church members, but not necessarily disciples. There are many programs being carried out and much activity, yet there is a lack of direction, understanding and intentionality in our disciple-making and spiritual formation process. I believe the church is looking for “something more.”

Project Purpose

The purpose of this ministry focus paper is to address the above need by formulating and presenting a new paradigm for ministry at GVSDA. The ministry focus paper will present a comprehensive, relevant and theologically based strategy which will enable congregants to become more authentically open to God so that he can bring about spiritual transformation in their lives. It will be an intentional plan for biblical discipleship and discipleship recruitment within GVSDA and its broader community.

Part One will paint a picture of the unique local context of the congregation and community. Chapter 1 will discuss the age, ethnic, economic, social, and religious aspects of the church and the community. Furthermore, it will analyze how these factors are impacting disciple-making at this time. In addition to this, the chapter will discuss the plethora of programs and committees at GVSDA and describe the challenges,

problems, and opportunities the church currently faces. Evaluative reflection will be given to the past and present disciple-making plans of the church.

Chapter 2 will describe the current and past strategies for gaining and maturing disciples. There is a lot of transfer growth from other Adventist churches, yet the church has not been able to make a significant impact in the community. There have been various programs for the spiritual growth of members and evangelism of unbelievers, yet these programs are no longer effective.

Part Two will develop the biblical and theological foundations for maturing current disciples and recruiting new disciples. Included will be biblical definitions and theological discussion of discipleship, evangelism, the role of the clergy, the role of the laity, spiritual formation, and organizational dynamics. Expert authorities on discipleship and church growth will be consulted.

Chapter 3 will share a biblical and theological framework for what a mature disciple looks like and how one may become a mature disciple. Specific biblical descriptions of discipleship will be discussed. The conversion experience will be examined in the light of Scripture. A theological discussion of spiritual disciplines, particularly of community in the maturation process, will be presented. A survey of integral spiritual disciplines will be included.

Chapter 4 will address key aspects of disciple recruitment from a theological viewpoint. It will lay a biblical foundation for evangelism through clergy and laity alike. It will highlight fundamental aspects of evangelism, from the motivation of those evangelizing to the biblical methodologies to be employed.

Part Three will provide a practical, strategic plan for recruiting and maturing disciples at GVSDA. In the beginning, a practical pathway for discipleship formation and recruitment will be described. Special attention will be given to the synergistic relationship that occurs when caring outreach and nurture are connected. Community in the body of Christ will be an integral part of this plan. Spiritual disciplines will also have a prominent place in this strategy. Change implementation will be discussed, as well as the role of the pastor, the governing board, and lay volunteers in this process. Finally, the change implementation process itself will be discussed. New ministry structures and systems will be suggested in order to strategically utilize resources and propel the church forward. A timeline will be developed and specific goals will be established.

Chapter 5 will outline a specific process for maturing disciples. It will explain the disciple maturation plan as a whole and show how the various parts connect together. A plan for inspiring new and current believers about the process will be discussed. Foundational to this process will be an emphasis on spiritual disciplines. A prioritization of key spiritual disciplines will be given.

Chapter 6 will provide a plan for the development of authentic Christian community in its various sizes for discipleship recruitment and maturation. It will provide a detailed implementation process and description of triads, small groups, the family dynamic, team ministry, corporate worship, fellowship luncheons, socials, and personal witness. It will end with a brief discussion on Adventist education in the context of discipleship and the church.

Chapter 7 will explore the pastor's role as an agent for change in the lives of individuals and in the church. Concrete, habitual roles for the pastor that will give

priority to disciple maturation and recruitment will be articulated. Prioritization of these key tasks in relation to the pastor's time management will also be discussed.

Chapter 8 will put the various parts of the plan together into concrete steps. It will detail a process that will incorporate all the components of the plan into a comprehensive, compelling vision for the future. Included will be an implementation timeline and goals. With these elements in place, GVSDA will have a relevant, comprehensive, and theologically based strategy to enable authentic discipleship to thrive.

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO GAINESVILLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an American-born denomination founded in Michigan in the year 1861. Its founders came from many religious traditions such as Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, and Congregational. A relatively young denomination, it is an eclectic movement borrowing the good from many Bible-centered faith traditions. During the middle of the nineteenth century the American landscape was full of religious fervor. The Second Great Awakening was well underway with the preaching of such figures as Charles Finney, Lyman Beecher, and Peter Cartwright. William Miller, a Baptist preacher and student of Bible prophecy, rejected the then popular postmillennial view of Christ's return. He began preaching that Jesus was coming soon. With time, this movement known as the "Millerites" grew, and ministers from many denominations began preaching the soon "advent" or second coming of Christ.

After the death of William Miller, and through disappointments caused by setting specific dates for Christ's return, the movement splintered. One of these splinter groups over a decade later would become the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Through various Bible conferences, camp meeting-type gatherings, and religious journals, doctrines were debated, studied, accepted, or abandoned. With a theology that could be shared by many evangelical churches today, plus several distinctive teachings of its own, the young denomination was born. Instead of creedal statements, an emphasis was put on progressive revelation through the continued study of God's Word. This new movement

grew rapidly until now it spans the globe with over fourteen million members and sixty thousand churches worldwide.¹

Local History

The history of the Adventist Church in Gainesville goes back to the year 1887 with the founding of a home church in the small community of Waldo, Florida, a village just outside of Gainesville. The small group continued to meet in a cotton gin until about the year 1900 when some of its members moved to Gainesville and the Gainesville Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized. The first church structure was built in 1903. The new church soon outgrew the building and in 1919 the church building was sold and church members decided to build another church home at North Main and 6th Avenue. The church met there for nearly thirty years.²

By 1949 the size of the congregation had outgrown the church structure. For the next three years GVSDA met at various locations such as the Moose Lodge and the Odd Fellows Temple until a new church was completed in 1953 at NW 10th Avenue and 12th Street. A church school was established in 1956. The church met at this location until 1974 when it moved to its present eight-acre location at 2115 39th Avenue. The first building that was built on the new site was a gymnasium and school complex. The 100-member congregation met in the gymnasium until the current sanctuary was completed and dedicated May 10, 1980. Nineteen years later GVSDA paid off the mortgage and the property became debt free.

¹ Statistics taken from "World Church Statistics," Adventist Statistics website, http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldAbr=GC (accessed October 25, 2007).

² Sam Litchfield, "Local Church History," Gainesville Seventh-day Adventist Church website, <http://gvsda.org/history> (accessed January 10, 2006).

A significant event in the life of GVSDA was its efforts to help plant the High Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many of the GVSDA members left the mother church to help in this new church plant. Now the High Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church is a thriving church and in the process of building a new church building as they have outgrown their current church facilities.

As pastor of GVSDA since 2004, I have talked to the members of GVSDA now for some three years, and they have shared their personal stories and the stories of the church. These include good stories and bad stories, but each has an impact upon what makes up GVSDA presently in 2009. In looking back at the history of the church, the evidence of God's hand can be seen. The record of history honors the faith and courage of those vision-filled pastors, leaders and members who served with vitality in years gone by. I honor them, and seek to build upon the positive foundation that they have laid.

Congregational Demographics

Membership and Attendance

Church growth expert Donald McGavran has written, "The numerical approach is essential to understanding church growth. The church is made up of countable people and there is nothing particularly spiritual in not counting them."³ The congregation of GVSDA has 354 members on the church membership records. Attendance at the main worship service ranges from 180 to 220 with approximately 30 children in the children's classes each weekend. The disparity between the church membership and the actual numbers of church attendance is quite common for North American Adventist churches.

³ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 83.

There are several factors that can account for this. There are people who move away and do not take their membership with them. There are those who go to other churches and do not ask to be removed from the membership list. And then there is the most difficult situation, those who leave faith in Christ, fall away and become missing. GVSDA is currently seeking to account for all its listed members and reclaim those who can be reclaimed.

Age

The median age of baptized membership is 41 years old. There is a good mix of young and old in the congregation. There are many young families in the church with young children, as well as quite a few junior high and middle school children. The children's Sabbath school classes are full each week. Currently there is an aging college student base with more graduate students than young undergraduates. The generational breakdown is as follows: 12% are Millennials (ages 4 to 23); 44% are Survivors (ages 24 to 44); and 27% are Boomers (ages 45 to 62). The Silents (ages 63 to 80) and Builders (over 80 years of age) account for the remaining 17% of the generational profile. Several guest pastors who travel around the state have said that it "feels like a young people's church." This is probably due to the fact while Florida is a retirement state, Gainesville is a college town.

Ethnicity

GVSDA is the most ethnically diverse Seventh-day Adventist church in the city. There is a predominately African-American Adventist Church in town as well as a

predominately Hispanic Adventist congregation. The ethnic representation at GVSDA (based upon data of baptized members only) is as follows: 63% are Caucasian; 18% are Hispanic; 7% are West Indian, with most being from the Island of Jamaica; 6% are Asian, which includes Philippine, Chinese, and Burmese; and 5% are African-American.

Social and Relational Dynamics

The social dynamics of a congregation can play a significant role in the health and growth of a congregation. There are several patterns of social behavior that I have observed. Quite a number of church members drive over twenty miles to get to the church. The home addresses of church members indicate that the average distance traveled to church is seventeen miles. Ideological, familial and doctrinal affinity seems to be more important than geographical location for the congregation. This can be both positive and negative. One negative result is that because most church members do not live in the geographical location surrounding the church, it can make it more difficult to reach the neighborhoods around the church.

Another social pattern is that the congregation tends to socialize more from generational and special interest affinity. Often at elders' meetings the point is made that GVSDA does not have cliques, yet I have observed clear generational groupings. The first group is that of families with young children. They tend to be involved with children's ministries and activities as well as school functions. Next are various service teams. Whether it is one of the five praise teams, guest luncheon teams, a community service team, or a small group, these groups tend to gather together and build relationships over common interests. Another group that is similar to these includes

those involved in leadership and church governance. These leaders are involved with each other and in the life of the church based on the task of leadership. Finally, there is the older generation. There are some within this generation that are very active in the life of GVSDA, while others are less involved or homebound due to health problems.

Economic Profile

GVSDA has members from across the socio-economic spectrum, from impoverished college kids to millionaires. If one were to classify the church via income, it would be described as a middle-class church. GVSDA relies on the support of its members for financial viability. The doctrine of tithing and free offerings is taught as a basis to support the work of God. The tithe for 2006 was \$269,000. Offerings totaled approximately an additional \$120,000. The church sends all of its tithes to the local Florida Conference for the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the state of Florida and around the world. This system will be analyzed further in Chapter 2. Returned to GVSDA are my salary and \$40,000 to help cover the elementary school teacher's payment package. All local financing is carried out utilizing the free will offerings.

Community Demographics

Population

In GVSDA's zip code, 32605, which is part of forty-eight square miles of community, there are approximately 20,404 persons. All detailed community demographics will be about zip code 32605 unless otherwise specified. The city of

Gainesville's population is 110,000. The area where the church is located is considered densely populated according to national averages. The projected population growth rate is somewhat static at roughly 7% over the next five years. There are approximately 60,000 students that attend the University of Florida and 23,000 which attend Santa Fe Community College. The community has population stability factors due to the large health industry in the area and also the large educational institutions.

Ethnicity

The statistics regarding ethnicity within the city of Gainesville have been compiled from the 2005 US Census.⁴ The largest group is Caucasian at roughly 80%. This is quite a bit larger than the 67% national average. The percentage of African-Americans is estimated at 10%, about the same as the 12% national average. The fastest growing ethnic group in this study area is African-American. Surprisingly, the Latino population percentage is only 5%, which is significantly lower than the 14% national average. The remaining residents of Gainesville are Asian (3%) and "other" (2%).

Age, Economic, and Community Flavor

In order to get a better view of who GVSDA is trying to reach, it is important to go deeper into detailed community demographics. The average age in the zip code surrounding the church is 39.7 years old. There is a fairly even spread between three major age groups: Millennials (ages 18 to 23) comprise 25%; Survivors (ages 24 to 44) comprise 28%; and Boomers (ages 45 to 62) comprise 26% of the population. Retirees

⁴ 2005 US Census data, taken from: "My Community," link2lead.com web site, <http://www.link2lead.com> and "Zip Code 32605," e-podunk web site, <http://www.epodunk.com> (accessed October 25, 2007).

and young children account for the remaining 19% of the population. The average median income for GVSDA's zip code is \$73,968. Almost one-third of the homes are classified as "single parent households." "Young and coming" (young professionals without children) is the predominant family structure. The marital status is: 29% never married, 16% widowed or divorced, and 56% married.

In observing the local society, there are several specific issues or areas of interest that the people in this community lean toward. Education is an important issue. It is interesting to note that within the community, 54% are college graduates, much higher than the 24% national average. This county tends to vote for the Democratic Party and be more liberal on political and social issues. There is a lot of talk about preserving the environment in the community. Natural foods, healthful living, and vegetarianism are important here. Sports, from drag racing at the NHRA Gatornationals at the Gainesville Speedway to college and high school athletics, are very big attractions in this community.

Beyond the US Census data, a website called "Link2Lead" provides data regarding "Faith Involvement" within the zip code.⁵ Some 39% in the study area said that they are not involved with religious faith, which compares to the 35% U.S. average. Another 29% said they were somewhat involved, which is about the same as the 30% U.S. average. And only 32% see themselves as strongly involved in their faith, which is less than the 35% U.S. average. These statistics clearly show that there are many unchurched to reach in the community.

⁵ "My Community," link2lead.com web site, <http://www.link2lead.com> (accessed January 10, 2006).

Some Implications Drawn from the Data

Age

The median age in the church of 41 years old is not very different from that of the study areas, in which the average was 39.7 years old. This is a positive since people can best relate to people in their own generation. In the church the Survivor generation was the largest group, comprising 44% of the congregation. This is sizably more than the average number of Survivors in the community, which is only 28%. Yet, this discrepancy can also be seen in a positive light because the center age group can reach to either side of the generational gulf more easily. Boomers inside GVSDA were nearly identical with the community with only 1% difference. In general, the age similarities between the church and community can be seen as a strength in seeking to relate to and reach the surrounding neighborhoods.

Ethnicity

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:27, 28, KJV).⁶ GVSDA is an ethnically diverse congregation and is committed to being open to people of all ethnicities. The church has not sought to target one ethnic group over another. It is very similar to the community in its ethnicity profile, yet GVSDA does have some marked differences. The lower number of African-Americans in the church could be attributed to the fact there is a predominately African-American Adventist church in town.

⁶ All biblical references cited in this ministry focus paper are taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Within GVSDA, Caucasian is the largest group, representing approximately 63% of the congregation. This is nearly 20 percentage points less than the community's 80% Caucasian residency. The church's strategy has been to reflect the diversity of the congregation in its programming and worship style. Caucasian culture is not targeted, nor is it ignored in seeking to be relevant to the community and worshippers. GVSDA seeks to enjoy the unique flavors of the various ethnic groups while also enjoying the majority culture. This is a fine balancing act, yet it happens quite naturally as people minister through their cultural heritage. In essence, race is not an issue except as it adds value to the community.

Households

It is fascinating to see that 44% of households in the community are made up of unmarried people. Only 56% of households are described as married. This information reveals that there is not only ample room for family ministries, but a definite need for singles' activities, social events, and help for the particular needs that singles and single-parent families encounter. As the traditional family unit and marriage itself is fragmenting in American society, the Church can step up and not only help preserve this God-ordained order, but help the brokenness and loneliness that people experience when family relationships are unhealthy or non-existent.

Community Flavor

While GVSDA cannot make the Florida Gators athletic teams a part of its religion, it can seek to reach people through common points of interest. There are several

points of interest that the church can use to reach the community. One of the foremost is the fact that there are more than twice the numbers of college graduates living in the area than the national average.⁷ True academic excellence of any kind embraces within it the love for truth and the responsibility to seek out the truth. Instead of a narrow-minded fundamentalist approach, authentic Christianity is open to new ideas and will listen to fresh ways of thinking. This toleration for a plurality of ideas, while not always as tolerant in actual practice, can at least open the door for Christian faith to emerge.

Another area where the church can intersect with local interest is healthy living. The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to help people take care of their bodies. The denomination was birthed at a time when various temperance movements were in full swing in the United States. By following the eight natural remedies of health, including nutrition, exercise, abundant use of water, sunlight, temperance, fresh air, proper rest, and trust in God, people can learn how to experience a lifestyle of wellness.

One cannot be part of a large university town without sensing the vitality of youth and seeking to be part of it at some level. Some would say this phenomenon is all about being young at heart. Others would say it is an optimism based on idealism not tempered by the disillusionment of life. Whatever it is, it includes hope for the future. Since this is what Christianity is about, it can intersect quite nicely. Many in Gainesville want to “save the planet.” This regard for the environment can ultimately be used to help them yearn for a world of utopia as the earth made new will be. This bright future is a legacy of hope brought to believers by Scripture.

⁷ “My Community,” link2lead.com web site, <http://www.link2lead.com> (accessed January 10, 2006).

These demographics give GVSDA insight. They show that the church has lots of possibilities for ministry in Gainesville. They show that GVSDA is, in many ways, aligned with the demographic data. These can be strengths for GVSDA.

CHAPTER 2

PAST AND PRESENT STRATEGIES FOR GAINING AND MATURING DISCIPLES

Strategies for Discipleship Recruitment

While evangelism is often described as an event during which people make a decision to give their lives to Christ, in this ministry focus paper evangelism will refer to a process rather than an event. More specifically, evangelism will be used to describe the initial stage of discipleship through which the believer is brought into a saving and continuing relationship with Jesus and his Church. The terms “evangelism” and “disciple recruitment” will be used synonymously.

In this chapter the past and present strategies for making disciples will be described. It will be clear that while there is a plethora of activity taking place, the present strategy is not working effectively. In a recent survey of the GVSDA congregation during the worship hour, there were only two people out of approximately two hundred attendees that had been reached through the local church’s discipleship recruiting efforts. There are many reasons that could explain this low number: local converts could have moved away, not all may have taken the survey, and some have certainly passed away. Yet, even after taking these factors into account, it is clear that the gospel commission has not been very effective in the over-fifty-year history of this church. The primary growth factors of GVSDA have been transfer growth and the baptism of members’ children. According to church records over the last five years, 50% of the church’s growth has been through baptizing members’ children, 40% through transfer from other Adventist churches, and only 10% through actual evangelistic outreach of the local church. While every soul is important, the great commission needs

to be effectively carried forth in the local church.¹ Ineffective discipleship recruitment is a major problem at GVSDA.

Over the history of GVSDA there have been many attempts to reach the community. The church has sought to use the church-run elementary school as a means of reaching the community. They have attempted “felt-need evangelism” by offering seminars on quitting smoking and healthy cooking, Vacation Bible Schools, and self-defense classes. A Bible correspondence school has been founded and personal Bible studies have been given. Seminars dealing with prophecy and the book of Revelation have been taught. Professional evangelists have been brought in to hold meetings, and even satellite prophecy seminars have been utilized. Revivals and weeks of prayer have been held, and worship services designed for seekers have been tried. There has been no end to the programs and strategies employed, yet the growth has been slow.

One of the primary ways that GVSDA has sought to gain members is by having an evangelistic crusade campaign. The church often relies on handbills and professional advertising to invite the unchurched. These meetings last from four to six weeks in duration with about twenty-five to thirty meetings. The meetings are prophetic in nature with Bible doctrine being taught and evangelistic decisions being called for. If during the meetings some individuals accept Jesus as Lord of their lives and accept the fundamental teachings of the Bible, they may be baptized.

Another methodology within Adventism and at GVSDA that has traditionally been used is the Sabbath school. This is similar to the Sunday school program. In the

¹ Church Membership Records, 2003-2008.

past, the branch Sabbath school was the first nucleus when planting a new church. Ellen White, a pioneer in the denomination, once wrote,

The object of Sabbath-school work should be the in-gathering of souls. The order of working may be faultless, the facilities all that could be desired; but if the children and youth are not brought to Christ, the school is a failure; for unless souls are drawn to Christ, they become more and more unimpressionable under the influence of a formal religion.²

Currently there are four children's classes from infancy to junior high, one youth class, one collegiate class, and three adult classes. The children's classes begin at 9:30 a.m. and finish at 10:40 a.m. The adult classes begin in a general meeting at 9:30 a.m. and then divide for their small group classes at 10:00 a.m. and finish at 10:40 a.m. At the adult general meeting there is usually some singing, a mission emphasis time, and a devotional thought. After this time, the adults break into small groups to study a Bible-based lesson from a curriculum which is published on a quarterly basis. This curriculum includes major topics dealing with the Christian life as well as thematic sections or books of Scripture.

Personal evangelism has often been encouraged at GVSDA. The Discover Bible Study School was set up in 2002 in order to equip church members to give personal Bible studies, share their faith, and bring the gospel to others. This school also helps people who would like to study through correspondence. Another personal evangelism approach has been to give out literature. Literature has been distributed by mail, door-to-door distribution, and through personal contacts. Popular for some time was door-to-door solicitation of funds called "ingathering." These monies would go to help the poor and disaster-ravaged. Literature which highlighted the humanitarian work of the Seventh-day

² Ellen White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1938), 47.

Adventist Church was given out. Also, from time to time, training seminars on how to witness have been taught to help believers personally share their faith.

The church school is also a major ministry of GVSDA Church. GVSDA has operated a private Christian school since the 1950s. The members of the church felt so strongly that they should provide a Christian education to their children that they decided to build the school before they built the Church. Approximately 50% of the Church's financial resources are spent supporting the elementary school. Currently, the school has twenty-eight students in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. There are two teachers employed for the elementary section and one full-time volunteer facilitator for the high school internet-based distance learning program. In addition to the Bible classes taught by the teachers, a baptismal class is offered to the children as well as various pastor-led worship assemblies and weeks of prayer. The school seeks to aid in the balanced development of the physical, mental, social and spiritual powers of the students. Spiritually, the school is there to help the students discover a saving relationship with Jesus Christ as well as help in the discipleship formation process.

Strategies for Discipling Church Members

Discipleship is a relatively new term in common Adventist vernacular, yet the GVSDA has been involved in discipleship in various forms for years. Sometimes words and phrases like "sanctification," "growing in a relationship with Jesus," "getting ready for Jesus to come," "and character building" have been used to describe discipleship. A theology of discipleship will be articulated later in this ministry focus paper, but for now Christian discipleship may be summed up as the process whereby one becomes more like

Jesus Christ.³ The following paragraphs will share some of the most common methodologies used in disciple formation at GVSDA over the years.

If one looks at the numbers, the most popular discipleship experience has been the eleven o'clock Saturday morning worship hour, and paramount during this hour has been the sermon. In fact, the other parts of the service have often been viewed as preliminaries to the sermon time. The focus of the worship service has been varied from discipling believers to recruiting new disciples through evangelism. The worship service is usually planned with care and has traditionally been a blend between high-church reverent formalism and low-church practicality. In recent years the organ has been exchanged for the praise team band and the pulpit for the plexi-glass podium and PowerPoint teleprompter. Currently, there is only one worship service with about 250 people in attendance.

Another traditional discipleship event has been the Wednesday night prayer meeting. Traditionally the children would go to their respective groups called Eager Beavers, Adventurers, and Pathfinders (much like a co-ed scouting group) and the adults would come into the main worship sanctuary for the prayer meeting. The prayer meeting would consist of songs, testimonies, prayers and usually some Bible teaching or reading from a spiritual book. The Wednesday night prayer meeting has not thrived recently at GVSDA and was closed down and restarted as small group ministries in the last few years. Currently there are four small groups that gather during the week, two at the church and two off campus. The Eager Beavers, Adventurers, and Pathfinders now meet during the weekend.

³ This definition is gleaned from Luke 6:40, "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher."

Beyond the Saturday morning worship hour, Sabbath school classes, and the weekly small groups, there are several other groups that can be classified as contributing to discipleship. The adult groups include: prayer warriors, women's groups, men's ministries, and various Bible study groups. Another larger small group that happens each weekend is vespers. Vespers takes place one hour before sunset on Saturday and is a time to sing songs, play Bible games, and learn about various spiritual topics. Attendance ranges from ten to thirty people.

One area of discipleship formation that is sometimes overlooked is helping people discover their spiritual gifts and helping to place people into meaningful ministry. Currently GVSDA uses a questionnaire that is given out when a person becomes a member at the church that lists the person's ministry interest areas, skills, and time availability for service. GVSDA also gives out a ministry interest survey right before the church election time so people may indicate an interest to serve in a particular area of ministry. Individuals are then elected to serve for a one-year term of office by a nomination committee process that is concluded each December.⁴

There are many different lay ministries that people can get involved in. The larger ministries are: Health Ministries Team, Choir, Praise Team, Church Board, School Board, Finance Committee, Elder Board, Deacon/Deaconess Board, Guest Luncheon Team, Church Social Committee, Greeter Ministry, Children's Ministries, Evangelism Team, Sabbath school, Vespers, Small Group Leadership, Video Team, Audio Team, Treasury, Prayer Ministry, and Community Services.

⁴ *Connections* materials and Spiritual Gifts surveys are sometimes utilized but not in any systematic way.

Building relationships within the church community in order to help grow disciples is vital. There are several ways the church has sought to intentionally aid in this process. Many members have stated that fellowship luncheon is very important to them. Each week a guest luncheon is held for members and guests who wish to share a meal together. Once per month there is a main fellowship luncheon in which the whole church is invited to come together and enjoy fellowship. Other social events include baby showers, Valentine's and Christmas banquets, ice cream socials, and gym game nights. Occasionally there are also outings planned such as visiting a water park, going to a river for tubing, or a picnic and game day.

Funding Discipleship and Evangelistic Work

An integral part of any organization is the use of monies within the organization. Important questions need to be asked as to whether the financial resources are being used in accordance with the purposes of the organization. The following questions should be considered: Could there be a streamlining of bureaucracy through an economy of scale? Could higher levels of church organization return a larger percentage of funding in order to grow the local church? Could more be done to facilitate evangelism and discipleship formation on the local church level? Denominational policy recommends the following:

Administrators on General Conference, division, union, and local levels, accountable as they are to God for their stewardship, shall give continued earnest study, in the light of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy counsels, to the purposes and proportions in which tithe funds are being used in the organizations for which they are responsible.⁵

⁵ Adventist Stewardship website, "North American Division Working Policy Regarding Tithe," 5, <http://www.adventiststewardship.org/tithe.html> (accessed June 16, 2008).

Currently the Adventist Church teaches tithing and the giving of free will offerings in accordance with Malachi 3:8-10. Members are educated to give ten percent of their income for tithe and additional free will offerings as the Lord blesses them. The North American Division promotes the “Personal Giving Plan” whereby each member is encouraged to give of their income in the following percentages: 10% tithe, 5% local church budget, 2% state conference projects, 3% world denominational budget, and to give over and above this to special projects. The non-tithe percentages are only suggestions in this stewardship plan.⁶

Conference Remittances of Tithes and Offerings

Currently it is the North American Division’s denominational policy for each local church to send 100% of the tithe to the local state conference office to distribute according to local, state, and world priorities as set by the designated denominational committees. According to church policy, “It is recognized that the local conference level of denominational organization is the ‘storehouse’ to which all tithes should be sent and from which the gospel ministry is supported. For the convenience of church members, the tithe is turned in to the local conference through the local church where membership is held.”⁷ Conferences send back to the churches the minister’s salary, some financial assistance to aid school teachers’ salaries if there is a school, and occasionally some funding for local evangelistic endeavors. The church policy reiterates, “All tithe shall be

⁶ Adventist Stewardship website, “The Personal Giving Plan,” 1-2, <http://www.adventiststewardship.org/index.cfm/method/content.personalgivingplan> (accessed June 16, 2008).

⁷ Adventist Stewardship website, “North American Division Working Policy Regarding Tithe,” 15, <http://www.adventiststewardship.org/tithe.html> (accessed June 16, 2008).

paid into the conference/mission treasury and under no circumstances is it to be retained in the local church for its use.”⁸

In 2007 the Florida Conference received roughly forty million dollars in tithes. After sending roughly 20% to higher denominational constituencies such as the Southern Union Conference, the North American Division, and the General Conference, it had a tithe budget of thirty-one million dollars.⁹ The remainder of the thirty-one million dollars of tithe was allocated in the following percentages: 43% for pastoral expenses, 1.5% for evangelistic work, 1% for various church appropriations, 5% for various youth and children’s ministries, 25% for elementary, academy, and college education, 2% for literature evangelism, 2% for adult ministries, 1% for camp-meeting and conventions, and 17% for administrative costs.

In addition to the tithe that is remitted to the denomination there are also free will offerings that are called for each week during the worship service. According to the offering schedules for 2007-2009, roughly 55% of the offering allocations are conference, division, and General Conference initiatives, and it is mandatory to follow this schedule. As stated in the Florida Conference Operating Policy Manual, “An offering schedule is published annually by the North American Division and the Florida Conference. It is expected that those schedules will be followed.”¹⁰

⁸ Adventist Stewardship website, “North American Division Working Policy Regarding Tithe.”

⁹ The Seventh-day Adventist Church is made up of five distinct organizational levels: the Local Church level, the State Conference level, the Union level comprising several states in a region, the Division level which is usually a country or several countries, and the General Conference level representing the World Church.

¹⁰ Florida Conference Operating Policy Manual, Policy Number 6280, effective date May 19, 1996.

It is exceedingly clear that the Adventist denominational system of finance for North America financially starves the local mission. With only the pastor's salary portion of the tithe and roughly only 45% of regular free will offerings going to the local church, Adventist pastors find it increasingly challenging to fund local evangelistic and discipleship initiatives. Some would have North American churches model such places as the developing world where financial resources are scarce. Others believe that while money is not the complete answer, there should be a prioritization and reallocation of resources, including financial, in order to reverse the ten-year plateau of growth in North America.¹¹

Funding Mission at the Local Church

In 2007, GVSDA took in \$471,045 in total tithes and offerings. This amount was given accordingly: \$286,937 in tithes was given; \$74,859 was given for the church operating expenses; \$12,255 was given for capital improvements, \$15,000 was given to support local Christian education; \$4050 was given to various Florida Conference projects; and \$6726 was given to world denominational projects. The church operating expense is budgeted into different categories based on priorities within the church.

The largest single local ministry commitment of funds is to GVSDA's local church school. While the church firmly believes Christian education is vital to the discipleship of its young people, it is a very large commitment of financial resources. Because of the large outlay of financial resources involved in this ministry, specific funding recommendations will be outlined in Chapter 7.

¹¹ The North American Seventh-day Adventist Church has had a less than 1% growth rate for the last ten years. This does not even keep up with the rate population increase. See the Adventist Statistics website, http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=D_NAD (accessed June 18, 2008).

Positive Areas of GVSDA

There are many positive aspects of ministry at GVSDA. One of the greatest areas is the city itself. Being in a large university city has many exciting challenges and ministry opportunities. These kinds of cities are intellectual centers where people are challenged to grow and change every day. Thus, the gospel can find ready access to those already in a change mindset. It also has an adequately large population to reach.

Another positive asset of GVSDA is the congregants. There is a great spirit among the people of this church. There are many committed seekers of God, individuals who want to see God's kingdom increase and the church move forward to reach the unchurched. The congregation mirrors the cultural, ethnic, and age diversity in the community. Among the core lay leadership I have observed a desire to grow and even a willingness to change. This is very significant, as there are many changes that need to take place. Visitors often comment on the warm welcome that they receive from the congregation. In the past several years there have been no major conflicts.

The next positive area at GVSDA is the relationship-oriented team ministries. While small groups are still in their infancy, the elders' team desires to increase this ministry. The four hospitality teams provide fellowship luncheons each week and add a great opportunity for community building. The eight Sabbath school classes are providing ministry for young and old at the church. The choir and five praise teams not only help lead the church in meaningful worship, but also provide opportunities for genuine relationships to grow. Other positive team ministries include the video team, web ministry team, the sound team, the worship committee, the prayer team, Discover Bible School, and the community services team.

Children's and youth ministries play an important role in the life of the church. Whether it is the bi-weekly children's church or the Pathfinder or Adventurers youth clubs, all of these youth organizations are serving well. One of the most important ministries of GVSDA is the K-12th grade elementary school.

Finally, the church building facility itself should be mentioned. Over the last five years, the church has gone through an extensive remodeling process. Paint, carpet, a new roof, new air-conditioning, landscaping, bathroom renovation, and paving have all been part of "Operation Gracelift." GVSDA is located on eight acres of prime real estate on a highly visible roadway. Parking is adequate with room to expand. The worship sanctuary is big enough for growth. And finally, it is paid for.

Growth Areas and Problems of GVSDA

Some of the issues can be summed up by the fact that the church lacks a clear, contemporary, comprehensive plan for growing the number of disciples, as well as deepening the discipleship experience of the members of the congregation. A clear vision of what the church is seeking to produce is lacking. This is something that this ministry focus paper will seek to address.

A major area of weakness is a clear understanding and action plan of how relationships impact discipleship formation. Much has been noted about knowing the "truth" or the "message" yet little is said about how relationships help the truth become a living reality in a believer's life. There are relational elements about most of the ministries in the church, yet many members do not realize or value the importance of such relationships to disciple formation. In essence, truth is taught without much of an

intentional support system to help this truth become assimilated in the new believer's life. All the gatherings need to be strategically tied into the purpose of discipleship. Small groups, life transformation groups, accountability groups, ministry groups, and felt need groups all should become an increasing part of how church is done at GVSDA. Currently, less than 10% of the membership is involved in any small group during the work week.

To state the problem more precisely, there is a need for a clear, shared vision of what kind of disciple the church should seek to produce and what methodology is best in GVSDA's context to produce them. Fewer traditional church activities and more life-transformational activities should be incorporated into the lives of the church and church membership. Under the current paradigm one might assent to intellectual truth, decide to give one's life to Christ, and join the church, yet stay frozen in one's discipleship development for years. This conception of discipleship has caused spiritual paralysis in the body of Christ. God has so much more for each believer and GVSDA. Apart from the Vine there is no fruit (John 15:4). A biblically based spiritual growth plan needs to be modeled, taught, and expected for all who are connected with GVSDA. By following this pathway, believers may connect to the Vine and bear fruit to his glory.

Another major problem is the lack of financial resources at GVSDA. There needs to be a clear strategy for growth and advancement when it comes to the finances of the church. Stewardship should be taught. Strategies and long-term plans to meet the financial needs of the church school need to be put in place. Monies should be made available to grow the church and plant other churches instead of just maintaining what exists at present.

Finally, the church is in need of a clear, focused approach in its corporate evangelism or discipleship recruitment. Reaching out to the community in a corporate way has been lacking. If the church disappeared tomorrow, individuals would be missed, yet the church as an institution for good in the city would barely be missed. It is not bad press, but no press that is hurting the church. There needs to be an intentional strategy to make the church known, respected, and appreciated in the city. To show love not only for those who are members, but for those who are not members, needs to permeate the very core of what the congregation is about.

Even though there are many good things happening at GVSDA, there is a desperate need to change in order to become great. In summary, the challenges that face us are multiplicitous. Discipleship recruitment has stagnated. Many traditional ways of discipling people have become somewhat obsolete and ineffective. Several of the current ministries have become missionally adrift. Ministries are being financially starved. There is not a broadly owned, clear, cohesive understanding of discipleship formation nor is there a strategy to move the church there. In short GVSDA is in need of a systemic strategic overhaul.

CHAPTER 3
THEOLOGY OF DISCIPLESHIP MATURATION

A Definition of Christian Discipleship

Sermons are preached on discipleship and people are encouraged to be disciples, but it is important to consider what it really means to be a true disciple of Christ. Much of what has traditionally been taught about discipleship has to do with teaching. Yet discipleship is not simply limited to cognitive understanding. The Greek word *mathetes* (μαθητής) from which the English word “disciple” is derived, literally means “learner” or “apprentice.”¹

Often the reason for this spiritual confusion is that many Christians do not clearly understand what Christian discipleship is. In his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard provides a very simple definition stating that “a disciple, or apprentice, is simply someone who has decided to be with another person, under appropriate conditions, in order to become capable of doing what that person does or to become what that person is.”² Thus Christian discipleship is foremost about an active, life changing, relationship with the Master, Jesus Christ. Willard goes on to state, in his book, *The Great Omission*, “The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christ-like and so dwelling in *his* “faith and practice,” systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end. By these decisions and actions, even today, one enrolls in Christ’s training, becomes his

¹ Michael S. Bushell, “μαθητής,” Greek Lexicon, “In BibleWorks Program,” Version 3.2, 1995.

² Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 282.

pupil or disciple.”³ Christian discipleship is more than simply learning a set of doctrines or proscribing one’s life to a specific list of activities; it is a radical new paradigm of relational living. It is about the process of being changed into the image of God. As believers enter this apprenticeship with Christ they enter a new dimension of living. One’s whole being begins a transformative experience. New relationships and practices are formed; many old relationships and habits are discontinued. The disciple experiences a new perspective on life. This new reality in Christ encompasses the entire being of the disciple, both internally and externally. This discipleship is about imitating Jesus Christ. This experience is spoken of by Richard of Chichester in his famous prayer: “to enable men and women to ‘know Jesus Christ more clearly, to love him more dearly, and to follow him more nearly.’”⁴

In summary, discipleship is a relationship between teacher and apprentice whereby the apprentice becomes like the teacher. Christian discipleship is a relationship with the teacher, Jesus Christ, whereby the apprentice becomes like Jesus Christ. Willard teaches, “Discipleship is learning from Jesus Christ how to live my life as He would live it if He were me.”⁵ Thus when one talks about being “spiritually mature,” or being a “mature follower of Jesus,” he or she is speaking about being transformed, becoming like Christ through discipleship.

³ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teaching on Discipleship* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 7.

⁴ Richard of Chichester, quoted in William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible, The Letters of Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Knox Press, 1975), xv.

⁵ “The Door Interview: Dallas Willard,” *The Door* (May/June 1993), 15, quoted in Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Disciple*, 64.

It is important to state, however, that while true discipleship is described as a radical and continuing transformation of one's life, this transformation is impossible without the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Humankind cannot save itself by its own works or willpower. No amount of following a rigid course of conduct can change one's sinful heart. In order for the spiritual practices of a disciple to have a real impact on the heart, they need to be actuated by the power and grace of God. Without this supernatural power, all the human effort and methodologies would be ultimately fruitless.⁶

The Fluid Nature of Discipleship

Discipleship often happens in a non-linear fashion. It does not always progress from point A to point B. Discipleship is as fluid as life and relationships are. In the ever-dynamic relationship that one has with almighty God and his body, discipleship development can often come in the most unexpected ways with elements often happening simultaneously or inversely.

Discipleship cannot be relegated to an "ABC" linear formula; the formula needs to be about relationships. Speaking about the non-linear way in which people grow in Christ, Adam Hamilton of the Church of the Resurrection writes,

What we have found is that most people don't actually progress in the Christian life in this way (a linear approach to discipleship development). . . . We have people whose first small-group activity at the church is joining a mission team serving low-income people in the inner city, long before they ever join the church.

⁶ "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). This will be discussed further in the section titled, "Conversion Experience," later in Chapter 3.

We have a number of people who take Disciple Bible Study, our most intensive Bible study, before joining the church.⁷

In relationship, discipleship is happening all the time; it is a long transformational journey toward radical transformation. One might be making disciples while at the same time becoming one. One might be serving God before one has even professed saving faith in God.

This view of discipleship rejects mere informational models of discipleship. It rejects the view that merely getting the facts right or experiencing the right feelings or going through a set course of study is ever enough. Bill Hybels, founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois, eloquently writes,

Many sincere Christians spend their entire lives earnestly searching for an experience, a conference, a revival, a book, a tape, or a single truth that will instantly transform them into a mature believer. Their search is futile. Although we have instant coffee, instant potatoes, and now even instant weight-loss methods, there is no such thing as instant spiritual maturity. . . . The truth is this: Spiritual growth is a process that takes time.⁸

This understanding of discipleship does not mean that the Church cannot have a strategic pathway or levels of progress for the disciple. Rather it means that the Church needs to build into its methodology many entry points and discipleship fundamentals along the pathway. Andy Stanley, in his book, *Creating Community*, speaks about this non-linear approach to discipleship and its perception among many Christians:

Over the years I have noticed that some people seem to equate spiritual growth with the accomplishment of a process or plan. They seem to believe that mature Christ-followers are those who have endured the equivalent of spiritual boot camp. If you have successfully undergone a regimen of classes, seminars, and prescribed activities, you are perceived as mature. If you finish the list, you have arrived. You are disciplined. Project complete. This perspective assumes that

⁷ Adam Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 62.

⁸ Bill Hybels, quoted in Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 335.

spiritual maturity comes at a point in time – namely, when the process or curriculum has been completed.⁹

Because time never stands still, there is never a point at which one can say that he or she has “arrived.” Stanley goes on to liken spiritual maturity to physical fitness; both should be constantly and continually worked on.¹⁰ Christian leaders need to ever resist the notion of pigeon-holing people into certain stages of discipleship development.

Willard articulates this dynamic relationship of discipleship convincingly when he writes,

Not only is the outcome of our progression in the kingdom not under our control, but we are not told in any systematic way how to do our part in the process. Well, at least we are not told in precise terms—certainly not in formulas. This is because the process is to be a walk with a person. But it is also because what is needed is very much an individual matter, a response to the particular needs of individual disciples. Perfectly general instructions simply cannot be given. That is why we do not find them in the Bible. Its “wisdom” books, especially Psalms and Proverbs, come as close as possible.¹¹

This does not say that churches cannot use such tools as the apprentice learning model, or that there is no understanding of cause and effect. But it is important that in any approach to discipling people, it is understood that people can learn while going down the path, up the path, off the path, and even before they are on the “traditional” pathway.

Scripture records that the twelve disciples of Jesus were human and made mistakes. There are many examples of this, but Matthew 26:56 clearly states, “Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.” Whether it was sleeping in Gethsemane (Luke 22:45) or fighting over who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Luke 9:46), these disciples unmistakably bare evidence that the apprentice does not become like his or her

⁹ Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2004), 61-62.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

¹¹ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 350.

master overnight. Even after three years of sitting at the feet of Jesus, Peter denied his Lord when he needed him most (John 18:5). But through his subsequent restoration (John 21) and ongoing discipleship, he would later be willing to give everything for the cause.¹² When modern-day disciples forsake and deny their Lord by their words or actions, this does not necessarily mean that they are not true disciples, it may merely mean they are in process.¹³ Often, through these difficult experiences the disciple may find the greatest opportunities for transformation.

Biblical Descriptions of Discipleship

The word “Disciple” occurs 269 times in the New Testament. “Christian” is found three times and was first introduced to refer precisely to disciples of Jesus – in a situation where it was no longer possible to regard them as a sect of the Jews (Acts 11:26). The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ.

-Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*

There are many Scriptural texts on discipleship and much to learn from the biblical record regarding what discipleship is all about. This section provides a survey of discipleship passages in the sacred text. According to Acts 6:1-7, 9:36, and 11:26, the New Testament believers were called “disciples.” Acts 11:26 reveals that the disciples “were first called ‘Christians’ at Antioch.” This verse explains two things about discipleship. First, it explains that New Testament believers were first called “disciples,” and second, that Christians other than the first twelve disciples can also be considered “disciples” of Christ. Since believers are called “disciples” primarily in the Scriptures, it

¹² John Fox, *Fox’s Book of Martyrs: A History of the Lives, Sufferings and Triumphant Deaths of the Early Christian and the Protestant Martyrs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1926), 4.

¹³ “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6, italics mine).

could logically follow that Christians should adopt this terminology to describe who they are today. “Christian,” meaning “Christ like,” is a good description, yet “disciple of Christ” captures more accurately what a believer is.

The next biblical insight is that disciples are first called and then they follow. After John the Baptist proclaimed, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” two of John’s disciples followed Jesus and he invited them to “come and see” where he lived (John 1:36-39). Later, when calling Simon and Andrew, he tells them to “follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.” The Scripture then records that they “immediately left their nets and followed him” (Mark 1:17-18). Still later, when one presents himself to Jesus, or “volunteers” to be a disciple, for dubious motivations, Jesus says, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20). While the Scripture invitation is broad enough to take in all (Matthew 11:28, John 3:16), some are not ready for discipleship and thus not invited into discipleship (John 6:44).

This call to Christian discipleship is primarily a call to a relationship with Jesus Christ.¹⁴ This union is to be so close it is described as “oneness” (1 John 5:20). The Scripture speaks to this union:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one in us*: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:21-23, KJV, italics mine).

¹⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer aptly stated, “When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an *exclusive attachment to his person*. . . . Discipleship means *adherence to Christ*” (italics mine). Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1995), 63. Also See Luke 12:31.

This relational oneness is the essence of true discipleship (John 15:7). This close relationship is that of a “follower,” an apprentice (μαθητής) type of relationship which requires close intimacy.¹⁵ This relationship is also described as “family” (Matthew 12:49)¹⁶ and also “friendship” (John 15:15).¹⁷

It is clear from Scripture that this relationship with Christ is the most important part of discipleship. The primacy of this relationship to all other relationships and aspects of life is repeated over and over again in Scripture, often with hyperbole. Luke 14:26-33 states,

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace. So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Clearly Jesus is not teaching that people should hate their families or themselves, but he is teaching through hyperbole that all other relationships or self interests must be a distant second place. In Luke 9 when people want to follow him, but then turn back for a funeral

¹⁵ Bill Hull writes, “A lexical definition of *mathetes*, ‘always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described as *mathetes*, and which in its particularity, leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative power.’ To summarize Kittel’s article, a disciple is a follower, a student of a certain teacher; John the Baptist, Plato, Jesus had disciples. It always means a supremely personal union.” Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1988), 56. Hull quotes Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 441.

¹⁶ “And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, ‘Behold my mother and my brethren!’”

¹⁷ “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

or to say goodbye to family, Jesus says, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). The discipleship relationship here conceived is ideally to be a total commitment or it is nothing.

As believers are called to this paramount relationship with Christ, this oneness, they will also be made one with others who have this same discipleship relationship with Christ.¹⁸ Jesus said, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one in us*: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21, italics mine). The world “believes” because it is unnatural for people to be in unity and love who come from such divergent socio-economic, caste, ethnic, gender, and political backgrounds. This relationship with other disciples transcends all earthly classifications and is characterized by love. A major test of discipleship is whether this love and thereby discipleship community is really happening. Jesus teaches, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. *By this all men will know that you are My disciples*, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35, italics mine).

This relationship of disciple with disciple is seen throughout the Scripture record. Jesus sent the disciples out two by two (Mark 6:7). The Apostle Paul had associates such as Barnabas, Timothy, John Mark, and Silas, among others. Even Paul’s teaching on spiritual gifts reveals that we need each other in order to have a healthy body (1 Corinthians 12). The Scripture testifies that “where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). There is something very special

¹⁸ Bonhoeffer wrote, “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1954), 21.

that happens when two or more disciples gather together in the name of Jesus: Jesus promises to come into community with them. What an incredible promise Christian community brings. It is abundantly clear from Scripture that discipleship is not something that is done solo.

Another important insight about discipleship can be found in Luke 6:40: “A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.”¹⁹ In 1 Corinthians 11:1 the Apostle Paul teaches, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” The Word here used is *mimetes* (μιμηταί) from which the word “mimic” is derived. Within the context of this verse, it is clear that the Scripture is teaching the reality that a student will become like his or her master. Jesus goes on to say, “For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit; nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit” (Luke 6:43). This transformation is said to take place, writes Hull, when one is “fully trained.”²⁰

This character transformation is a goal which believers will strive for by God’s grace until the end of their earthly sojourn. The apostle Paul states in Philippians 3:12-17,

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by

¹⁹ Also see Matthew 10:24-25.

²⁰ The Ultimate goal of spiritual growth is to become like Jesus. God’s plan for us since the beginning has been for us to be like his Son. “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29). God wants every believer to develop the character of Christ. Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, 331

that same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

Part of becoming like Christ is learning to do the will of God and by being obedient from the heart. This obedience is based upon the new covenant relationship that disciples have with Jesus Christ.²¹ Jesus' family had come to him and sought an audience with him, but he turns and points at his disciples and says, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:49-50). Another text that helps define discipleship is John 8:31-32, in which Jesus says, "If you abide in My word, *then you are truly disciples of Mine*; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32, italics mine). Abiding in Jesus' Word and doing his will are evidence of authentic discipleship. This Word of Jesus is his holistic "truth" embodied in himself that sets humankind free from the inside out.

One of the major commandments given to disciples is the Great Commission. In Matthew 4:19 Jesus says to his disciples, "Follow Me, and I will make you *fishers of men*" (italics mine). The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 explains to believers what they are to be about. Believers are commanded to go and make disciples, baptizing them and then "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." The word for "observe" is *tereo* (τηρεῖν) and is always used in the New Testament as a verb. These "commands" of Jesus are not merely to be understood properly, but to be *tereo* (τηρεῖν),

²¹ For finding fault with them, God says, "'Behold, days are coming,' says the Lord, 'when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and I did not care for them,' says the Lord. 'For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' says the Lord: 'I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people'" (Hebrews 8:8-10).

observed or obeyed.²² Thus a disciple is one who has been taught to keep God's commandments, and one of the greatest commandments is to multiply disciples.²³ Thus multiplication is built right into authentic discipleship.

Jesus teaches, "*If anyone wishes to come after Me*, let him deny himself, and *take up his cross daily*, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it" (Luke 9:23-24, NKJ, italics mine). The cross of Christ is the means of salvation for others. When the disciples take up their crosses, they become the means of salvation for others. In this paradox of discipleship, believers find themselves by losing themselves for others.²⁴ This unselfish service for others becomes the believer's passion, purpose, joy, labor of love, and, at times, physical death. Jesus said, "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and *so prove to be My disciples*" (John 15:8, italics mine).

The Holy Spirit as sent by Christ to represent himself is the primary source of the lived relationship with God, and central to this ongoing apprenticeship to the Master. In John 14, Jesus says,

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because *He abides with you, and will be in you* (John 14:12-17, italics mine).

²² Greek Morphology of "τηρεῖν," BibleWorks, Version 3.2, 1995.

²³ "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

²⁴ Losing oneself for others involves not only serving the unchurched, but serving one another within the church community as well. See John 13:14-17.

This “Spirit of truth” that guides and comforts the disciple is a wonderful promise from the lips of Jesus. It is the wonderful working of the Holy Spirit which brings oneness with humanity and the Godhead, and which connects believers to unlimited power for the glory of God.

Becoming a Disciple

The discipleship process begins before one has accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ. God, through the working of the Holy Spirit, has been drawing each person into a saving relationship since before his or her life began. God has put it into people’s hearts to seek him.²⁵ It is the greatest experience on earth to form a relationship with and bring one’s life into alignment with God. In *The Ministry of Healing*, Ellen White writes,

Everywhere there are hearts crying out for something which they have not. They long for power that will give them mastery over sin, a power that will deliver them from the bondage of evil, a power that will give health and life and peace. . . The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ.²⁶

Yet even though this process has already begun, there is a definite time when one starts to respond to the Holy Spirit in a more decided manner.²⁷ Often it is in response to a certain need. Motivation will be addressed later, but it is important to note here that there is a

²⁵ See Romans 2:14-16.

²⁶ Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1960), 143.

²⁷ Some have difficulty understanding conversion as a process. The difficulty seems to lie in the confusion of terminology about the meaning of “conversion,” “justification,” “sanctification,” “salvation,” and their blurred usage. For further study about conversion and discipleship being about process, see Richard V. Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 5, 10, 12, 13, and 329; Larry Crabb, *Inside Out* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 202, 203; Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 148, 149, and 155; Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988), 28.

definite process that begins. In his book, *Conversion in the New Testament*, Richard Peace speaks of this process as one's pilgrimage:

Pilgrimage begins with what I call the Quest phase in which people search for God. It moves to the Commitment phase in which people respond to Jesus. And it concludes with the Formation phase in which people seek to follow God as disciples of Jesus. This three-part paradigm enables us to talk about the various aspects of pilgrimage in ways that are useful to others on the Pilgrim way.²⁸

This three-phase system is very helpful when trying to understand one's place upon the pilgrimage. Even though, as noted earlier, discipleship does not always take on a linear path, it is helpful to know that there are different places on the pathway of conversion and discipleship. Helping people see that conversion and discipleship are a process can help people realize that there might be something more that they need to experience for Christianity to "work" for them.²⁹

The Conversion Experience

Insight

To gain a firm grasp of Christian conversion one needs to understand what humanity is, who God is, and what is the process and inherent outcomes of Christian conversion. Thus, for conversion to take place there needs to be a realization that one is

²⁸ Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 311.

²⁹ Peace writes, "The statistics indicate that on average only 10 percent of those who respond at an evangelistic meeting become active disciples of Jesus. So the question becomes: What about the other 90 percent? Could it be that for these 'lost converts' the whole experience might turn out to be counterproductive? In their minds they 'tried Jesus' and it didn't work (for whatever reason), so they are less likely to make such a response in the future. It is almost as if they have been immunized against Christianity by being given a small dose of the gospel." Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 305. Willard writes, "'Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and left untried.' So said that insightful and clever Christian, G.K. Chesterton. Whether or not he was totally serious, there is almost universal belief in the immense difficulty of being a real Christian. The vast, grim 'cost of discipleship' is something we hear constantly emphasized. Chesterton's observation can at least be taken as reflecting the attitude of my serious people toward the way of Christ. But it must not be left to stand as the whole truth. We would do far better to lay a clear, constant emphasis upon the cost of non-discipleship as well." Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 1.

lost, that there is One who can help, and what the good news of salvation is. Peace explains,

Conversion begins with insight. Without insight the whole process is stopped even before it starts. Unless people have a reason to respond to Jesus they will not respond to Jesus. Such insight needs to extend in two directions: insight into who Jesus is and insight into who we are. Sometimes it is the amazing appeal of Jesus and his call to be part of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God that draws us to him. At other times it is the awareness of our lostness, our brokenness, or our neediness that draws us to Jesus as the one who can heal, forgive, and restore us. How well does contemporary evangelism do when it comes to assisting others to “see” who Jesus is and to discern their need for him?³⁰

This insight leads to a realization that people need help outside of themselves, and that Christ can help.³¹ There are many instrumentalities that can lead to this insight, but in and behind all of them is a loving God working through the Holy Spirit.³²

Confession and Conviction

As this God-initiated insight comes into one’s life, it allows the change process to take place.³³ In his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren writes, “The first building block of a deeper friendship with God is complete honesty—about your faults and your feelings.”³⁴ If people are honest with themselves and their feelings, and if they

³⁰ Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 298. Also see pages 49-50, 252, and 279-280.

³¹ “Apostolic congregations know, as Samuel Shoemaker stressed, that people who are not following Jesus Christ and are not working out their salvation within the body of Christ are lost. And they cannot find the way to abundant life by themselves. They know this from Scripture, for our Lord revealed that such people are lost, like sheep without a shepherd.” George G. Hunter, *How to Reach Secular People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 144, 145.

³² Smith, *Beginning Well*, 16.

³³ “Without understanding, a proper response to Jesus is not possible. Understanding is that which makes it possible to respond to Jesus. It is the motive power. Hence it is not surprising that the whole Gospel of Mark is structured around the unfolding understanding on the part of the disciples as to who Jesus is.” Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 252.

³⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 92.

are real with God, then this transformational process becomes real as well. People learn that God loves them and they begin to have a desire for the change that only God can bring. Believers begin to have a clear understanding of sin and the consequences of sin. When Christ is lifted up, then people come to Christ. In her book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ellen White writes, “When a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.”³⁵ This is done through sharing the wonderful news of God’s reality as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

After gaining this insight about oneself, God, and his great purpose to save humankind, then believers confess their sins to Jesus and ask for his grace for the forgiveness of their sins. Believers then begin the commitment phase of their pilgrimages. This choice enables the past to be put in the past.³⁶ A wonderful promise is found in 1 John 1:9, which says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This confession might be difficult at first, yet it is therapeutic and refreshing to the soul.

Faith in Christ

This confession of sin brings pardon and peace through faith. By faith a new and living relationship becomes a reality to the new believer. In order for a conversion to take place the relationship needs to become real through a personal faith. The Bible teaches, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must

³⁵ Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 245, 246.

³⁶ See 2 Corinthians 5:17-18.

believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).” It is through faith we find “access” to his “grace” (Romans 5:2). This faith is not merely a mental assent to truth; it is taking the promises of God to be personally real to one’s own life and acting as such.³⁷ It is a living faith.

Repentance

After the new disciples confess their sins and by faith rest fully upon the merits of Christ Jesus, they are now prepared by an attitude of love and gratefulness to choose to give God complete control over the present and future life. Jesus is chosen to be “Lord” and “Master,” to be the new leader of the converts’ lives. This choice is called repentance.³⁸ Peace writes,

Repentance is, by definition, a cognitive concept. It involves a decision to change one’s mind about God and the work of God. It involves new understanding and the ability and willingness to act upon this new understanding. Repentance means to turn away from the old understanding about God and embrace the new understanding. In this unit Mark has discussed understanding and how hardness of heart prevents a person from embracing new understanding. He has shown that hardened hearts can be changed by the healing touch of Jesus.³⁹

This repentance or “turning” is more than merely a cognitive exercise; it is a heart’s response to God’s love. This turning takes place as a result of God’s grace and

³⁷ “The faith of Jesus. It is talked of, but not understood. What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs to the third angel’s message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righteousness. And faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus.” Ellen White, *Selected Messages Book 3* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 172.

³⁸ “When repentance is paired with faith, turning takes place. This is conversion proper. Having understood that you are not walking in God’s way, you turn around from that old way and reach out to Jesus by faith so as to walk in his new way. The result is new life in Christ. The nature and character of the transformation that takes place is shaped by the walk of discipleship.” Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 279-280.

³⁹ Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 251.

love and continues through God's Spirit to lead one into the fullness of Christ and a transformed life.⁴⁰ This love and grace awaken a love within the heart of the sinner. This newfound love in turn produces a hatred for the sins which only destroy. A cultivation of this love and grace is foundational to repentance. This experience is a radical change in loyalty.⁴¹

Public Confession/ Baptism

After this initial new "conversion experience" it is important to make a public confession of this inward experience. Jesus said, "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). The symbol of public confession that Scripture enjoins upon believers is water baptism. Romans 6:4 explains, "We are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." This death to self, burial of the past, and resurrection to newness of life ratify the new covenant of grace to the believer. Experiencing the symbolism of baptism is a powerful experience, much in the same way as is the marriage ceremony. It is a public declaration of the love and commitment to another. It is an experience that can bind one to Christ.

⁴⁰ It is the "goodness of God that leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4, KJV). Also see 2 Corinthians 7:9, 2 Timothy 2:25, Hebrews 6:1, and 2 Peter 3:1.

⁴¹ "The central place of faith and repentance is the basis for the biblical understanding that conversion is a turning, a change, a *metanoia*. This turning reflects a change of mind, but much more than that, it is a radical change of orientation. One's face is turned from one fundamental orientation to a radically new direction. The 'turning' of faith and repentance means a change of loyalty and allegiance." Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation*, 143. Also see Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 346, 352.

Spirit Baptism

The Holy Spirit is an agent in this conversion process.⁴² Through the Spirit conviction is brought and supernatural power is given to be “born again” (Matthew 3:11, John 3:5 and 16:8). This same Spirit is the regenerative agent who keeps believers from being “under the law” and helps them to “walk in the Spirit” (Romans 6:14, 8:4, and Galatians 5:16). Through the continued ministry of the Spirit believers start to become like Jesus and partake of the fruits and gifts of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-25).

Sanctification

Through the transformative ministry of the Holy Spirit believers grow in character. At times it may seem to an individual that he or she is moving in the wrong direction; yet to continue on the pathway is to continue to grow and become more like Christ. Speaking about the need for true transformation in one’s life, Willard writes,

And when you stop to think about it, how could one actually trust him for forgiveness of sins while not trusting him for much more than that? You can’t trust him without believing that he was right about everything, and that he alone has the key to every aspect of our lives here on earth. But if you believe that, you will naturally want to stay just as close to him as you can, in every aspect of your life.⁴³

Jesus is molding his people into his wonderful image. The character of Jesus, including his love, his grace, his mercy, his hope, is the great attraction of Christianity. To speak

⁴² John Stott suggests, “The norm of Christian experience, then, is a cluster of four things: repentance, faith in Jesus, water baptism, and the gift of the Spirit. Though the perceived order may vary a little, the four belong together and are universal to Christian initiation.” John R. Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 305.

⁴³ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 14.

about conversion without a conversion of inward character and outward fruitage is not in keeping with the teachings of Scripture.⁴⁴ Smith writes,

We cannot think effectively and biblically about conversion until we take seriously both the possibility of and the call to transformation. This is, properly speaking, the goal of all of the church's life and thus of theological reflection. Conversion therefore is not an end but a beginning we give it particular attention to encourage the spiritual transformation that it is meant to begin.⁴⁵

Helping people see that true conversion is an initiation into a lifetime of spiritual formation through discipleship and that justification and sanctification are connected is imperative. Willard writes, "It is the life of regeneration and resurrection--and justification, which is absolutely vital, for our sins have to be forgiven. But justification is not something *separable* from regeneration. And regeneration naturally moves into sanctification and glorification."⁴⁶

Initiation into Discipleship (Imprinting)

Colossians 2:6, 7 says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (KJV). It is through repeating the early experiences of conversion within the context of community that believers grow in

⁴⁴ Speaking about the current debate within Christendom on discipleship, Willard writes, "As for the conservative side, most conservatives by the early seventies generally accepted that being a Christian had nothing essentially to do with actually following or being like Jesus. It was readily admitted that most 'Christians' did not really follow him and were not really like him. 'Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven' became a popular bumper sticker. (While correct in the letter, this declaration nullifies serious effort toward spiritual growth.) The only absolute requirements for being a Christian was that one believe the proper things about Jesus. The doctrinal struggles of many centuries—intensified in their impact by the usual intertwinings with political, legal, and even military power, but at the same time drained of religious significance—had transformed saving faith into mere mental assent to correct doctrine." Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 22, 23.

⁴⁵ Smith, *Beginning Well*, 19, 20. Also see pages 16, 26, 135, 136.

⁴⁶ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 62.

discipleship. Without a proper foundation in the early stages of conversion, later discipleship can be flawed. This is why it is so crucial to help the new converts experience insight, conviction, faith, confession, repentance, commitment, and connection with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Many times it can be the first experiences with things that can set the stage for rapid advancement or slow, painful stunted growth.⁴⁷ The processes that churches have in place to “birth” new faith in its formative stages are essential to the later growth in discipleship. These processes help to form habits that begin to change the new believer’s life.⁴⁸

The Requisite of Community for the Disciple

One of the most important issues for new disciples is to bring them into community. Yet today’s society values self sufficiency. In her book, *Community That Is Christian*, Julie Gorman writes, “While the concept of community is deeply rooted in biblical soil, we live in the land of the self-made individualist. ‘Meism’ is nurtured as a cardinal virtue. Self-centered individualism is considered an essential right of being a person. This is the principal language of our time.”⁴⁹ Yet this kind of thinking has had its effect on society. Over the years there has been a real disintegration of community within society and the family circle. The terrible effects of these shifts are widely known.

⁴⁷ Even in animals the importance of imprinting has been seen. See Sylvia Helena Cardoso and Renato M.E. Sabbatini, “Learning Who Is Your Mother: The Behavior of Imprinting,” November 4, 2001, *Brain and Mind: Electronic Magazine on Neuroscience* website, <http://www.cerebromente.org.br/n14/experimento/lorenz/index-lorenz.html> (accessed March 15, 2009).

⁴⁸ “Establishing right habits is vital to the life of a disciple. The right habits will provide consistent means of developing a disciple’s relationship with Jesus Christ.” Paul D. Stanley and J Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1992), 51-52.

⁴⁹ Julie A. Gorman, *Community That Is Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 42.

They are having a devastating impact upon humanity. John Ortberg, in his book, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*, writes,

Researchers found that the most isolated people were three times more likely to die than those with strong relational connections. People who had bad health habits (such as smoking, poor eating habits, obesity, or alcohol use) but strong social ties lived significantly longer than people who had great health habits but were isolated. . . . In other words, it is better to eat Twinkies with good friends than to eat broccoli alone.⁵⁰

If relationship and community are so vital for one's health, they are even more essential when it comes to building strong disciples. Relationships within community are God's plan for his disciples. Stanley and Willits write, "No substitute will fill this need in you for human relationship. Not money. Not achievement. Not busyness. Not books. Not even God Himself. Even though this man was in a state of sinless perfection, he was 'alone.' And it was 'not good.'"⁵¹

Church Membership

It is through relationship that believers come to a saving experience with Christ. It is not an experience that is arrived at solo; it is through the intercession of Christ, the working of the Holy Spirit, and the working of his appointed messengers to bring insight. As believers begin their discipleship journeys it is imperative to cultivate Christian community in order to grow into the fullness of Christ. In his book, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, Gareth Icenogle aptly states,

Spiritual transformation is a process of human community formed and reformed through the presence of divine community. Group members are empowered to help one another embrace God's transforming power. The Spirit's power to effect

⁵⁰ John Ortberg, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 33.

⁵¹ Stanley and Willits, *Creating Community*, 30.

human change is mediated through the ability of group members to see themselves through God's eyes and mind and act on behalf of the Holy Spirit who is a community Spirit. They help one another to see the truth of their beings and relationships in light of Jesus' intimate relationship with the Father. As Jesus has ongoing intimacy with the Father, so the Spirit enables the disciples of Jesus in the ecclesia to share in his divine relationship and community.⁵²

The Scriptures record, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47, KJV). In Scripture those who were being saved were part of the Church, the body of Christ. They were naturally identified as part of the Church. Hull writes,

The process of growth to Christlike maturity is one through which we need to patiently walk in the context of community because it is impossible to experience any kind of significant growth on our own. If we are going to experience the richness of learning and growing in community, then we need to be in a covenant group with people we trust and with whom we can share our lives through thick and thin.⁵³

This covenant is to join oneself to others as they are joined to Christ. A person cannot be one with Christ and not in unity with fellow disciples who are one with Christ.⁵⁴

Church membership should be automatic when a believer takes the initial steps of conversion and covenants to be a disciple.⁵⁵ It should not be some complicated, rigorous process where great Christian maturity is immediately expected. Nor should individuals identify themselves as part of the Christian community unless they understand the basic

⁵² Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 279, 280.

⁵³ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Disciple*, 95.

⁵⁴ "In a genuine Christian conversion, through an encounter with Christ we become part of the community of those who are called (*ekklesia*) and who, in response to that call, become one in Christ. There is no such thing as an isolated Christian; a conversion to be properly Christian includes incorporation into a community of faith. We must be both careful and intentional. Language shapes thought and behavior. When language is weak and meaningless, we fail to effectively communicate truth and grace. When language is dynamic and consistent with truth, it has the capacity to profoundly shape understanding and behavior. It makes a difference." Smith, *Beginning Well*, 44.

teachings of Scripture and understand the commitment of discipleship.⁵⁶ For any commitment to mean something there needs to be a clear understanding regarding the terms of that commitment.

In addition to understanding and committing to the basic teachings of Scripture, one must understand that he or she is only at the beginning of the Christian journey. Now that one has declared allegiance to Christ, the Holy Spirit can more fully engage the disciple in the transformative work of Spiritual formation.⁵⁷ In order for the new disciple to grow more effectively, the church needs to have a simple plan whereby the convert may be disciplined. Writing about this need, Warren states,

Many churches have no organized plan for following up on new believers and no comprehensive strategy for developing members to maturity. They leave it all to chance, assuming that Christians will automatically grow to maturity if they attend church services. They think all they need to do is encourage people to show up at meetings and the job will get done. Obviously, this isn't true. Spiritual growth does not happen once you are saved, even if you attend services regularly.⁵⁸

If new converts are instructed and initiated into a simple plan from the beginning, they will be able to flourish in their faith journeys and become healthy disciples. They understand that it is something important, something life-changing.⁵⁹ This becomes the healthy norm for the disciple and from the inception of their experience they can mature more rapidly. George Hunter, in his book, *How to Reach Secular People*, writes,

Seriousness suggests credibility and believability. So these churches expect all of their members to worship regularly, give generously, study the scriptures

⁵⁶ “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he has *sufficient* to finish it?” (Luke 14:27-28, KJV, italics mine).

⁵⁸ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 332.

⁵⁹ For further valuable research on this see Andy Stanley and Ed Young, *Can We Do That?* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Company, 2002), 36, 37. Also see Willard, *The Great Omission*, 5-6. Also see Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 57-62.

diligently, open their souls to peers in a small group, to minister in accordance with their gifts, to witness for the faith in their social networks, to be in mission. They communicate that expectation to their people often, and they “contract this with new members. But the expectations are not communicated as Law or duty, but rather as grace and opportunity—the means by which we become God’s powerful, compassionate, fulfilled, and reproductive people.”⁶⁰

With all this discussion on “comprehensive strategies” and “expectations” one might fear that we are putting the membership bar too high. It needs to be clearly understood that these expectations and teachings in themselves are the key to effective initiation. Whether the new believer can follow them yet is not the issue. The issue is to have something magnificent to grow toward, even the likeness of Jesus Christ. Thomas Rainer studied hundreds of churches and then wrote a book entitled, *High Expectations*. He learned that in order to successfully assimilate new believers it is important to raise the expectations rather than lower them. He wrote,

Repeatedly we heard about effective assimilation methodologies that worked only if the ministries carried with them high expectations of those involved. Such is the primary conclusion and thesis of this study. Effective assimilation churches have one primary characteristic that sets them apart from churches that do not keep their members in active involvement. Effective assimilation churches had high expectations of all of their members.⁶¹

Because first experiences can set the tone for further discipleship, it is important to help these new disciples see excellence in expectation from the very beginning, yet know that believers grow in a simple way, one baby step at a time, by grace.

⁶⁰ George G. Hunter, *How to Reach Secular People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 146.

⁶¹ Thomas Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), 23, as quoted in Bob Russell with Rusty Russell, *When God Builds a Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Company, 2000).

Relationship Modeling in Community

Much of the way people naturally learn is by modeling. We see others do and we learn to do. This apprentice style of discipleship was followed throughout the Scriptures in both Old and New Testament times. It is through relationships that God has designed for his people to grow and be sustained. Randy Frazee, author of *The Connecting Church*, powerfully states, “The development of meaningful relationships where every member carries a significant sense of belonging is central to what it means to be the church.”⁶² Relationships are the foundation for influencing others. They are the natural way of learning and they are the way that churches must make disciples.⁶³ In his book, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, LeRoy Eims explains, “The ministry is to be carried on by people, not programs. It is to be carried out by someone and not by something. Disciples cannot be mass produced. We cannot drop people into a ‘program’ and see disciples emerge at the end of the production line.”⁶⁴ This relationship modeling is something that comes about naturally as a result of one’s spiritual walk with others. It is something that can be done at all times and all places. It is not confined to “spiritual time” or relegated to some “witnessing program”; it is simply “letting your light shine” and being “the salt of the earth.” In the local church, these relationships will not form by accident. In order for these relationships to form there needs to be intentional education,

⁶² Frazee, *The Connecting Church*, 35.

⁶³ Gorman writes, “To commit ourselves to proclaiming that joining together in spiritual community is what God wants and what he intends to bring about among his people. Community is not optional. We will not mature into the fullness God intends without it.” Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 229.

⁶⁴ LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 45, quoted in Philip G. Samaan, *Christ’s Way of Making Disciples* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 69.

systems, and venues where believers can understand the importance of personal relationship modeling, as well as venues where relationship bonds can develop.

Practicing Community in the Church

Discipleship is nurtured most effectively within the context of community. One type of powerful gathering for Christian community is known as “small groups.” Roberta Hestenes and Julie Gorman define a small group as “an intentional face-to face encounter of no more than twelve people who meet on a regular basis with the purpose of growing in the knowledge and likeness of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁵ These gatherings can do so much to help believers grow into the fullness of Christ. Small groups can be very different, yet they need to always be characterized by love for one another and for God. Whether the group is about Bible study, prayer, socials, family worship, paintball games, fishing, knitting, witnessing, soup kitchen, praise team practicing, or any other specific interest, a small group can help people love one another and encourage one another in the faith.

In order for these groups to take place, intentional education and organization needs to happen in order to fight the inertia of isolationism and busyness in today’s society. White writes,

The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others. Let them reveal Christlike forbearance and patience, speaking no hasty words, using the talent of speech to build one another up in the most holy faith. Let them labor in Christlike love for those outside the fold, forgetting self

⁶⁵ Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 110.

in their endeavor to help others. As they work and pray in Christ's name, their numbers will increase; for the Saviour says: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19).⁶⁶

These small gatherings can take place whether the church is large or small, whether the members are young or old; these groups, above all else, must embody what it means to "do church" in today's context.

Without these groups, there is little formation of relationships, little accountability, little love being shown, little work for the lost, little care for one another. Without these groups Christians have abandoned their brothers and sisters and relegated a "love" relationship to a few minutes each week. It is impossible for Christians to accept the mandate of bearing one another's burdens and loving one another unless they plan to spend much time together on a regular basis. It is impossible to exhort one another, confess to one another, or really care for one another if believers only know each other in the context of a couple of hours at church. Discipleship will be greatly stunted unless small groups are part of the disciple's lifestyle.

Other Venues for Christian Community

There are many other venues that can contribute significantly to disciple formation. There are the revivals, the camp meetings, the weekly worship experiences, Christian concerts, prophecy seminars, family life seminars, and evangelistic meetings. Probably the most significant of these is the weekly worship service. Jack Hayford, in his book, *Worship His Majesty*, writes,

⁶⁶ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church, Volume Seven* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1909), 21, 22.

I am totally persuaded that worship is the key to evangelism as well as to the edification of the Church. Amid childlike, full-hearted worship, God's love distills like refreshing dew upon us. As worship moves beyond a merely objective exercise demanded by theological posturing, and as it becomes a simple, subjective quest for God, He responds. He answers the hunger of earnest hearts and reveals Himself in personal, transforming and fulfilling ways. The hungry and thirsty are filled as they seek Him in our worship.⁶⁷

Worship and other gatherings have a great place in the edification of the disciple and are times for experiencing special growth from the Spirit of God.

Spiritual Disciplines in Disciple Maturation

Human relationships are so important to discipleship, yet the most important relationship of all is the relationship that believers have with the trinity. There are certain activities that believers can do to place themselves in connection with God. These activities, known as spiritual disciplines or spiritual devotional habits can help a believer build a life-changing relationship with God. In speaking about spiritual disciplines, Willard writes, "The disciplines are activities of mind and body purposely undertaken to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order."⁶⁸ These spiritual exercises help believers become spiritually fit and cause them to come into conformity to the will of God.⁶⁹ Willard again defines these exercises in this way:

⁶⁷ Jack Hayford, *Worship His Majesty* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 56. Also see Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 79.

⁶⁸ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 68.

⁶⁹ "Exercise thyself unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-8, KJV).

“Spiritual disciplines are activities in our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort.”⁷⁰

Usually when believers think about their devotional lives they think of prayer and the study of the Scriptures. Yet there are many other spiritual habits that will help people draw near to Christ and his transformative power. Some habits such as praising God or the contemplation of the life of Christ can be very powerful. Willard has a “standard list” which he divides according to disciplines of “abstinence” and “engagement” (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Dallas Willard’s Categories of Spiritual Disciplines

DISCIPLINES OF ABSTINENCE

Solitude
Silence
Fasting
Frugality
Chastity
Secrecy
Sacrifice
Watching

DISCIPLINES OF ENGAGEMENT

Study
Worship
Celebration
Service
Prayer
Fellowship
Confession
Submission

In commenting on the distinction between the two groupings he writes, “The disciplines of abstinence are designed to weaken or break the power of life involvements that press against our involvement with the kingdom of God, and the disciplines of engagement are designed to immerse us ever more deeply into that kingdom.”⁷¹ While this list is not a comprehensive list of all possible disciplines it presents the classic spiritual disciplines.

⁷⁰ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 52.

⁷¹ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 417-418.

Not by Works

It is important to understand that the spiritual disciplines are not practiced to make people right with God, they are not about earning God's favor, but they position people to allow God to have access to them so that he can bless and transform them. Therefore, the disciplines should not be practiced in a rigid legalistic way, but out of joy and gratitude from a heart that has been saved from destruction. Believers ought to practice these exercises from a sense of freedom from the old way. Through the disciplines, believers seek after a rich relationship, a joyous and precious communion with the Lord. This is of a completely different inward motivation than legalism. Macchia writes,

Practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer; Scripture reading and reflection may feel at times like we are earning God's love. However, his amazing love and grace are an unconditional gift that he extends freely and generously toward us as his disciples. It is in the daily choosing of spiritual disciplines that we show our gratitude and cultivate our relationship with him.⁷²

This relationship becomes the sweetest, most important quest in the believer's life. These disciplines are not works to atone for sins or to gain the love and favor of God. But they become the conduit for the believer to build a closer relationship with God.⁷³

Growing through the Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are one of the chief ways of growing as disciples. Without these exercises disciples become feeble. The disciplines connect people in relationship to

⁷² Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Disciple*, 64.

⁷³ "If in spiritual formation you focus on action alone, you will fall into the deadliest of legalisms and you will kill other souls and die yourself. You will get a social conformity. That has happened over and over again in the past, and it is where the various 'spiritualities' past and present begin to exact a dreadful price---focusing on the outward activities and the actions, not on the inward person, not on the 'spirit.' God is looking for those who worship him in truth and in spirit." Willard, *The Great Omission*, 55.

God and are thus essential to one's continued spiritual vitality and advancement. Hull writes about the importance of daily maintaining this connection:

Too many think that once you become a Christian you turn on the spiritual autopilot. Christian growth is supernatural, not automatic. The important difference is the daily decision to follow Christ. Choice directly governs the degree to which one remains in Christ. By starting with the conditional *if*, Jesus clearly communicates an ongoing responsibility, on the part of the disciples, to maintain their relationship.⁷⁴

Christianity cannot be on autopilot. A relationship with Christ is living and must be cultivated. If the disciple does not choose to practice the disciplines then it is like a toxic relationship that is only one sided with God as the only active participant. Many Christians look for change to happen and pray for it to happen; but alas, it does not happen because they do not know how to connect to the power of God. Willard writes,

The single most obvious trait of those who profess Christ but do not grow into Christ-likeness is their refusal to take the reasonable and time-tested measures for spiritual growth. I almost never meet someone in spiritual coldness, perplexity, distress, and failure who is regular in the use of those spiritual exercises that will be obvious to anyone familiar with the contents of the New Testament.⁷⁵

The growth happens as the relationship is exercised by the practicing of the spiritual disciplines. People supply the natural, simple disciplines, and God supplies the supernatural growth in their lives. By this two-way relational connection, disciples grow.

Personally Experiencing the Disciplines

In order to become spiritually mature, believers must start to personally experience the disciplines. It takes effort, yet this effort can be compared to taking baby

⁷⁴ Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, 61.

⁷⁵ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 30.

steps.⁷⁶ When the disciple begins to habitually experience the great disciplines, his or her life reaches new vistas of growth and fulfillment. By following this lifestyle the disciple experiences a relationship that is full, free and life-changing. Jesus stated that his “yoke is easy and his burden is light” and certainly these exercises are not difficult (Matthew 11:30, KJV). Yet they do go against a spirit of busyness and the noise of people’s busy lives.

As disciples follow these beautiful exercises, they experience a vibrant and living relationship with the Lord. These encounters are sweet and are more than just intellectual. As a human relationship is more than just about facts, one’s relationship with God produces joy and life in itself. Macchia writes,

What I have discovered over the years is that practicing the spiritual disciplines is not for the purpose of knowing more data about God, more facts about his Word, or more information about the Christian life. Instead, the disciplines are for the purpose of knowing and experiencing the richness and vitality of a relationship with God—a relationship that begins with the Lord’s expression of intimate love for us. His earnest desire is that we relish this truth at the deepest recesses of our being. By coming before him with ears, eyes, hands, and hearts open wide, we remain in him long enough to hear his voice and make choices aligned with his will.⁷⁷

While it is important to get the facts right, it is even more important to encounter God in one’s actual life. This is why practicing the spiritual disciplines is so important. They enable the whole person to connect with the Divine. The results of these experiences are truly life-transformational.

⁷⁶ Thomas a Kempis writes, “For a pittance men will travel a great distance, but for eternal life many will scarcely take a single step. They look ahead to puny gains and sometimes shamefully wrangle over a single penny; neither do they hesitate to wear themselves out working day and night for some foolish promise or trifling object.” Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (New York: Random House, 1998), 76.

⁷⁷ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Disciple*, 67-68.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGY OF DISCIPLESHIP RECRUITMENT

The Natural Essence of Evangelism

Disciples create disciples. Where there is authentic discipleship there is effective evangelism. True disciples are contagious, and it is impossible for the gospel not to be proclaimed in their lives.¹ Instead of looking at evangelism as something that Christians do, evangelism should be viewed as something that naturally grows out of and is the fruit of who Christian disciples are. When Jesus called his disciples he said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). The call of authentic discipleship naturally leads to evangelism. In his book, *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church*, Sterling W. Huston writes,

Although the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19-20) is well known by Christians, it is often misinterpreted. Discipleship leader Waldron Scott points out that “most Christians see this essentially as a twofold commission: (1) to go (that is to evangelize) and (2) to disciple (that is to baptize converts and teach them). They assume a chronological sequence: evangelism first, followed by discipling. Such a reading, however prevalent, is unwarranted exegetically, as numerous biblical scholars have pointed out. The Great Commission is unitary, not dualistic. Its primary, even sole, objective is discipleship.”²

In the natural world when a seed is planted in good soil, watered, given sunlight and not crowded out by weeds, there will be a fruitful harvest.³ In Matthew 13 Jesus

¹ “The spirit of Christ is a missionary spirit. The very first impulse of the renewed heart is to bring others also to the Saviour.” Ellen White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 70.

² Sterling W. Huston, *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1996), 34. Huston quotes Waldron Scott, “Discipleship Evangelism,” in *Evangelism: The Next Ten Years*, ed. by E. Wirt (Waco, TX: Word Publisher, 1978), 104.

³ “Every student of God’s creation—Christians and non-Christians alike—will eventually stumble upon something scientists call the ‘biotic potential.’ Ecologists define it as the ‘inherent capacity of an organism or species to reproduce and survive.’” Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A*

likens evangelism to sowing seeds. It is not some magical trick or fanciful program that produces the fruit; it is a sower sowing seed. That is what sowers do; they sow seed; it is intrinsic to their identity. Evangelism needs to be seen as something that is done naturally in every department and activity of the Church. It is more about who believers are rather than just merely what they do. For the authentic disciple it is as natural as breathing. Whenever evangelism is looked upon as some special, unique, unnatural event, it will soon become ineffective. Peace writes,

What I am saying is that we need to go beyond such directly evangelistic activities and work evangelistically in as many structures as possible. When evangelism is seen as “something special,” it is done only occasionally and only in a specific way that will reach some people but miss most. Furthermore, experience demonstrates that entropy takes hold of evangelism. We have to keep at it or it dies away (even in churches that owe their existence to vigorous evangelistic programs). So if evangelism is seen as that which requires special structures, then over time, it will become marginalized. Whereas if you have the attitude that most all church activities have evangelistic potential and that it is merely a matter of realizing it, continuous involvement in outreach by a church is more likely.⁴

Thus, evangelism becomes a natural byproduct of authentic discipleship. It is a very important part of discipleship, but a natural part of discipleship nonetheless. When evangelism is seen in this way, disciples are free to “fight in their own armor” and use personal individualized contextual approaches to reach the hearts of others. In this way evangelism becomes a natural lifestyle, a fruit of apprenticeship to Jesus.

Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 10.

⁴ Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 332.

Multiplication at the Cellular Level

It is not God's plan to work on the system of addition for evangelism. Each new disciple is to multiply himself or herself. When life grows at the cellular level the multiplication factor can be truly exponential. This natural evangelistic process is called cell multiplication. In nature a cell that does not multiply itself begins to die. Daniel Mazia, professor of zoology at the University of California at Berkeley, states,

Double or nothing. With few exceptions a living cell either reproduces or it dies: the principle is so simple that no one has bothered to call it a principle. A cell is born in the division of a parent cell. It then doubles in every respect: in every part, in every kind of molecule, even in the amount of water it contains.⁵

What is true in the natural world is also true in the supernatural realm. Christians can either multiply and reproduce or die. When individual believers commit themselves to making disciples, it is then that they really begin to experience the fullness of discipleship. Without an emphasis on others, a spiritual selfishness may develop that can lead to spiritual decay. Ron Kincaid, in his book, *A Celebration of Disciple-Making*, writes,

Reproduction is the stage when a Christian begins real growth. Laboring in the Lord's work quickens the rate of growth toward Christian maturity. Failure to understand this principle has caused thousands of well-meaning Christians to be locked in spiritual stagnation. Having lost their growing edge, they become lukewarm in their faith. Scripture teaches that disciple-making is intimately connected to Christian maturity.⁶

This natural process of cell multiplication is the strategy Christians must follow if they are going to hope to reach the world.

⁵ Daniel Mazia, professor of zoology at the University of California at Berkeley, quoted by Ron Kincaid, *A Celebration of Disciple-Making* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 21

⁶ Kincaid, *A Celebration of Disciple-Making*, 22.

By focusing on a few disciples who can reproduce themselves in others, the sharing of the gospel can grow faster than one person seeking to convert the crowd. By each person focusing on reaching just one person each year, the Church could double every year. Mathematically, through multiplication at the individual disciples' single cell level, the gospel could reach the whole world in less than one generation. This is not another program, gimmick, or trick. It is about healthy disciples doing what comes naturally. It is about authentic disciples loving one person at a time into the kingdom.

The Right Ingredients for Evangelism

The first ingredient of evangelism is authentic disciples. It is impossible to produce something in others that one does not have personally. The greater the number of authentic disciples, the greater will be the impact in evangelism. This refers to authentic disciples, not merely church members or those who believe in Christ. Neil Cole, in his book, *Cultivating a Life for God*, writes,

This is the power that the church is meant to display. It's not our rational arguments, grandiose buildings, elaborate television broadcasts or bold personalities that will win this world to Christ. It is our simple testimony of a life that has been forever changed by the power of Christ who has come from heaven to seek and save those who are lost that will leave the world speechless.⁷

It is by authentic disciples living out their lives that people are impacted and led into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.⁸ These disciples display a love and grace that is truly extraordinary and attractional in nature. By the life they lead they are "light" and

⁷ Neil Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1999), 21.

⁸ White writes, "By the power of His grace manifested in the transformation of character the world is to be convinced that God has sent His Son as its Redeemer." White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 470.

“salt,” the “city set on a Hill” that Christ envisioned in his great Olivet discourse. White poignantly writes,

A true, lovable Christian is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Bible truth. Such a man is Christ’s representative. His life is the most convincing evidence that can be borne to the power of divine grace. When God’s people bring the righteousness of Christ into the daily life, sinners will be converted, and victories over the enemy will be gained.⁹

It seems so easy and natural, yet the Church has failed in producing this kind of disciple. Often it is the “lovable” part that is so difficult, or it is the tendency to rely on externals; plans, and programs instead of taking a hard look at the kind of disciples the Church is producing.¹⁰ A return to true discipleship lies at the core and foundation of church growth. It is the missing link, the great *eureka* of evangelistic efficacy. The Church must awaken and become serious about making authentic disciples. Believers must put down their bags of evangelistic “tricks” and mobilize the whole Church in the great cause of extending the hand of redemption to a bleeding world.

Another ingredient for effective evangelism is simply connecting with people. The Church must be a place that fosters positive interpersonal relationships. Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, in their book, *Comeback Churches*, write,

Ministry and outreach is about connecting with people— for God so loved the world . . . that’s people. He sent His Son, and His Son is sending us (John 20:21) to connect with and reach people. Developing a churchwide evangelistic strategy is about having the same vision that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have—to connect with, relate to, and love people.¹¹

⁹ Ellen White, “A Call to Greater Consecration,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 14, 1904.

¹⁰ “If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one.” Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume Nine (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1909), 189.

¹¹ Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 115.

Relating with actual people needs to be an integral part of evangelism.¹² Accosting people with intellectual truth while not helping people with their needs will only validate the viewpoint that Christianity is uncaring and irrelevant to their lives. Christians need to learn how to be relational people.¹³

The most important ingredient for effective evangelism is prayer. In many churches prayer has become a mere formality like a quick blessing given at a meal. At church prayer meetings people *study*, during weeks of prayer people *preach*, and on the special day of prayer people learn *about* prayer. When is the Church supposed to actually pray? McIntosh and Reeves, addressing this problem, write,

Missing, then, is an *intentional strategy* with substantial emphasis placed on building spiritual energy through an intentional focus on corporate prayer. Although prayer has been emphasized in books and workshops for more than a decade, only rarely do we find churches able to point to a significant prayer strategy that has been verbalized and activated. This critical life-giving system, although always acknowledged as overwhelmingly important, is in all too many churches underpracticed and underorganized.¹⁴

It has been said, “Little prayer, little power; some prayer, some power; lots of prayer, lots of power.”¹⁵ When the church stops giving lip service to prayer, and actually prays, then

¹² “Evangelism happens in the context of interpersonal relationships. It happens when one believer allows God to use him as salt and light within his own sphere of influence. All too frequently evangelistic programming takes people out of their spheres of influence. But personal friends and acquaintances from any arena of life form the most natural environment in which to begin reaching out. Our friends are our personal mission field.” Dann Spader and Gary Mayes, *Growing a Healthy Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 154.

¹³ Ellen White writes, “Especially should those who have tasted the love of Christ develop their social powers, for in this way they may win souls to the Saviour. Christ should not be hid away in their hearts, shut in as a coveted treasure, sacred and sweet, to be enjoyed solely by themselves; nor should the love of Christ be manifested toward those only who please their fancy.” Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church, Volume Six*, 172-173.

¹⁴ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches in the Twenty-First Century*, 62.

¹⁵ John Wesley is known for his phrase, “Get on fire for God and people will come to watch you bum.” Wesley would pray for four hours a day and once off his knees, he would exhort his itinerating

the power of God will be seen. When the leaders and people individually and corporately gather often to know and do the will of the Lord in prayer, power will be seen to impact people's lives.

After studying churches that were intentionally pursuing people and leading them to Christ, Stetzer and Dodson identify the fact that effective prayer brings effective evangelism. They write,

In the last section of the survey, comeback leaders were asked about the top three factors that lead to their church's revitalization. In the responses recorded to this question, eleven factors or words were prominent. The word mentioned most often was "prayer," occurring in 143, or 44.7 percent, of the 320 responses. We've dealt with strategic prayer earlier. Second "evangelism/outreach" was highly valued in these churches.¹⁶

This is a significant finding that the word "mentioned most often was 'prayer.'"

Churches that are serious about reaching the lost must be praying churches. Pastors and leaders who want to make an impact in the lives and hearts of the unchurched need to be men and women who are often on their knees. Another study of church growth by Huston notes,

Surveys of Crusade inquirers reveal that at least 80 percent of the unchurched who respond to the invitation were brought personally by someone else. Most Christians can point to a caring person who prayed for them. One survey of those who claim a personal relationship with Jesus Christ revealed that 85 percent could identify a relative within their family circle who had been praying for them. God has placed each Christian in the center of a web of relationships with persons to whom they can tell the good news.¹⁷

It should not take any more studies to convince believers that a praying church is a church of power. The Church needs to find a way to empower its members and equip

circuit riders, "You have no other business than to save souls." Huston, *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church*, 187.

¹⁶ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 105.

¹⁷ Huston, *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church*, 50.

them to pray for the unchurched. Church leaders must teach members to intentionally pray for those in their circles of influence. Leaders need to teach them that this will have a powerful and profound impact on reaching their friends and loved ones.

A clear theology of mission will contain many of these ingredients.¹⁸ GVSDA needs to have a theology that informs its vision to reach lost people in its community. This vision will then in turn translate into specific lifestyle activities within the lives of those being discipled. Without a clear unifying theology of mission to inform the church's vision the church will remain adrift. Brian McLaren, in his book, *Seeing Beyond Church Walls: Action Plans for Touching Your Community*, writes,

I've realized more and more that we don't become seeker-sensitive Christians until we take a long and hard look at our theology. I think our inward-focused churches are, ultimately, an accurate reflection of our deepest theology. In short, we have inward-focused churches because we have an inward-focused theology. You can talk about changing your "methods" all you want, but face it, as soon as you start talking about changing your theology, your ministry is ruined. For good!¹⁹

Looking at long held assumptions and traditions can be painful at times; yet this is exactly what needs to take place in order for evangelistic mission to thrive. The next section will go deeper into a missional theology in an exploration of the motivations of the evangelist and the evangelized.

¹⁸ Donald McGavran writes, "In this world, mission must be what God desires. It is not a man-initiated activity but *missio Dei*, the mission of God, who Himself remains in charge of it. Hence the problems of mission should be viewed in the light of His revealed will. Being the kind of God He has shown Himself to be in Christ, what kind of mission does *He* desire? For that is what mission essentially and theologically is." Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 31.

¹⁹ Brian D. McLaren and Steve Sjogren, *Seeing Beyond Church Walls: Action Plans for Touching Your Community* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2002), 53.

Motives of the Evangelist

Love is the greatest motivation for the evangelist. “For God so loved” (John 3:16) is the great motivation for the salvific work within Scripture. Without a primary motivation of love for others and for the lost, the disciple is merely self-centered and self-absorbed. The Scriptures record that Jesus was “moved with compassion” towards the multitude because they were “as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 18:12-13). It is a love for God and a love for others that motivate the evangelist.²⁰ This is the kind of love that motivated the great evangelists of old. Huston writes,

Evangelism is the cry of John Knox, “Give me Scotland or I die,” and of John Wesley, “The world is my parish.” Evangelism is Henry Martyn landing on the shores of India and crying, “Here let me burn out for God!” it is David Brainerd coughing up blood from his tubercular lungs as he prays in the snow for the North American Indians. It is George Whitfield crossing the Atlantic thirteen times in a small ship to preach in the American colonies.²¹

It is only love that can cause this kind of motivation and sacrifice. This is the kind of love Paul had when he wrote, “The love of Christ compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Believers have tasted of something very good, the love of God, and they love others enough to share it. This is the kind of motivation that loves all people and cares for them wherever they are, no matter how far they are away from God or his Church. Believers love them “just because,” not “in order that.” There are no strings attached to

²⁰ Sally Morgenthaler writes, “Evangelism by accident” happens when Christians have a genuine, infectious love relationship with God, when they worship God wholeheartedly. Conversely, it is difficult to witness convincingly about a God we do not know and love in our inmost being. And when it comes to a worship service, we have already seen that seekers are not the least bit interested in watching us “go through the motions.” They are hungry to see evidence of God at work in our hearts!” Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 40.

²¹ Huston, *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church*, 183.

this love, no “gospel hook,” just genuine, unconditional love flowing forth from a love relationship with God.²²

Because of this great love for Jesus Christ and gratitude for what he has done and is doing, believers long to follow him and obey him. This in turn motivates them to obey the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Believers should not forget that God has clearly given them their work. There are many noble enterprises that could garner the attention of the Church, yet God has clearly made obligatory only one aim and purpose, the making of more disciples. Billy Graham once said,

Our chief motive for evangelism is not the world’s physical, moral, philosophical, and spiritual needs, as great as they may be. Our primary motivation for evangelism is that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ “under orders.” We must proclaim the Gospel because He has ordered us to do it. Our Lord has commanded us to “go,” “to proclaim,” and to “make disciples,” and that is enough. If we do not evangelize, we will be disobedient to our Lord.²³

Even though this command is enough, there is yet more motivation. The joys of working with heaven for the salvation of others, the joys of service, and even the spiritual impact that reaching out to others has on one’s own life. St. Francis of Assisi once prayed,

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace; Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is error, the truth; Where there is doubt, the faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek To be consoled, as to console; To be understood, as to understand; To be loved as

²²“This raises the whole question of motives for friendship. Should one cast about for a relationship with a non-church person simply because this will give one the opportunity to witness (albeit in a non-mechanistic way)? Surely this is a flawed motivation that cannot reap true friendship. Rather, the challenge is for a person to be open to friendship with all sorts of people and not just seek relationships with people who might be interested in one’s church or in Christianity.” Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 294.

²³ Billy Graham, “The Biblical Mandate to Evangelize,” in *Evangelism Alert*, ed. by Gilbert W. Kirby (London: World Wide Publications, 1972), quoted in Huston, *Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church*, 76.

to love. For it is in giving that we receive; It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.²⁴

It is truly in giving that one receives (Luke 6:36-40), and in following the great commission that one is blessed beyond measure. By taking part in the Great Commission believers' joy is made full. They now have a great purpose for life. And even more, their unselfish love, the highest of all virtues, is seen to be real. What higher motivation could be invoked? What deeper or nobler meaning could there be given for the purpose of one's life?

Motivation of the Unchurched

There are many motivations and factors that can lead someone into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. But again, the love of Christ is the greatest motivation. His unconditional acceptance, genuine care, honesty, and great grace and patience all awaken within the heart a desire to become a follower. Human relationships are wonderful, yet nothing compares to a relationship with Deity.

Historically, there have been many means employed to seek to motivate the unchurched. Mental and physical coercion tactics, bribes, and even lies have been used. While falsehood and forceful manipulation must be vigilantly guarded against, there are benefits in sharing the pros and the cons of faith in Christ. Believers need to guard against extremes while seeking to paint a picture of reality. Mark Finley, in his book, *Decisions, Persuading People for Christ*, explains,

As soul winners, we are the salt of the earth. It was necessary to present to men and women the gospel in such a way that not only will they have adequate

²⁴ St. Francis of Assisi, "Peace Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi," *American Catholic* website, <http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/Francis/peaceprayer.asp> (accessed December 2, 2008).

information and be convicted that they ought to do something, but they will want to do it. By presenting the benefits of rightdoing, the consequences of wrongdoing, and the influence that the action will have upon others, desire is heightened. Through the Bible God, Himself, presents the joy of heaven, the terror of hell, and His own love as a powerful motive to heighten our desire.²⁵

Many evangelists have overemphasized the “terrors of hell,” yet there is value in helping people see the great advantages of following Christ. These advantages have often been overlooked and not used to their fullest extent when painting a picture of the gospel. Willard writes,

In 1937 Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave the world his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. It was a masterful attack on “easy Christianity” or “cheap grace,” in the context of mid-twentieth-century Europe and America. But it did not succeed in setting aside---perhaps it even enforced---the view of discipleship as a costly spiritual excess, and only for those especially driven or called to it. It was right and good of Bonhoeffer to point out that one cannot be a disciple of Christ without forfeiting things normally sought in human life, and that one who pays little in the world’s coinage to bear his name has reason to wonder where he or she stands with God. But the cost of *nondiscipleship* is far greater---even when this life alone is considered---than the price paid to walk with Jesus, constantly learning from him.²⁶

This cost of non-discipleship can certainly be brought before the unchurched as a motivation to follow. Yet, underneath all the talk of hell or of prosperity for the believer there must be love. Without love as the primary motivation for following Christ, temporal life circumstances can falsely appear to be more advantageous than following Christ.

²⁵ Mark Finley, *Decisions, Persuading People for Christ* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial/Stewardship Association, and Center of Continuing Education for Ministry, 1984), 1.

²⁶ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 8-9.

The Role of Clergy in Evangelism and Discipleship

The Personal Spiritual Formation of the Pastor

There is a tremendous need today for clergy who are effective spiritual leaders.²⁷

Throughout human history it has been God's method to call a leader and through that leader accomplish his purposes. The fact is, without effective leadership a church is destined to fail. Gary McIntosh, in his classic book, *One Size Doesn't Fit All*, writes,

Since the early 1970s a large number of studies have been conducted on growing churches in North America. A persistent thread running through all this research has been the need for a high caliber of pastoral leadership. Second only to the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, pastoral leadership is the most determinative factor in growing churches. Any church that desires to develop a healthy ministry must adequately recognize that strong pastoral competence is a decisive factor for the vitality and outreach of their congregation.²⁸

Good pastoral leadership is vital to the growth of a church, however good leadership is hard to find because the pressures on leaders are tremendous. Some would even argue that today's challenges are greater than ever before.²⁹ The demands of ministry and life can seem overwhelming at times, yet God has called his servants to not only survive, but thrive in his work.

What lies at the root of pastoral effectiveness is being the right person.

Methodologies and strategies learned from seminary will only get one so far in ministry.

²⁷ Gene Wood writes, "Everything rises and falls on leadership. No serious student of church growth argues the fact that the pastor is key." Gene Wood, *Leading Turnaround Churches* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2001), 35.

²⁸ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 67-68.

²⁹ Writing about the problem, Gene Wood notes, "More than 1300 pastors each month are forcibly terminated without just cause. A church that has fired a pastor has a 70 percent chance of doing the same to the following pastor. Each month more than 1200 pastors leave the ministry due to stress, church related issues, family issues, or burnout. Sixty-seven percent of pastors' wives say they're dissatisfied with their marriage. Seventy-five percent of pastors spend less than one evening per week with spouse or friends. Clergy divorce has risen 654 percent in the last 20 years. Fifty percent of seminary graduates leave the ministry after five years. Seventy percent of pastors say they don't have someone they consider to be a close personal friend. Seventy-one percent of pastors say they're having personal financial problems." Wood, *Leading Turnaround Churches*, 35.

Effective pastoral ministry grows from the inside out. It is more about developing the character within than honing the skills on the outside. Henri Nouwen, speaking to this deep inner condition in his book, *Creative Ministry*, writes,

If a minister wants to be of real help in his contact with people, he has to be a professional with special information, special training, and special skills. But if he wants to break through the chains of our manipulative world, he has to move beyond professionalism, and through self-denial and contemplation, become a faithful witness of God's covenant.³⁰

This kind of ministry is different because there is inner congruence. There is a great effectiveness in action that flows from one's inner being. It is action that does not have to be contrived; it is action that is natural, and people can sense that there is a life-transformational power involved.

This congruence translates into credibility and people want to follow those whom they can trust. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, in their book, *Credibility*, write,

Of all the attributes of credibility, however, there is one that is unquestionably of greatest importance. The dimension of honesty accounts for more of the variance in believability than all of the other factors combined. Being seen as someone who can be trusted, who has high integrity, and who is honest and truthful is essential. You may know someone is clearly competent, dynamic, and inspirational. But if you have a sense that that person is not being honest, you will not accept the message, and you will not willingly follow. So the credibility check can reliably be simplified to just one question: "Do I trust this person?"³¹

No one starts with the desire to finish his or her ministry due to a moral failure or financial scandal. No pastor wants to have to move on because he or she has lost the trust of the people. But it is difficult to find trustworthy spiritual leaders when daily there is news of another prominent leader who has fallen. It is critical for a leader to ensure that his or her life is congruent on the inside and out.

³⁰ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (New York: Image Books Doubleday, 1971), 64. Also see page 113.

³¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 24.

When it comes to spiritual leadership, leaders must become spiritual people. If they are not spiritual men and women they cannot lead spiritual organizations. In order for leaders to become credible, spiritual people they must become experts in spiritual formation. In his book, *Revolution in Leadership*, Lyle Schaller notes,

Spiritual formation is the most significant issue facing church leaders for the future. This is true both for the congregational context as well as for the personal practice of the leader. Spiritual formation is the process whereby Christ is formed in us. This process includes the discipline of intentional efforts, which we practice publicly and privately, intended to open our lives to God for Him to fashion His heart in us.³²

This spiritual formation is not something that is added to our lives, but something that becomes who we are as spiritual people. The leader needs to first become an apprentice learner in the school of Christ before he or she can be trusted to lead others in this experience.³³ This intentional formational learning and practice needs to become habitual and consistent throughout the life of the leader. Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, in their book, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformation Journey*, write,

Personal preparation must begin with the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines. Transformation is a process of bringing the church into alignment with God's unique vision. If the leaders of the congregation are not spending significant, consistent time seeking God's direction-through prayer, Bible study, meditation, solitude, and fasting – it will be impossible for meaningful and lasting transformation to occur. In addition to a daily time with God, personal retreats can be a very effective way to prepare and recharge.³⁴

³² Lyle E. Schaller and Reggie McNeal, *Revolution in Leadership* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 100.

³³ An overview of the essential spiritual disciplines every disciple and leader must learn to habitually practice are found in Chapter 5 of this ministry focus paper in the section titled, "Overview of Key Spiritual Disciplines."

³⁴ Jim Herrington and Mike Bonem and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformation Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 31.

In the American Church's academically oriented system of producing spiritual leaders, often the character formational issues, which are difficult to teach in the classrooms, are left out. Yet these are the very elements that will produce great spiritual leaders. Spiritual formation is the one activity that will produce the inner integrity and trustworthiness that spiritual leadership demands. Spiritual formation, which paradoxically is often born of stillness, will make all other activity effective. Spiritual formation needs to be built into the training curriculum and schedules of all who would do ministry. This must be top priority. White writes,

In all who are under the training of God is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. . . . And this is the effectual preparation for all who labor for God. Amid the hurrying through, and the strain of life's intense activities, the soul that is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. The life will breathe out fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men's hearts.³⁵

All of this means, above all else, that one needs to be a genuine spiritual leader. Leading must be more about being than doing. Churches, church schools and church administration must take this task seriously. Church leaders must realize that all their efforts without Christ are mere busyness, like a hamster running in a stationary wheel. GVSDA needs an authentic spiritual leader. Without this inside-to-outside approach, leadership at GVSDA cannot be trusted. As pastor of GVSDA, my role must be more about *being* the right leader than merely *doing* the right church programs or activities. I must take this seriously.

³⁵ White, *The Desire of Ages*, 363.

Preaching and Teaching

Few would argue that preaching and teaching are vital skills for clergy. Preaching is often the most celebrated part of a “preacher’s” work. So it certainly should not come as a surprise that growing churches are churches where there is effective preaching and teaching of God’s Word. In his book, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, Thom Rainer reports, based on a survey of the formerly unchurched, that nine out of ten times the pastor was critical in the individual’s decision to join the ranks of the church. During the interviews, eight specific issues surfaced which influenced these people to join the church. Seven out of the eight directly revolve around preaching and teaching. Out of 220 respondents, 211 cited “preaching that teaches” as significant, 147 cited “preaching that applies to my life,” 121 cited “authenticity of the pastor,” 120 cited “the pastor’s conviction,” 105 cited “personal contact by the pastor,” 89 cited “the pastor as a good communicator,” and 87 cited “the pastor’s class.”³⁶ In another study, Rainer wrote, “The pastors from our study group of evangelistic churches spent five times more time in sermon preparation compared to the pastors in the non-evangelistic churches. We also found a strong relationship between assimilation and sermon preparation time.”³⁷ Clearly being an effective teacher/preacher is vitally important.

Deleted:

Scripture records that preaching is God’s chosen means of helping people find salvation. St. Paul writes, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”

³⁶ Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched: and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 56-57.

³⁷ Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 75, quoted in Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 95.

(1 Corinthians 1:21, KJV). Though the style of preaching should always change to fit the audience, the idea of proclaiming God's message of love is always relevant. The great radio preacher H.M.S. Richards wrote,

Preaching, my young friends, will never die. You see, I have sort of aimed this particularly at you younger men who are preparing for the ministry. Don't think that preaching is going to die. It never will---not as long as there are sinners in this world, not as long as the work of God isn't finished. Preaching will never be superseded as long as true men with a true message are guided by the Holy Ghost. Such preachers will always have someone to listen to them.³⁸

People need a word from God; people need hope. And this hope is founded upon the Word of God; the hope of Jesus Christ will ever satisfy.³⁹ Leith Anderson, in *A Church for the 21st Century*, gives this sage advice:

Pastors who want to check their preaching should ask parishioners whether they are receiving the hope of God. They should listen to tapes of their own sermons to determine whether they have an overall message of condemnation or encouragement, and whether the hope they offer is genuine and comes from Jesus Christ.⁴⁰

With this kind of hopefulness, people cannot help but be attracted and transformed. The world is a very negative place; may the Church be a place where the candle of hope can

³⁸ H.M.S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 15.

³⁹ "Barna tells us that the number-one piece of information that interests an unchurched person when he or she looks for a church is not the worship style that is offered. Rather it is a church's specific beliefs and doctrines. Similarly, when George Gallup asked, 'What do Americans want from their churches?' part of what he learned was this: '[Americans] have a strong desire for information about the Bible and its meaning.'" Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism*, 19. Morgenthaler quotes George Barna, *Never on a Sunday: The Challenge of the Unchurched* (Glendale, CA.: Barna Research Group, 1990), 28; and George Gallup and Jim Castelli, *American Faith in the 90's* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 253.

⁴⁰ Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1992), 202.

be lit, where the warm glow of hope can burn brighter. Even the warnings and judgments of Scripture can be seen in the light of hope.⁴¹

Leading by Example

It was through working personally with people that Jesus found entrance into their hearts. In many ways, all evangelism and discipleship is personal. The minister should not be so hurried that he or she does not have time for divine appointments with others. Ministers must not isolate themselves from common everyday activities that bring them into contact with others. In order to be effective, the minister must model what he or she is teaching his people. Southerland, in his book, *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change*, writes, “You cannot expect a church to catch a vision that you are not living out in your own life. They won’t catch it if you are not living it. They will never be any more committed to reaching seekers than you are. When you are living it and can talk about it from first hand experience, it will catch on.”⁴² This personal example lends credibility to the message. Howard Hendricks writes, “You can impress people at a distance; you can only *impact* them up close. The general principle is this, the closer the personal relationship, the greater the potential for impact.”⁴³

⁴¹ J.N. Andrews shares that the last great messages to be proclaimed just prior to the second coming are messages of warnings, yet given to inspire hope. John Nevins Andrews, *Three Messages of Revelation 14* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1970), iii.

⁴² Dan Southerland, *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 94.

⁴³ Howard Hendricks, quoted in Dann Spader and Gary Mayes, *Growing a Healthy Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 67.

The Church needs leaders who really care about people and who really listen to the needs and thoughts of others.⁴⁴ This will not be some stilted leadership exercise in order to manipulate followers or drive some agenda. It will be born out of genuine desire to understand and serve the needs of the followers. This caring attitude will speak louder than any words. It will help the people to know that they can follow because the leader truly cares. Kouzes and Posner write,

As fundamental as it might seem, the best thing that leaders can do to show others they respect them and consider them worthwhile is to reach out, listen and learn. Professors Suresh Srivastva and Frank Barrett of Case Western Reserve University underscore this point in their writings on executive integrity by noting that it is “not the content of the exchange that is central but the experience of being taken in and heard, which not only affirms the legitimacy of one’s way of looking at the world but then allows one to begin letting go of some defensiveness because the experience of affirmation increases one’s capacity to affirm others.”⁴⁵

This attitude that puts a high value upon others is critical to effective interpersonal and pastoral effectiveness. This kind of grace is not very common in American society today. It is a wonderful experience to meet someone like this. This work cannot be delegated to others; it is a personal work, a work from heart to heart. In his book, *Hope: How Triumphant Leaders Create the Future*, Andrew Razeghi asks,

Recall the last time someone believed in you—I mean really believed in you, so much that they put you in a situation that even you thought was beyond your capacity. Perhaps it was a coach, a teacher, or an old boss. How did it make you feel knowing that someone thought you could walk on water and run through walls? How did you perform?⁴⁶

⁴⁴ James O’Toole writes, “Moral and effective leaders listen to their followers *because* they respect them and *because* they honestly believe that the welfare of followers is the end of leadership (and not that followers are the means to the leader’s goals).” James O’Toole, *Leading Change* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 9.

⁴⁵ Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility*, 97-98. The authors cite S. Srivastva and F.J. Barrett, “Foundations for Executive Integrity: Dialogue, Diversity, Development,” in *Executive Integrity: The Search for High Human Values in Organizational Life*, ed. by S. Srivastva and Associates (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988).

⁴⁶ Razeghi, *Hope*, 35.

Clergy should budget significant amounts of time to personally be with people. Whether during home visitations, social gatherings, neighborhood picnics, community events, or church life, the minister should be unhurriedly engaged socially and interact with grace and love. Others will see this and model their lives after the leader. In this way others can be apprenticed into the great work of God.

Training/Equipping

One of the primary roles of clergy is to unleash the power of God through “equipping the saints for the work of the ministry” (Ephesians 4:12). This is how the minister can multiply his or her effectiveness. This needs to be the constant aim of leadership at all levels of organization. It is through this educational process that others “catch the vision” and are mobilized for the work of God. Gareth Crossley, in his book, *Everyday Evangelism*, writes,

This commission to teach and train the church for its God-ordained role must be taken seriously. Each member has discovered what contribution he/she can make to the good of the whole and then go ahead and make it. Mobilizing all the church to multi-faceted ministry is the urgent need of the hour. Multiplication of workers, viewed from a human perspective, it is a key factor in church growth and evangelism.⁴⁷

Yet this work should not be seen as something unusual, special, or unnatural. It is a natural outgrowth of authentic discipleship. Gorman writes, “‘Equipping’ by its very nature is not just teaching skills but holistically growing people up in Christ’s way of living and loving so that the whole body ends up increasing in maturity in him.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Gareth Crossley, *Everyday Evangelism* (Hertfordshire, England: Evangelical Press, 1987), 212-213.

⁴⁸ Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 17.

Having said this, pastors and other church leaders should not assume that people will automatically be trained and equipped for service. Pastors should have high expectations and give many opportunities for equipping and growth.⁴⁹ Everything that is happening needs to be looked upon as an opportunity for training and equipping the disciples for the work of God.

Training and equipping should be primary aspects of the minister's job description. This needs to be ever kept in mind. In his book, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church*, Russell Burrill writes,

It is safe to assume that the role of the pastors in the early church, along with the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, was not primarily the performance of ministry, but the training of other people so that the ministry of the whole church could be enhanced. The care of the church is always assigned in Scripture to all the people of God, not to the pastor alone. The pastor does provide care because he is a part of the people of God, but it is not for this reason that pastors are hired. They are hired to train and equip the saints for their ministry. Only thus can the church truly be built up.⁵⁰

A minister who endeavors to do all the work himself or herself and does not make provision for others to do the work of the ministry robs others of a great blessing and seriously impedes the work of God. White explains,

It is not the Lord's purpose that ministers should be left to do the greatest part of the work of sowing the seeds of truth. Men who are not called to the ministry are to be encouraged to labor for the Master according to their several ability. Hundreds of men and women now idle could do acceptable service. By carrying the truth into the homes of their friends and neighbors, they could do a great work for the Master. God is no respecter of persons. He will use humble, devoted Christians, even if they have not received so thorough an education as some

⁴⁹ Stetzer and Dodson write, "In analyzing responses from comeback churches, three main issues rose to the surface—expectations, equipping, and empowerment. Over and over, comeback leaders stated that increasing expectations is a key to creating an atmosphere for mobilization of the laity. Church members are expected to be involved and to use their God-given gifts, talents, and skills." Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 137.

⁵⁰ Russell C. Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 1998), 45.

others. Let such ones engage in service for Him by doing house-to-house work. Sitting by the fireside, they can--if humble, discreet, and godly--do more to meet the real needs of families than could an ordained minister.⁵¹

In many ways it is just following the principles of delegation laid forth by Jethro to Moses. This does not happen by accident; there should be clearly defined objectives in place in order to equip and place people into service for God. These plans must be systematized and carefully maintained. This work should not only be the work of the pastor but also the minister must enlist the help of the elders. White contends,

The elders and those who have leading places in the church should give more thought to their plans for conducting the work. They should arrange matters so that every member of the church shall have a part to act, that none may lead an aimless life, but that all may accomplish what they can according to their several ability. . . . It is very essential that such an education should be given to the members of the church that they will become unselfish, devoted, efficient workers for God; and it is only through such a course that the church can be prevented from becoming fruitless and dead. . . . Let every member of the church become an active worker--a living stone, emitting light in God's temple.⁵²

Creating such a culture of lay involvement and empowerment will happen when pastoral and lay leadership prioritizes this work.⁵³ This task will not be easy. Often people will feel the minister is being lazy. Others will feel like a “paid professional” should be doing all this work. Yet church members need to be educated that lay ministry is essential for the success of the Church.

As equipping and training is prioritized, pastoral leadership needs to create an environment where others can minister effectively by relinquishing control and

⁵¹ White, *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 7*, 21.

⁵² White, *Christian Service*, 62.

⁵³ “When asked, ‘Was your church’s comeback affected by mobilizing the laity in a greater way? Comeback leaders responded that it was, rated this third (3.87) among the factors of vibrant faith, evangelistic efforts, and mobilizing the laity, small groups, marketing, facilities’ changes, and leadership. That tells us that lay ministry or mobilization is clearly important in effecting a comeback.” Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 134.

eliminating needless bureaucratic hindrances. Leonard Sweet, in his book, *Aqua Church: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture*, writes,

Leadership is less about employing people than empowering people. Leadership is less about controlling people than releasing them. This does not mean that other people will not put their lives in your hands. But the whole purpose of an air traffic “controller” is not to keep planes on the land, but to get them off the ground and into the sky. What do “controllers” do? They clear pilots for takeoff.⁵⁴

Control is important, yet without releasing it in an orderly fashion, people are never set free to do ministry. People need to see that there is control, and then that there is enough trust and support to relinquish control. By thus commissioning others for the work of the ministry, people believe in themselves and believe that their work will be effective, even if unsuccessful at first. In *Leading Congregational Change*, Herrington, Bonem, and Furr contend, “A permission-giving culture encourages individual leaders within the congregation to take initiative, take risks, and experiment. The opposite of a permission-giving culture is not one that denies permission, it is one that controls, second guesses, and micromanages every decision.”⁵⁵ Certainly pastors should be secure and mature enough in order to allow for a permission-giving culture in their churches to flourish. They also need to be so resolute about the role that they have been called to that there is little time to micromanage.

There is a unique interplay in dynamics when leadership is released to others. There needs to be an understanding of who is responsible for what, who has the authority, and who is accountable to whom. Paul Borden, in his book, *Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim at the Mission Field*, explains these nuances of leadership:

⁵⁴ Leonard Sweet, *Aqua Church: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture* (Loveland, CO: Group, 1999), 188.

⁵⁵ Herrington, Bonem, and Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, 75.

Any individual who is given a specific responsibility must be given adequate authority to accomplish the task. That individual must be held accountable to ascertain that the responsibility has been fulfilled. Separating authority from responsibility creates frustration, and if accountability is absent, often creates ineffectiveness. Giving someone both authority and responsibility without demanding accountability is both dangerous and foolishness. All effective structures enable individuals to know clearly what their responsibilities are, provides them with more than adequate authority to carry out the responsibilities, and then demands that this individual provide measurable expectations of what will happen when the responsibilities are fulfilled (accountability).⁵⁶

Authority speaks of permission to do what is necessary to accomplish the task.

Responsibility speaks to ownership and the capability of a person to perform a task.

Accountability speaks of the desire to work with others to ensure success. This accountability can be given through education in God's vision concerning the ministry of the laity. Ample autonomy is given so that each person can work according to his or her individual gifts and innovation, yet it is balanced with enough accountability to keep the church's purpose in focus. Accountability is also provided to ensure support, encouragement, and team collaboration – in short, success.

Ministry of the Laity

The laity should certainly be doing ministry, but pastoral leadership needs to ask what kind of ministry the laity should be doing. One may also wonder whether pastors become irrelevant if they give their work away. It is also important to consider, in this age of specialization and experts, whether ministry by the laity should be encouraged. These considerations come to mind when the ministry of the laity is discussed. In his book, *The Once and Future Church*, Loren Mead shares this insight:

⁵⁶ Paul D. Borden, *Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim at the Mission Field* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 127.

Although some articulate lay leaders today call for laity to be the primary ministers of the church, neither clergy nor laity are clear what that means. As a matter of fact, most lay people are already doing what they assumed they were supposed to do—working hard in their jobs and trying to make their communities better. They are surprised and hurt to find that their leaders consider those expressions of faithfulness somehow wanting. Indeed, committed laity sometimes feel their efforts in ministry are disparaged by church leaders.⁵⁷

Clearly there should be an understanding of what the work of the laity is to be about.

Without a doubt clergy should understand the vital role of the laity in the work of God.

Whenever one becomes a Christian there is a desire to share this good news with others. There is a desire to do something for the One who has done so much for his people. God does not have to use believers in the great work of redemption, but for their blessing he has chosen them to be his ambassadors.⁵⁸ The great object of life is to unselfishly love others by giving oneself in service for the salvation and up-building of humanity. In the words of Henry David Thoreau, some people lead lives of “quiet desperation.”⁵⁹ This should not be the life of a Christian.⁶⁰

The Church has a unique opportunity to help people lead lives of significance. The great purpose for people’s lives may be fulfilled in serving others either directly or indirectly through the body of Christ. Winston Churchill once said, “There comes special moment in everyone’s life, a moment for which the person was born. That special opportunity, when he seizes it, will fulfill his mission, a mission for which he is uniquely

⁵⁷ Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church* (New York: Alban Institute, 1991), 36.

⁵⁸ See 2 Corinthians 5:20 and White, *Desire of Ages*, 142.

⁵⁹ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854), 2, cited from “Transcendentalists” website, http://www.transcendentalists.com/walden_economy.htm (accessed February 8, 2009).

⁶⁰ White states, “If the church members do not individually take hold of this work, then they show that they have no living connection with God. Their names are registered as slothful servants.” White, *Christian Service*, 87.

qualified. In that moment, he finds greatness. It is his finest hour.”⁶¹ To enable and inspire men and women to fulfill their personal missions, to do good in this world, either by direct ministry or serving the good of humanity in some other way, this should be a vital goal in pastoral leadership.

No discussion on the work of the laity would be complete without considering spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:8-12; 1 Corinthians 12). God has placed within his body people that have different gifts and church leaders should do everything possible to help these gifts flourish. In his book, *A Conversation with Jesus*, Stephen Seamands writes,

When the gifts are made manifest through us, as they were through the disciples, we too will be able to get the job done. If we have been given the gift of teaching, when it is in operation, people will learn; if the gift of mercy, they will be comforted. If it's administration, the organization will run smoothly; if healing, the sick will get well. If it's evangelism, persons will come to know Christ; if service, practical needs will be met. When we minister in the fullness of God's Spirit the gifts of the Holy Spirit become increasingly operative in us. There is an anointing bestowed upon us for the task at hand. Our service for God becomes powerful and effective.⁶²

This is the desire of every church, that the service of its people may produce powerful and effective ministries. By ministering according to the gifts of the Spirit, the laity and the church community will live at their finest hour.

To help people understand where they are to minister, various avenues need to be explored. People should be given room for experimentation in ministry. There must be interviews and coaching to help ascertain where one's passion for ministry lies. Spiritual gifts classes and inventories can be utilized. More team ministry can be used in order to draw out the giftedness of each person. McIntosh and Reeves write,

⁶¹ Sir Winston Churchill Dwight Bain, *Destination Success* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2003), 189-190.

⁶² Stephen Seamands, *A Conversation with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 134-135.

The major shift in the new generation of gifts-based strategies is to take a more relational, holistic approach. All of the previous steps have now been incorporated seamlessly into both small groups and frontline ministry teams. Teaching, testing, and counseling are offered on a supplementary basis rather than as a prerequisite for service. Everyone is encouraged to be in a group or a team as soon as possible, with few if any prerequisites.⁶³

The important factor is to help people understand that discipleship is about a lifelong calling and no one else can fulfill someone else's unique calling.⁶⁴ Even as life is fluid, so ministry is also fluid, and God will equip those he calls as they give themselves to his work.

Biblical Methodology of Evangelism – Two Examples

Evangelistic Methodology of Christ and Paul

Paul and Jesus were arguably the greatest evangelists of all time. From their lives and ministries, readers can learn important lessons on how to reach others with the good news of Jesus Christ.⁶⁵ Of course such a topic could fill up volumes of books, but this ministry focus paper will seek to enunciate the key methodologies that are found both in Paul's and Christ's ministries.

⁶³ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches in the Twenty-First Century*, 101.

⁶⁴ A great resource to help people discover that their lives have meaning through service is Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*. Another great resource is Bill Hybels' *Connections*. For the already churchied, Kim Johnson's *Spiritual Body Building* is helpful.

⁶⁵ Stephen Olford notes, "The Lord Jesus Christ is our supreme Example in the ministry of soul-winning, as indeed He is in every other aspect of Christian life and service. We cannot study His life without being impressed with the qualifications which marked Him out as the wise Winner of souls. From the manward aspect of His life and work, soul-winning was His first concern. He could say, 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10)." Stephen F. Olford, *The Secret of Soul-Winning* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 10.

The ministries of both Paul and Jesus grew out of the spiritual experiences with the Divine. No man ever preached like Jesus because no man ever lived like him.⁶⁶ Jesus stated, “Of My own self I do nothing” (John 5:30). His power came from his personal connection with his father by daily communion and devotion. The Scriptures are replete with examples of Jesus gaining strength through his daily connection with his Father (see Mark 1:35, Matthew 26:36, Luke 5:16, Luke 9:29, and Matthew 4).

Likewise, Paul was someone who had a great personal connection with the Divine. Willard writes,

The key to understanding Paul is to know that, with all his “weaknesses” and failures and personality deficiencies, he gave himself solely to being like his Lord. He lived and practiced daily the things his Lord taught and practiced. He lived a life of abandonment; and it was his confidence in this path, and in the power that derived from the rich union with Christ it created, that enabled him to call others to do the same. His actions, his character, his motivations—and the astonishing world-changing power derived from his lowly life-style—can only be understood by keeping this fact in mind: Paul followed Jesus by living as he lived. And how did he do that? Through activities and ways of living that would train his whole personality to depend upon the risen Christ as Christ trained himself to depend upon the Father.⁶⁷

Thus both their ministries flowed out of their innermost beings. The methodology was “the man” and each man received power and guidance from the Divine.

McGavran and Warren both speak of working where the Spirit of God is already at work.⁶⁸ It is naïve to believe that God is not constantly already at work in the lives of the unchurched, and it is vital that believers begin their work where God is already at work. For Jesus that meant working hand in hand with his precursor, John the Baptist, or to teach in the temple, where people had come for spiritual nourishment (Matthew 3:1-3;

⁶⁶ John 7:46 reveals that his speaking was unique.

⁶⁷ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 106.

⁶⁸ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 13, and McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 140.

Luke 19:47). For Paul it meant providing further teaching to those with whom Apollos had already worked (Acts 19). It was to preach first in the Jewish synagogues (Acts 14:1) or debate with the worshippers of the Unknown God on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17). Since evangelism is a natural process of sowing and reaping, Jesus and Paul reaped where there was already spiritual interest and preparation. Jesus sent his disciples out into certain villages to prepare the soil, and then later he personally went to the same places where the preparation had been made (Matthew 11:1; Acts 2).

Paul and Jesus both had preaching and healing ministries.⁶⁹ They cared for people personally. Matthew says of Jesus, “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35). There is something powerful when the Word of God is preached and it is combined with meeting personal needs. Referring to this personal work, White explains, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”⁷⁰ Spader and Mayes write, “Jesus was described by His peers as a friend of sinners. He intentionally went to them to build relationships with them. Although the religious leaders of the day despised Him for it, Jesus knew it was crucial for success in evangelism. The situation is no different

⁶⁹ “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

⁷⁰ White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.

today.”⁷¹ In a nutshell, both Jesus and Paul found ways to personally love people. They preached love, taught love, and then lived out love by helping people.

Another important element of the evangelistic methodology of Jesus and Paul was working with a small group. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two (Mark 6:7). The twelve were never far away when Jesus did his ministry. Paul went with Silas, Barnabas, Timothy, and John Mark, to name a few.⁷² Icenogle writes,

Jesus modeled God’s way of transforming the world. He called out a small group of people to experience their own exodus journey together, to move from the enslavement of controlling social, political and religious patterns and to enter into the freedom of “pour {ing} new wine into new wineskins” (Mk 2:22). The faithful small group with Jesus in their midst was the visible demonstration of heaven come to earth.⁷³

By doing ministry as a team there were several advantages. Jesus and Paul could emulate life and ministry for them personally and use teacher/apprentice modeling to train them.⁷⁴ This methodology is surprisingly simple yet amazingly effective. Another advantage is that this methodology can be replicated through multiplication (2 Timothy 2:2). Its strength is the integrity of real ministry, in the actual life, which is modeled by the next generation of workers. Finally, mutual support and encouragement can be given to one another during difficult times.⁷⁵

Another important methodology of Paul and Christ was to contextualize their message. This is one of the most misunderstood ideas in the Church today. Often the

⁷¹ Spader and Mayes, *Growing a Healthy Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 158.

⁷² Others include: Titus, Silas (Silvanus), Euodia, Syntyche, Epaphroditus, Priscilla, and Aquila.

⁷³ Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, 118.

⁷⁴ See Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, 200.

⁷⁵ White, *Desire of Ages*, 350.

saints confuse truth with tradition and thus when ceremonies, symbols, and styles are changed, it feels like heresy. In describing his ministry, Paul writes,

And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, *that I might win those* who are under the Law; To them that are without law, as without law, not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, *that I might gain them* that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, *that I might gain the weak*: I am made all things to all men, *that I might by all means save some* (1 Corinthians 9:19-22, italics mine).

Jesus constantly told stories so the common people could understand. He changed his approach to meet the varied needs of each individual in order to meet all the people with whom he worked (John 16:12). In his personal interviews Jesus clearly sought to understand people and then minister to them in just the unique way their cases required. It would be hard to imagine Jesus memorizing a rote canvass for witnessing, or sharing the gospel with the woman at the well the same way he did with Nicodemus. Jesus and Paul did not compromise the gospel, but they did everything possible to change their presentation in order make it meaningful and relevant to the lives of their hearers. Each fresh expression of the gospel contextualized in the local culture made it a powerful force that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

Another evangelistic methodology found in the lives of both Paul and Jesus was the preservation of those who were newly come into the faith. Jesus loved his erring disciples and ultimately died for them. Paul worked tirelessly, suffering great privation for them. They both were patient enough to stay the course and preserve those newly come into the faith. Barna writes,

The apostle Paul was a master at sticking with it. He would go back to the community forum day after day and speak with the skeptics and the curious, presenting information, answering questions, asking questions, and praying for them and with them. Jesus was no different. Upon His initial encounter with

each of His disciples it is apparent that they had no clue who He was, what He expected of them or what precious gift He offered. It took months of intense ministry before Peter was able to identify Jesus as the Savior they had been awaiting (see Matt. 16:17, 18). Others in the group undoubtedly took longer to get the point. But what if Jesus had done His evangelistic routine and went off in search of new unreached people, leaving the disciples to ponder among themselves the significance of what He had said and done? Would they have caught on? Probably not. In this lifestyle of caring and sharing by Jesus and Paul we have an example to follow. Evangelism is more than just proclaiming the Word. It requires loving people long enough and sincerely enough so that they can hear the Word, grapple with it and ultimately make an informed decision regarding what to do about what they heard.⁷⁶

Much of the New Testament is spent with the Apostle Paul counseling and admonishing the leaders of the new churches which were planted. Paul genuinely loved these new believers and was very anxious about the steadfastness of their faith.⁷⁷ Paul and Jesus loved people enough to stay the course with them; they cared enough to help them grow.

⁷⁶ Barna, *Evangelism That Works*, 152.

⁷⁷ Paul writes, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thessalonians 3:8-10).

CHAPTER 5

THE PROCESS AND CORNERSTONE OF DISCIPLE MATURATION

Church growth seldom comes without bold plans for it. Only those who disregard the evidence can believe that church growth is a by-product of multifaceted mission. The assumption is contrary to the New Testament practice. We do not see the apostles carrying out a genial program of koinonia, diakonia and kerygma and the churches happily rising here and there like dandelions in a well-watered lawn. There we see Paul and Barnabas throwing their lives into a tremendous program of church planting, racing against time to reach as many as possible with the message of salvation before the Lord returned.

- Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*

The Scripture records, “The Lord Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand’” (Isaiah 14:24-25). And again, God says, “What I have planned I will do” (Isaiah 46:11). If God sees fit to make plans, then mortals who follow almighty God should make their plans after the divine plans. This chapter and the ones following will enunciate a strategic plan for GVSDA. While even the best plans and strategies change when subjected to real life, there must be an intentional focus of energies to be effective.¹ To say that GVSDA is intentionally prioritizing certain activities and ministries reveals a recognition that the church cannot do everything; it must focus its resources. GVSDA needs to do a few things well. The church’s intentional process of producing authentic disciples might look different from other churches or even the GVSDA of the past, yet the goal and values of disciple growth and multiplication remain the same. Stanley and Willits write,

¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.” *The Quotations Page* website, “Dwight D. Eisenhower quote,” http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Dwight_D._Eisenhower (accessed January 12, 2009).

Becoming crystal clear on what you are trying to do is critical for any group of organization. Without clarity an organization becomes pointless. Getting clear begins when we answer three important questions: What do we want people to become? What do we want them to do? Where do we want them to go? Answering these questions is vital for gaining clarity of mission and strategy. These are issues all leaders need to be clear on. Crystal clear.²

This clarity will enable the vision of GVSDA to come alive and give meaning and purpose to every activity in the life of the church. It is only through this clarity of purpose that the church can meet the rapid changes, challenges, and opportunities in the coming years.

Overview of Discipleship Pathway and Process for New Members

When Jesus met his disciples, he invited them to “come and see” (John 1:39, 46). Discipleship begins even before a strong commitment is made to Christ or his body. Prospective disciples “come and see” and even experience a taste of discipleship while they are being led to commitment. After the attraction phase they are ready to be initiated into more intentional discipleship. As noted in Chapter 4, Paul teaches, “*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him*, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude” (Colossians 2:7, italics mine).

With this in mind, the primary process and pathway of discipleship is for every ministry of the church to answer two questions: First, how can this ministry move non-Christians to accept Christ? Secondly, how can discipleship be fostered in this ministry? GVSDA’s strategy is to connect with people relationally and involve them in the life of the church even before they are ready to make a commitment to Christ, and then continue

² Stanley and Willits, *Creating Community*, 78.

this in a more intentional way after receiving Christ. If a church ministry does not contribute in these two ways it should be discontinued or refocused back on growing and multiplying disciples. Thus church life will continually cycle itself, leading disciples to ever deepening maturity. As new disciples reach out to others in service, a synergistic effect is seen whereby the disciples themselves grow.

Secondarily, a series of entry opportunities will be strategically placed throughout the life of the church to provide different avenues for people to make a commitment to join church membership and initiate intentional discipleship. Evangelistic meetings, altar calls, personal visitation, classes, membership transfer cards, personal Bible studies, and baptismal classes will all give people opportunities for church membership commitment. The use of various avenues will avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

Newcomer's Orientation Class

The primary entry point will be the Newcomer's Orientation Class.³ This will be a quarterly class open to anyone who would like to see what the church is all about and who might be considering becoming a part of the church. This class will be held at two different times: Saturday morning at ten o'clock, and repeated Saturday afternoon at two o'clock. This class will help prospective disciples understand what the church is all about and then give people an opportunity to be a part of it. During the forty-five minute class, several important principles will be shared.

The first principle will be the commitment to Christ and his Church. Although people may attend and be a part of the church without being members, this experience is

³ Andy Stanley and Ed Young, *Can We Do That?* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Company, 2002), 40, 42.

much like two people living together rather than getting married. Although non-member attendees will receive most of the benefits of membership without actually becoming members, it will be communicated that, just like in marriage, there must be commitment in order to go deeper with someone, in this case, Christ. This commitment, when followed through with appropriate action, will facilitate abundant Christian living and a vibrant Christian life. GVSDA's desire is to help people experience the fullness of the gospel and really live authentic Christian lives.

The second principle will include the basic elements of what it means to be a disciple. Discipleship is primarily about a relationship with Jesus Christ and secondly about a relationship with other disciples. Newcomers will be encouraged to simplify their lives in order to make time for these relationships.

Next, an overview of how to cultivate these relationships through spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts, and living a life of community will be presented. In order to teach spiritual disciplines, GVSDA's quarterly class entitled "Discipleship 101" will be introduced. This is a class that teaches how to connect with Christ and be Spirit-filled by practicing the spiritual disciplines. During this discipleship class newcomers will learn about the work of spiritual mentors and will meet with a spiritual mentor to develop a personalized spiritual growth plan. In order to connect them with meaningful ministry, the church's Human Resource Team will personally assess and interview the members of the group to assist them in discovering their spiritual gifts and in leading lives of significance. Finally, the value of participating in a Christian community through small groups, ministry teams, life transformation groups, and other gatherings will be emphasized. GVSDA is too big for each member be loved, cared for, or even missed

unless he or she is part of a smaller group within the congregation. In short, GVSDA's strategy for discipleship will be presented.

Finally, GVSDA's expectations for membership will be discussed. While not every area may apply to each individual, the list of expectations provides insight regarding the church's overall strategy. Rather than obligations to fulfill, these expectations are to be seen as powerful opportunities for spiritual advancement. First, members will have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior through water baptism and Spirit baptism and will have an understanding of the Gospel. Second, members need to understand and accept the basic church doctrines of GVSDA. This may be accomplished in various ways: enrolling in an online course, attending personal Bible studies, or going through a doctrinal series of presentations. Third, members need to attend the class, "Discipleship 101," and learn how to practice spiritual disciplines in their personal lives. Fourth, members can meet with a spiritual mentor who will coach each disciple into a personal plan for spiritual discipline implementation and spiritual growth. The spiritual mentor will also function as a spiritual lifeguard during the member's first year in the church. Fifth, within three to six months, members can be personally coached by a member of the Human Resource Team in order to help discover their spiritual gifts and be placed into meaningful ministry. Sixth, in order to experience Christian community and spiritual accountability and live lives of significance, members may join one or more small groups or ministry teams. Options might include a Life Transformation Group, a Small Group Bible Study, a Ministry Team, a Sabbath school class, and the like. Seventh, members can help with an evangelistic reaping meeting within a year of joining. Eighth, members can join a hospitality team (a group that bi-

monthly helps prepare a meal for all worship service guests, mingles with them, and helps clean up afterwards). Ninth, members can support the church financially by tithing and giving freewill offerings. Tenth, members can worship at corporate worship regularly and invite others to “come and see.” Eleventh, members can be committed to continual, lifelong holistic growth: spiritual, mental, physical, and social.

Summary of Pathway Overview

This plan is simple and synergistic by design. George Ordioro writes, “The typical church is an activity trap. Having lost sight of the higher purposes for which it was originated, it now attempts to make up for this loss by an increased range of activities.”⁴ By having clear straightforward expectations and a simple process to help disciples grow, this plan can be clearly communicated and followed.

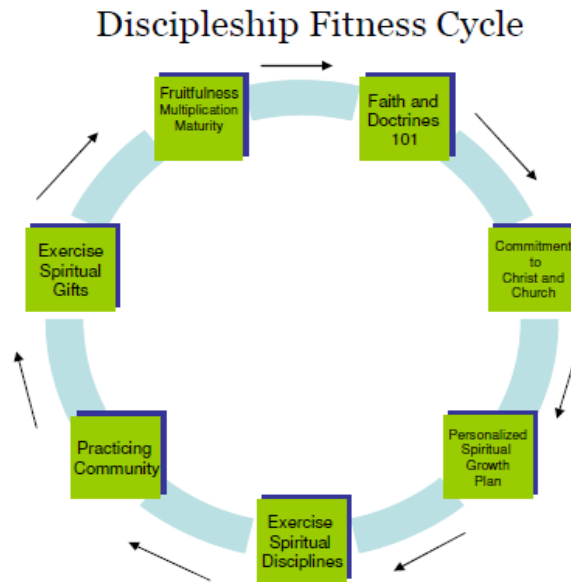
In some cases metaphors and schematics can be helpful in describing a particular discipleship approach. Rick Warren and others have used a baseball diamond.⁵ GVSDA uses the metaphor of physical fitness (see Figure 2). This model avoids the linear progression of other models, allowing people to grow into the unique persons they were created to be. Because each disciple’s pathway is unique, it is impossible to draw a linear

⁴ George Odiorne, quoted in Spader and Mayes, *Growing A Healthy Church*, 9.

⁵ Southerland is another writer who uses the baseball diamond analogy and whose content is similar to that of GVSDA. “1st base = commitment to membership. I have committed my life to Christ. I have completed the new members class. 2nd base = commitment to maturity. I am attending a weekly small group Bible study. I am spending daily time with God. I am giving my financial resources to God. 3rd base = commitment to ministry. I am serving in a ministry. I am participating in ongoing training for ministry. I am mentoring a leader. Homeplate = commitment to multiplication. I am living an authentic Christian life. I am building relationships with unchurched people. I am sharing my faith story. I am bringing my unchurched friends to church.” Southerland, *Transitioning*, 64.

schematic of the plan.⁶ A cyclical analysis of phases, referred to as “waymarks,” proves more helpful in capturing the synergistic process even while understanding that people may get on and off the cycle at different times at differing phases during the rotation.

Figure 2. The Discipleship Fitness Cycle



During the first waymark on the diagram (Faith), the disciple is led to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The various elements of conversion noted in Chapter 3 are imprinted in the new believer’s life and a living faith comes into the heart. During this

⁶ Because sequential steps alone can often cause people to either feel like they have arrived, or that they are not living up to God’s design if they do not possess certain leadership gifts, the physical fitness metaphor seems to fit GVSDA’s theological understanding the best. Also, this metaphor recognizes that people may be strong in an advanced area, such as biblical information, while very weak in what might be considered a fundamental area such as trust in God or love for others.

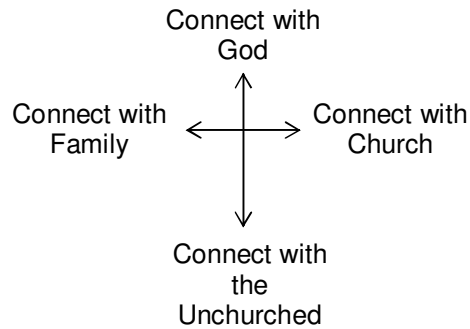
time the most basic elements of Bible doctrine are taught to the new believer. The second waymark (Commitment) is about commitment to Christ and his Church through entering church membership. During this waymark a spiritual assessment (spiritual examination) is done by pastoral interview in order to help the disciple deal with major issues that would be an impediment to a spiritual exercise regime in the body of Christ. During this waymark there is a submission to the will of God in the major areas of one's life through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and his servants. There is also an understanding of the church's strategy for discipleship and membership expectations and that it is truly the Spirit who is leading a disciple to embark on such a faith journey.

The third waymark (Personalized Spiritual Growth Plan) usually takes place soon after church membership. As part of this waymark, the disciple attends Discipleship 101 where he or she learns about spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts, community, and is connected with the system (Spiritual Mentors, Human Resource Team, Small Groups) which will help them put these areas of discipleship into practice. Waymark four through six (Disciplines, Community, and Gifts) happen simultaneously and work synergistically to produce spiritual growth and multiplication (waymark seven). The cycle is repeated as applicable to each disciple (Colossians 2:7). As it is repeated, new believers will be apprenticed in learning and teaching it to others. The lifestyle of the disciple will change more and more into the lifestyle of the Master teacher, Jesus Christ.

Another helpful metaphor is the "Discipleship Cross" (Matthew 16:24) (see Figure 3). This illustrates the key relationships and methodologies of discipleship: Upward – a connection to God through faith and spiritual disciplines; Beside – a

connection to church and family through practicing community; and Downward – a connection to the unchurched through the exercise of spiritual gifts.

Figure 3. The Discipleship Cross



The Cornerstone of Discipleship Maturation: Spiritual Disciplines

In their book, *How to Change Your Church without Killing It*, Alan Nelson and Gene Appel ask, “What if we were to begin an organization designed solely to help people grow their own souls and experience radical change based on Biblical principles of connecting with God?”⁷ This is exactly what GVSDA must do. This is a very daunting task, yet one that can be accomplished through leading people to practice spiritual disciplines. In the study guide accompanying Willard’s book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, Jan Johnson, Keith J. Matthews, and Dallas Willard write,

People privately see Jesus’ teachings as admirable but too hard for anyone to really *do*. So instead of becoming disciples of Jesus, individuals substitute trying to achieve correctness of doctrine or of practices as defined by some tradition,

⁷ Alan Nelson and Gene Appel, *How to Change Your Church without Killing It* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 35.

resulting in a gap---even a conflict---between the way Christians behave and what Jesus taught.⁸

This should not be the norm for Christians. The goal should be to follow the practices of Jesus in such a way that believers can connect to the divine as Jesus connected to his Father while on earth. The spiritual disciplines will enable the believer to experience a relationship with the Godhead that is rarely seen in today's Christendom.

Overview of Primary Spiritual Disciplines

Simplicity

The first task is to help people realize that spiritual disciplines are about prioritizing the things of God by changing how believers spend their time. In all the teaching at GVSDA there will be an emphasis on practicing the discipline of simplicity. Most people's lives are already hectic enough and it is impossible to add more to a plate that is already too full.⁹ The key question will be, "What can I stop doing in my life so that I can begin practicing the things of God?" In *Revolution in Leadership*, Reggie McNeal writes,

Busier Christians are not necessarily more spiritual. They are just more tired and increasingly burned out on church programming. Many churches fail to come out of denial at this point because they have no other way of measuring than counting participation at church activities. Worse, yet, when people drop out of the frenetic pace of church life, they are considered somehow less committed to Christ. So we are creating untold numbers of guilty Christians who feel "less spiritual" than they should be.¹⁰

⁸ Jan Johnson, Keith J. Matthews, and Dallas Willard, *Dallas Willard's Study Guide to The Divine Conspiracy* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 1.

⁹ "In a speech to a group of pastors, Lyle Schaller, a leading church consultant, stated: 'The biggest challenge for the church at the opening of the twenty-first century is to develop a solution to the discontinuity of fragmentation of the American lifestyle.'" Frazee, *The Connecting Church*, 37.

¹⁰ Schaller and McNeal, *Revolution in Leadership*, 101.

The first discipline is simplicity because without the time to practice the spiritual disciplines, the frantic pace of society crowds out all of one's good intentions for God. GVSDA will teach its disciples that there is a way of escape from the rat race of society by putting first things first. By intentionally leading a life of simplicity in time and lifestyle there will be time to connect with God and serve others.

Observing the Sabbath and Taking Spiritual Retreats

One of the major ways of helping get life back in balance is to start practicing Sabbath. To “religiously” block out twenty-four hours of time each week for God might seem legalistic at times, but it is needed if believers are to recapture their lives for God. In his book, *Practicing Greatness*, Reggie McNeal notes, “The loss of Sabbath is one of the major failings of contemporary church life in North America. We are substituting frenetic activity for genuine spiritual vitality.”¹¹ Max Lucado, in speaking of where the Church finds itself, writes, “Sadly, it seems that we have lost the meaning of Sabbath by cramming our Sundays full of activities that leave no room for meaningful reflection on the worship we experience with the family of God. Isn't it time we reclaim the gift of rest as outlined so thoroughly by God in the Ten Commandments?”¹² Seventh-day Adventists have often stressed the seventh day while forgetting to stress the true meaning of Sabbath as a day to rest so that they may connect with God spiritually. Indeed there “remains a Sabbath rest for God's people” (Hebrews 4).

¹¹ Reggie McNeal, *Practicing Greatness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 149.

¹² Max Lucado, *Traveling Light* (Nashville: W Publishing Group/Thomas Nelson, 2001), 41.

In addition to the weekly Sabbaths there should be monthly and annual days for spiritual retreat so that the soul can find its center. Sometimes it is good to be alone on such a retreat; at others times one may choose to go on a spiritual retreat with others. Creating these intentional spaces is vital for spiritual formation in discipleship.

Daily Meditation, Prayer, Scripture Contact

Taking time for daily prayer, meditation, and listening to God through the Scriptures are spiritual disciplines which are vital to the Christian life. By practicing these three daily disciplines, one may learn to be in tune with God. By prayer one talks with God; by Scripture one listens to God; and by meditation one combines the two together in a conversation with God.¹³

Christian prayer focuses on talking with God. Henry Blackaby and Claude King, in *Experiencing God*, write, “When the Holy Spirit reveals a spiritual truth to you in prayer, He is present and working actively in your life. Genuine prayer does not lead to an encounter with God. It is an encounter with God.”¹⁴ Of course believers are instructed to live in an attitude of prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), but there should be specific times during the day when believers talk with God. Taking the time to communicate with God is vital. Because discipleship is primarily about a relationship with God, and one cannot have good relationships without good communication, prayer is critical to true discipleship.

¹³ “*Lectio Divina* is designed to move the Word of God off the page and into our hearts so that it becomes living and active in our lives. It begins with reading the Scriptures (*lectio*). Then meditation, then praying to God about the Scripture and then finally contemplation, where we do the will of God.” Christine Sine, *Sacred Rhythms, Finding a Peaceful Pace in a Hectic World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 119-120.

¹⁴ Blackaby and King, *Experiencing God*, 174.

Listening to God through the Scriptures is another vital spiritual discipline. There are many ways to interact with Scripture. One may study it, listen to an audio recording of it, memorize it, listen to a sermon or someone teaching it, pray it, meditate on it, and even sing it. Scriptural memorization is particularly vital to the Christian life.

Christian meditation, or contemplation, is another important discipline. This exercise in being still (Psalm 46:10) and thinking about and listening to God allows God to converse with the substance of one's life. Foster, in his classic, *Celebration of Discipline*, writes,

Christian Meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God's voice and obey his word. It is that simple. I wish I could make it more complicated for those who like things difficult. It involves no hidden mysteries, no secret mantras, no mental gymnastics, no esoteric flights into the cosmic consciousness. The truth of the matter is that the great God of the universe, the Creator of all things desires our fellowship. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve talked with God and God talked with them—they were in communion.¹⁵

As prayer, Scripture, and meditation interrelate, communication takes place and sweet communion with God. In describing this experience personally, Blackaby writes,

I believe the Spirit of God often uses the Word of God when you pray. I find that when I pray about something, Scripture often comes to my mind. I don't see it as a distraction. I believe He is trying to guide me through the Scripture. I have found that as I pray about a particular matter, the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and applies it to my heart and my mind to reveal the truth. I immediately stop my praying and open the Word of God to the passage I believe the Spirit of God brought to my mind.¹⁶

As God personally speaks to the soul through these exercises there is a sense of his presence and power in one's life. During mediation every thought is "brought under captivity" (2 Corinthians 10:5) to Scripture and God's voice often speaks to the soul.

¹⁵ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 17.

¹⁶ Blackaby and King, *Experiencing God*, 175.

Spiritual Mentor/Coach

During Discipleship 101 new disciples are informed about the work of the spiritual mentor or spiritual coach. These are leaders within the congregation who have the spiritual gift set necessary for this work and also have been trained for such ministry. Stanley and Clinton define this person's work: "A Spiritual Guide is a godly, mature follower of Christ who shares knowledge, skills, and basic philosophy on what it means to increasingly realize Christlikeness in all areas of life."¹⁷ A spiritual mentor comes alongside the disciple and guides him or her in discovering a personalized spiritual growth plan.¹⁸ The spiritual mentor holds the new believer accountable and helps him or her discover strengths and weaknesses, identify obstacles and opportunities, and offer insights on how to navigate these areas that affect the spiritual life. Also included in the role of the spiritual mentor is the idea of coaching. In *Connecting*, Stanley and Clinton define coaching as "a relational process in which a mentor, who knows how to do something well, imparts those skills to a mentoree who wants to learn them."¹⁹

Discipleship Classes

Discipleship 101 will be the foundational time to introduce new believers to spiritual disciplines, but there will also be other discipleship classes that will explore in greater depth the meaning and practice of the disciplines. Each year GVSDA will spend one week with a week of prayer. During this prayer initiative the church will be inspired to practice the spiritual disciplines. The school will also have at least one week of prayer.

¹⁷ Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 65.

¹⁸ See Appendix A for more information on the individualized personal growth plan.

¹⁹ Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 79.

The weekly Sabbath school classes will also be places where spiritual disciplines and discipleship are modeled and taught. More time will be given to the weekly Sabbath school small group classes so they can spend time in praying, building relationships, and sharing ways to apply practically the weekly lesson study. Annually, there will also be a class entitled, “How to Study the Bible.” This class will teach biblical hermeneutics and will show how to use the various tools of Bible study. It will also share common mistakes that are often made when studying, such as proof-texting, taking ideas from their context, and not personally applying the Scriptural knowledge to one’s life.

Each year GVSDA will teach a three-part class entitled, “Having the Time of Your Life: How to Find Your Life’s Purpose, Have Time for It, and Lead a Life of Significance.” This class will teach principles of life and time management, goal setting, and living for the greater purpose of service. During this class leaders will help participants craft personal mission statements, discover core values, simplify their lives, and discover their unique callings from God.²⁰ Each year GVSDA will alternate between two additional classes: the first is a stewardship series based on the book, *Financial Peace*, by Dave Ramsey, and the second is the Crown Ministries curriculum.²¹ These classes will help participants learn how to become good stewards of the financial resources that they have been entrusted with. Those involved in leading these seminars will be trained as “Money Map Coaches” by Crown Ministries. This training will enable the leaders to personally coach individuals with their various financial challenges.

²⁰ See MacDonald, *The Life God Blesses*, 128-129.

²¹ See www.crown.org and www.daveramsey.com for further details.

Encouraging an Environment of Spiritual Disciplines

Because spiritual disciplines are the foundation and cornerstone of GVSDA's discipleship plan they will permeate everything that happens at the church. Specific curriculum will be used in the various small groups to teach and practice the disciplines.²² Weeks of prayer, intentional sermonic calendar planning, spiritual mentors, corporate worship, printed materials, emails, bulletins, newsletters, video testimonies, bulletins, bulletin boards, stories, prayer ministries, prayer spaces, retreats, classes, and personal examples will all come together to encourage the practicing of spiritual disciplines. People will start to know that GVSDA is serious about connecting with God. They will know that the members of GVSDA are living the disciplines; they are people who truly "call on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26).

²² For example, Richard V. Peace's four-book series may be used, which focuses on spiritual journaling, spiritual autobiography, *lectio divina*, and meditative prayer. Richard V. Peace, *Spiritual Journaling* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1999); Richard V. Peace, *Spiritual Autobiography* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1999); Richard V. Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996); Richard V. Peace, *Meditative Prayer* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996).

CHAPTER 6

A STRATEGY FOR EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECRUITMENT AND MATURATION OF DISCIPLES

The objectives, goals, and strategies outlined in this chapter will help GVSDA experience life-changing Christian community. Positive Christian community happens when believers experience *koinonia* (κοινωνία – positive relationship) that is characterized by love, authenticity, and faith. As people identify themselves with this community (the body of Christ) they join a relational network known as the family of God. To a large degree, it is through these family relationships that spiritual growth occurs. It is also through these loving relationships that unbelievers are attracted to Christianity (John 13:35). Genuine Christian community will always have a powerful influence in recruiting new disciples as well as helping the current disciples mature.¹ By intentionally building these relationships, life-changing power will be infused into the lives of those connected with GVSDA.

Discipleship Triads and Prayer Partnerships

Integral to GVSDA's system of discipleship is spiritual accountability through relationships. In the book, *Cultivating a Life for God*, author Neil Cole shares how Life Transformation Groups (or discipleship accountability triads) can make a profound

¹ “*Oikos* (sharing faith through relationship) was and still is the most effective way of spreading the gospel. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology devotes approximately ten pages to *oikos* relational evangelism. *Oikos* in Greek means the dwelling place, the structure, the family, or a community with the word strongly related to salvation history. [The Lord] . . . wants this community of faith to make a difference in the world by sharing their faith and love.” S. Joseph Kidder, “The Power of Relationships in Evangelism,” *Ministry Magazine* (July 2008): 10.

impact in the life of the disciple.² GVSDA will promote this strategy as part of its overall discipleship plan. There is great power when two or three meet in the name of Jesus for the purpose of growing spiritually.

In Cole's plan, disciples covenant to read a portion of Scripture each week, pray for another's salvation, and ask each other a series of spiritual accountability questions. These questions can be summarized as: What is God doing in your life? and What is Satan trying to do in your life? Whether the group is two or three matters not; what is important is accountability and relationship building. Cole shares that the best way to start Life Transformation Groups (LTGs) at a church is to start small through a grassroots-type movement. GVSDA will promote LTGs through word of mouth testimonies and continually sharing this concept. Some will consider LTGs as traditional prayer partner relationships, which in many ways they are. The emphasis will not be on a new program but on creating community for spiritual support, prayer for the unchurched, and for accountability to the Personalized Discipleship Spiritual Growth Plan.

Implementation of the LTG concept will happen in several ways. First, it will be modeled by the pastor each week. The pastor can write about it regularly in web logs, the weekly bulletin letter, and the church newsletter. Second, the LTG concept will be promoted publicly through intentional monthly testimonies and video segments. Third, literature about LTGs will be provided in the foyer at a display place. Fourth, the concept will be taught at Discipleship 101. And finally, there will be multiplication through the groups themselves.

² Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God*. His latest book is entitled, *Search and Rescue: Becoming a Disciple that Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008).

Small Groups on a Mission

General Description

The various types of small groups are very multifaceted at GVSDA, but ultimately they will gather for discipleship and evangelistic purposes. It is within the dynamic of relationships and within a variety of contexts that people model, learn, and grow as disciples. There are many discipleship and evangelistic opportunities that can happen within a small group or ministry team: proactive member care, ministry, witnessing, accountability, insight, and so on. For the purposes of GVSDA's plan, "small group" will be loosely defined as a group of approximately thirty or fewer individuals gathering together in relationship to carry out some facet of discipleship. In their book, *Emerging Churches*, Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger write concerning today's postmodern context:

There is also a strong aversion to regimentation, even at the small group level. Church might happen in twos and threes. Dwight Friesen of Quest (Seattle) declares, "We deconstructed small groups. Who does 'this or that' felt artificial to orchestrate. Now, we hook up with a friend or two intentionally for conversations. We covenant to co-spiritually direct each other for a season." They seek "organic connecting." Church happens whenever two or three come together. The church is not a particular time or place but the connection that happens when followers of Christ come together.³

For the reasons given by Gibbs and Bolger, GVSDA's definition is slightly broader than the traditional small group definition offered in Chapter 3. The desire will be for the groups to flow with the fluidity of life.⁴

³ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: creating Christian community in postmodern cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 103.

⁴ "Although adults in the church commonly grow in spirituality and faith through the joining of small groups, this is by no means the only vehicle. There are adults, many over forty years old, who do not like small groups. There are more complex mission projects for which several small groups will organizationally cluster together. There are Sunday school, music, or youth initiatives that are less easily

Currently, GVSDA has many ministry teams and small groups. Rather than undoing all the clubs, ministries, and current groups in order to move forward with the new strategy, they will be incorporated, new groups will be added, and all will be taught disciple-building dynamics. GVSDA will differentiate organizationally between ministry teams and small groups, yet both will have the same goal of discipleship and evangelism in mind, even with radically different foci.⁵ Writing on this concept, Gorman states,

Forming groups under the umbrellas of established ministries such as Sunday School classes or missionary association is a good way to ease into a small group ministry structure. Because these parent ministries are already ongoing and have credibility, they have great power to motivate their participants to become a part of the small group structure.⁶

This new purpose for existing ministries can breathe new life and purpose into existing ministries and structures. By understanding that a small group can be much more than a home-based Bible study, new possibilities and opportunities arise in the minds of group leaders. In summary, GVSDA will promote a broad range of groups: home- and church-based relational Bible study groups, Life Transformation Groups, Ministry Team groups, and hobby/interest affinity groups.

Small Group and Ministry Team Strategy

GVSDA's strategy will begin with an appointment of a leader who will have a passion for small group ministry. This person will be the point person to work with a

adapted to the small-group process." Thomas G. Bandy, *Kicking Habits: Welcome Relief for Addicted Churches* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 85.

⁵ Some groups may focus on basket weaving, scuba diving, or grief care while others focus on Bible study or practicing spiritual disciplines. But discipleship and evangelism will happen in all groups because of the building up of relationships.

⁶ Gorman, *Community That Is Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 233.

small group team to implement the small group strategy. This leader will focus on promotion, recruitment, coordination and training for small group ministry. As the groups grow, this individual will be actively training coaches to equip small group leaders.⁷

The next part of GVSDA's small group strategy will be education and recruitment. Each year as part of the small group strategy, small groups will be promoted. The need for community verses isolationism will be preached and taught. Discipleship through small groups will be intentionally added into the sermonic calendar. Literature will be published that advertises existing groups and team ministries and which shares the basic philosophies of discipleship through small groups. Recruitment of small group leadership will be done through ongoing vision casting, the work of the Human Resource Team, the small group coordinator, and the pastor.

While group recruitment will take place throughout the year, the two main recruitment times will be spring and fall. Some groups will take a break during the summer while others will have their main focus during the summer. Two weekends each spring and fall will be dedicated to small group kickoff and recruitment. Various groups will have tables set up in the church foyer and entryway in order to gather interest and participation for their respective groups. In addition to this, the concept of discipleship through community in group and ministry teams will be taught annually at the Church Volunteer Orientation and Breakfast meeting in January.

⁷ "David Cho, the founder and pastor of the largest church in the history of Christianity, once said, "The key behind the cell system is the coach." The research of Dwight Marable and Jim Egli confirms this. They researched small group churches around the world and discovered that coaching was the key element for assuring long-term cell group success. Egli says, "We looked at six church elements in our research. Coaching surpassed even training and prayer." Joel Comiskey, *How to Be a Great Cell Group Coach* (Houston: Cell Group Resources, 2003), 21.

Next, each existing ministry team will be reviewed in a ministry audit. This audit will include teaching on the principles of discipleship and evangelism within small groups and will challenge each team and group to become more intentional in making their ministries effective for discipleship and evangelistic purposes. This will be facilitated through coaching breakout sessions at the Church Ministry Board meeting (which occurs monthly) and through personal interviews with the small group coordinator and pastor. In addition, during each month's Church Ministry Board meeting various small group exercises will be modeled and taught. Groups that do not fit within the philosophy of discipleship and evangelism or do not have sufficient leadership or support will be strategically discontinued.

Targeting Groups for Discipleship and Evangelism

Strategic to the plan will be the promotion of certain small group team ministries and small groups. What follows is a description of each strategic group within which GVSDA will seek to promote discipleship and evangelism.

The Sabbath school classes will be encouraged to follow relationship-building exercises including personal sharing, interactive study questions, prayer, and triad activities. Teachers will also be encouraged to promote spiritual disciplines. It will be recommend to the Sabbath School Council that the small group lesson study time be extended and that the superintendent part of the service only take place once each

quarter.⁸ Each quarter a prayer breakfast will be organized starting at 8:30 a.m., during which people could share about their spiritual walks and pray together.

The children's and youth Sabbath school classes are designed to offer age-appropriate curriculum and activities to nurture the faith of the young. These classes will be encouraged to take an active role in meeting the needs of parents with young children. Birthday parties, field trip outings, and parenting workshops can all be a part of this ministry. Special training will be given to the children's Sabbath school staff in order to help them care for unchurched parents or parents who have recently returned to church.

These groups work closely with various Children and Youth Ministries leadership. The Pathfinder and Adventurer and Eager Beaver clubs are similar to scouting organizations but are co-educational with a decidedly Christian framework for children and youth aged five to eighteen. These groups will be encouraged to not only involve the youth within the church, but also the unchurched friends of club members.

Vespers is a gathering at the end of Sabbath. It is a time for spiritual reflection, community interaction, and relationship building. The meetings usually consist of singing, topical devotionals, personal interaction time, and prayer. It is a medium-sized group with approximately thirty to forty in attendance.

The Women's and Men's Ministry groups meet either weekly or monthly to disciple and encourage the men and women of the church. They can target issues and interests that are gender specific. Each year both groups have annual spiritual retreats that are facilitated by the state denomination.

⁸ Currently the Sabbath school superintendent has a monologue devotional and a few hymns as people come in between 9:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Under this plan there is only forty minutes of small group interaction. Under the new plan there would be one hour and ten minutes, thus giving more time for relational activities and Bible lesson study.

As the church grows, additional midweek church and home fellowship small groups will be added. These groups may have a variety of foci, but their purpose is discipleship and evangelism in the context of relationships. Critical to each group's success will be a focus on promoting and practicing the spiritual disciplines.

Another way to build Christian community is through affinity groups. These are small groups that gather around a common hobby or interest. There are many ideas for these affinity groups: dog training, exercise, entrepreneur/stock trading, paintball fellowship, divorce care, grief care, parenting, Alcoholic Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous, to name a few.

The Prayer Ministry is another important group ministry. This group meets after worship service each week to pray, and they also organize the church prayer chain. These prayer groups can have a vital influence when it comes to discipleship and evangelism. By sharing prayer requests, ministering to each other and praying for others, great good can be accomplished.

Collegiate Ministries and Campus Advent are of major importance for the church. Stable, non-college student leadership needs to be recruited to work with the collegiate leadership in order to continue to build this ministry. Campus Advent (GVSDA's campus ministries group) gathers every Friday night at the University of Florida Campus. These groups are vital to the discipleship of the collegiates at GVSDA.

There are also many social gatherings that provide opportunities for relationship building such as banquets, talent shows, gym nights, baby and wedding showers, and graduation parties. At certain times of the year picnics, ski trips, tubing trips, and

camping trips can also be organized. These outings can be coordinated by the social team ministry.

The Guest Services ministry involves greeting guests and helping them feel welcome during the church services. Tasks include giving a warm welcome, sharing information on the building and church programs, registering visitors, giving of guest welcome kits, and generally showing hospitality through serving guests. The pastor sends out a welcome letter and guests are contacted following their attendance by the pastor and visitation ministry.⁹

Currently the Luncheon Ministry provides a guest luncheon each week and a main fellowship luncheon once per month. Sharing lunch together allows members to mingle with guests and for all to build relationships. GVSDA's strategy is to have seven groups so that no group will need to serve more than once every eight weeks.

The third Sabbath of each month a Visitation Ministry group meets for guest follow-up, missing members love sharing and evangelistic Bible study visitation. This ministry can be coordinated through the Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses. This can also be a time of prayer and equipping in order to be more effective witnesses. Participants can be sent out in groups of twos and threes.

Each weekend one of four Praise and Worship Teams practices on Friday night and ministers over the weekend. These four teams can build relationships and care for

⁹ "Information from across the United States indicates that the following formula is highly accurate: (a) If we visit the home of the first-time worship visitors within 36 hours, 85 percent of them will come back next week. (b) If we visit the home of first-time worship visitors within 72 hours, 60 percent of them will come back next week. (c) If we wait seven days before visiting the home, only 15 percent of them will come back the following week. (d) If we send a clergyperson to visit the home rather than a layperson, we cut these results in half. (e) Telephone contacts instead of personal contacts usually reduce the results by at least three-fourths." Herb Miller, *The Vital Congregation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 81.

each other while serving God through music. As these teams make music together, they can also use this music to attract others to Christ.

The Human Resources Team can help people discover their spiritual gifts through personal interviews and surveys and helps to place disciples into meaningful ministry. They will work throughout the year and in conjunction with the nominating committee held every other year.

The Elder's Team Member Care is a group of eight teams, each one made up of an elder and a small group of deacons and deaconesses. They meet monthly to pray for and find ways to show love and care to members who are entrusted to their care. They take worship attendance of these members.

Another member care team is the Member Emergency Assistance Team or M.E.A.T. This team helps members who are experiencing financial difficulties. They can work together with the Community Services Team, Deacons and Deaconesses to meet the needs in the church.

The Personal Bible Study Team meets weekly to help people with personal Bible studies or Bible studies through correspondence. This group is also involved leading out with the monthly literature distribution and prayer walks. From time to time this group can table at fairs, community events, and college and university functions.

The Public Evangelism Team is a small group of individuals who will be recruited each time there is a reaping series of evangelistic meetings who will usher, sing, greet, pray, and intentionally make relationships with the guests. Members will be recruited who have great people skills and who have a passion to love the unchurched.

Nursery Care will be a ministry made up of paid staff and volunteers who care for the children aged newborn to five years old during worship and reaping meeting services. The security of the children is paramount and the parents will be given pagers.

The Health Ministries Team helps promote healthful living to the congregation and the community. The vision of healthful living is promoted through a variety of activities such as cooking classes, health fairs, fitness accountability groups, and health education. While seeking to avoid extremes, this group will guide the church members into a vibrant healthy lifestyle.

The Communication and Audio/Visual Teams work with the audio, computer projection, video production, website, and lighting. They duplicate CDs and DVDs after each worship service and send them to shut-in members free of charge. This team will be integral to the future vision of television ministries.

The Deacon and Deaconess Ministry takes care of the maintenance of the physical structure of the church and more. They organize work days, decorate, care for the main fellowship luncheon, take up offerings, and set other related goals. They are the hands and feet of the organization.

The Elders' Team helps guide the church. They coach ministry teams, lead Elders' Teams, and meet together to pray. Many serve in various ministries and provide leadership to various areas within the church. They meet twice each month to advise the pastor on various issues such as church discipline, conflict, and directional issues. They preach and teach the word of God as well as help lead the worship service.

As opportunities and personnel change so will some of these teams. As GVSDA moves forward the church should continually strengthen the current teams and

strategically discontinue the ones which have become ineffective at accomplishing the mission. New ministry teams and small groups must be aligned with the churches' new focus. In this process new teams will be formed.

Empowering the Family as a Small Group

The primary small group unit is the household family.¹⁰ GVSDA wishes to strategically empower this unit toward discipleship and evangelism.¹¹ Each family unit will be encouraged to have a strategic discipleship development plan for itself. Kincaid writes,

Recognizing the importance of the family, *churches that are serious about making disciples structure their programs to meet the needs of the family.* They are "family sensitive" as they plan activities. For example, our church seeks to provide quality classes for all ages---children, youth and adults---on Sunday morning. There are groups for collegians, singles, parents, and senior citizens, so we can attract the entire family.¹²

In planning the calendar of the church activities ministry leaders will be encouraged to keep the family dynamic in mind. Church ministry meetings will also endeavor to keep this in mind by being good stewards of people's time and having fewer committee meetings on the Sabbath. Church leaders must also model this focus.

Each year there will be family-oriented training and opportunities for families to learn and grow. Important resources and learning opportunities related to marriage, pre-

¹⁰ This is defined as those living in the same household as opposed to the nuclear family which is made up of a man and a woman and children. The nuclear family, though God's ideal, is found in fewer than half of the households in the Gainesville area.

¹¹ "Families form the character, ethics, beliefs, and relational patterns of each human being. Family systems are created and nurtured by strong persons (and relationships) who establish clear patterns of behavior. Every human being grows up as a participant in several different family systems that affect one's personal and relational values in different ways." Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, 274-275.

¹² Kincaid, *A Celebration of Disciple-Making*, 128-129.

marriage counseling, single parenting, family worship, media selection, the internet, Christian children's materials (DVDs, CDs, and books), family finances, Scripture memorization, and time management will be provided and prioritized on the church calendar. Families will be encouraged to develop their own plans to disciple their families and love their friends and neighbors for Christ.

In addition to this, during worship services the church will provide children's quiet bags, a mother's nursing room, a toddler's room with closed circuit TV, a staffed nursery, and a children's story time. Once a month the children will have their own children's church which will be sponsored by the Children's Ministry Department.

The Role of Corporate Worship Gatherings

GVSDA's corporate worship services should be God-directed, excellent, creative, evangelistic, participatory, culturally relevant, authentic (real and spirit-filled), and they should lead into life-changing surrender to God. There must, first of all, be a realization that the audience of corporate worship is primarily God and secondarily the congregation. In order for GVSDA's worship to be God-directed the church needs to constantly ask the question, How is God most pleased with this worship? Terminology, worship style, and order of service can be used in order to invite and acknowledge the presence of God.

Believers come to worship because they are God worshippers. Macchia writes,

We go to worship to give, not get! Yet in our giving, we certainly receive. It's like the prayer of St. Francis: "It is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born to eternal life." The Primary motivation of the worshiper should be to come into the sanctuary to give all we are and give back to God out of gratitude, love, and obedience.¹³

¹³ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Disciple*, 55.

Second, there needs to be a commitment to excellence and creativity on the part of the worship service leadership. Anything done to worship and glorify God should be done as best as possible and with creativity to honor the creator God. Writing on the importance of worship, Miller states,

A positive, uplifting worship service ranks among the top six reasons why people say they join growing congregations (on a list of forty-eight). Another study reports that 82.7 percent of new members in all congregations rate the quality of the worship service as an important reason for joining. In still another study, 64 percent of the church dropouts declared that “the worship service is not meaningful” was a major cause.¹⁴

Because of this need for excellence and creativity, quarterly worship team meetings will be held in which all who have a part in the worship service work together for worship service excellence and creativity. Each month the Worship Planning Team will meet to plan the month’s services.¹⁵ Each week the worship coordinator will work with the pastor and key participants to plan the worship service. The worship team will meet ten minutes before the service each week for prayer and to discuss any last-minute issues.

Third, the worship service needs to be evangelistic. Sally Morgenthaler, in her book, *Worship Evangelism*, shares that worship is at the heart of all that is done within a church. She successfully argues that seeker sensitive services must be a combination of seeker sensitivity and true worshipers worshipping God in order for worship evangelism to take place. She writes,

Yet I am of the firm conviction that if seeker-driven churches become first and foremost *worshipping* churches, they could have an incredibly vital role in reenergizing and reshaping evangelicalism as we enter the next millennium. A matrix of seeker events and dynamic worship that is open to nonbelievers (worship evangelism) is a possible option. . . . However, for this or any other

¹⁴ Miller, *The Vital Congregation*, 29.

¹⁵ The Worship Planning Team is made up of the pastor, worship coordinator, computer graphics member, praise team coordinator, and special music coordinator.

matrix to be biblical, worship must be reinstated as a church's number-one activity.¹⁶

Truly, when there are authentic worshippers interacting with God through worship, then evangelism will take place naturally.

In order for GVSDA's worship services to be evangelistic in this way, its worship services need to be understood by the unchurched; they need to be seeker sensitive. Church leaders should resist placing non-worship items on the order of service. They should resist using churchy words and phraseology that only the initiated understand. Church business should be kept to a minimum, as well as lengthy announcements that only apply to a few. There must be appeals to make deeper commitments to Christ at each service.

Fourth, the worship service should be culturally relevant. In order to connect in a relevant way with people living in the contemporary culture the Church needs to be able to speak their language. Language is expressed sometimes in words, other times in dress, music, art, atmosphere, and mood. This is where many church fights begin. What is considered sacred to one culture is secular to another, what is considered dead, to another is considered alive with meaning. Because of this, GVSDA will seek to contextualize the language of its worship style toward the current church worshippers and unchurched in the community, leaning a bit toward the latter. Stetzer and Dodson write, "Many people today think Contemporary is good and Traditional is bad. We don't agree. We think that contextual is best—mostly because the words have come to mean different things to

¹⁶ Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism*, 45.

different people.”¹⁷ In *How to Change Your Church without Killing It*, Nelson and Appel write,

We are not against pipe organs, hymnals, ceremony, or tradition. We are for relevance and effectiveness. By prompting effectiveness, we do not suggest achieving gain at all costs. We do not believe there is a need to compromise on the basic tenants (sic) of the Bible or Christianity in order to bear fruit. At the same time, we know that many traditional congregations are designed to be productive in social settings reflective of the fifties through seventies---not the twenty-first century---in America.¹⁸

While avoiding extremes GVSDA will seek to make itself culturally relevant, reflecting the great diversity of the congregation and local community. This will be done through surveys of congregants, community “link2lead” demographic information, and focus group feedback. The question of cultural relevance will be brought up at each worship team meeting.

Fifth, the worship service needs to also be participatory. Active learning through participation is much more effective than mere passive learning. Studies of learning styles indicate that people learn best if a variety of styles are used.¹⁹ It is also clear that when more people are interacting with the worship then the impact is greater. Macchia writes,

Through our surveys and dozens of in-church visits, we have discovered that the people of God are hungering today for meaningful worship experiences. Not the kind of worship where they sit passively back in the pews—but the kind of that engages and requires their full involvement. The key to effective worship in the healthiest settings is engaging people’s hearts, minds, souls, and strength. To be

¹⁷ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 81-82. Their research also indicates, “Music selections suggested an overall trend toward a more contemporary approach, as well. Praise choruses, hymns, and contemporary Christian music were utilized in 90 percent, 75 percent, and 59 percent of comeback churches, respectively.”

¹⁸ Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church Without Killing It*, 16.

¹⁹ Some are auditory, visual, kinesthetic, logical, feeling-oriented, inductive, deductive learners or various combinations of these.

engaged in worship involves varying styles and forms, but is focused on actively drawing in and involving God's people.²⁰

In order to do this, time should be spent creatively planning worship experiences so that the congregation can be engaged through participation. This can be done by the pastor working in conjunction with the Worship Planning Team at their monthly meetings.

Sixth, a worship service needs to be authentic, that is, real in spirit and in truth. All the planning and programming in the world cannot take the place of simple heartfelt worship to God from a heart that is in touch with the Divine. Many people sense that they are going to a performance, highly choreographed and professionally designed, yet lacking in real spiritual heart. This is why all those who are leading worship should be worshippers themselves. Morgenthaler writes,

All the technique in the world cannot produce worshipers. It cannot produce worship. The time has come to make technique the servant of spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). Only then will we be able to engage believers in heartfelt, active response to a living God. Only then will our worship be genuinely attractive to the seeker who is hungering to see what a supernatural relationship with God is like. Only then will our worship produce the by-product God intended: a witness to Christ.²¹

This is why all of GVSDA's rehearsal, planning, and methodology should flow out of the fragrance of who the leaders are as disciples. All those involved in worship need to understand that worship is a very spiritual act and for it to be real they should be real with God themselves. God is not looking for perfect people to lead worship, but broken people who can testify to his saving power and grace in their actual lives.

²⁰ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, 44.

²¹ Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism*, 31.

Seventh, true worship is about a life-changing encounter with God. Warren states, “The heart of worship is surrender.”²² He goes on to state, “Surrender is best demonstrated in obedience. You say ‘yes, Lord’ to whatever he asks of you. To say, ‘no Lord’ is to speak a contradiction. You can’t call Jesus your Lord when you refuse to obey him.”²³ This is not some legalistic obedience, but a life-transforming experience with the Divine.

During this kind of worship people will recognize that they are in the presence of almighty God. Through this experience people allow God to take control and they say and do only his bidding. The preacher and the worship leaders are lost sight of and the soul communes with the Almighty. This is something that can only happen when worship leaders and congregants open their hearts completely to the control of the Spirit – as they totally surrender their lives worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.

In summary, it is clear that through God-directed, excellent, creative, evangelistic, participatory, culturally relevant, authentic (real and spirit filled), and life-changing surrender toward God, the gathering of worship will be a great power at GVSDA.²⁴ As worship grows, the church can add additional services for the glory and praise of God. From time to time other gatherings can be helpful for the purpose of discipleship and evangelistic activity. These events will include public evangelism, camp-meetings, prophecy seminars, concerts, communion services, music jam sessions, prayer breakfasts,

²² Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 77.

²³ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁴ In order for the people to grasp the fullness of worship, leaders must continually teach what worship is all about through modeling, sermons, print, and experience.

and national equipping events. These events will be spaced throughout the yearly calendar in a way to supplement the discipleship and evangelism plans in place.

Personal Witness

As noted before, loving relationships form the basis of discipleship and evangelism. The power of personal witness cannot be underestimated. Becoming a contagious Christian is something that needs to happen from the inside out, yet there are lifestyle habits that individuals can cultivate to become more effective witnesses.²⁵

GVSDA's primary teaching on personal witness will involve a yearly three-session class and workshop. The objective of this class and workshop will be to help people learn interpersonal relationship and personal witnessing skills. While some are naturally more social than others, interpersonal relationship skills can be learned. Before the first session participants will be encouraged to read Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg's *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, Bill Hybels' *Just across the Room*, and Ellen White's *Gospel Workers*.²⁶ The first session will focus on active listening, story line listening, conflict management, and other general interpersonal relationship skills. Special emphasis will be placed upon cultivating a grace-filled, loving personality.

²⁵ "A lot of promotional material is printed and publicity distributed in order to attract others to attend churches. And that has its place. However, the most powerful promotion and publicity is the existence of an authentically loving Christian community. This kind of promotion does not end up in disappointment, because they witness that the profession and possession of God's love have indeed become one and the same. . . . And that is the only kind of love which can forge a Christian community of true disciples to impact the world." Samaan, *Christ's Way of Making Disciples*, 39.

²⁶ Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Bill Hybels, *Just across the Room* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); and Ellen White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1901).

The second session will deal with practical, creative ways one can initiate a “conspiracy of kindness.”²⁷ Participants will be encouraged to start every day with the prayer that God will lead them to someone to whom they can share kindness. Practical methodologies from baking bread for neighbors to buying a stranger’s lunch will be suggested.²⁸ This will launch into a time of brainstorming and reflection which will serve as a catalyst for each participant to start putting these ideas into practice. Special attention will be given to sharing Christ’s love with family and friends. Included in this session will be specific strategies to invite people to church activities and services.²⁹

The third session will help people to be personally ready to share their Christian faith. Participants will be able to write out their unique testimonies and learn to share them effectively. Also included will be a simple way to present the gospel and lead someone to put his or her trust in Jesus Christ. Participants will learn to recognize indicators which will show when a person may be receptive to the Gospel. Methodologies such as Bible studies, prayer walks, business card invitations, gospel literature, web logs, surveys, and evangelistic visitation will be discussed.

The first Saturday afternoon of each month, participants will have an opportunity to meet together and put into practice the concepts learned during the witnessing seminar. By doing on-the-job training, elders and others who have experience can mentor those

²⁷ Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus with Others* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2008).

²⁸ Another resource is Ruthie Jacobsen, *Bridges 101: gas pumps, banana bread, and attitudes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 2008).

²⁹ “A national study indicates that 77.6 percent of all new church members attend worship the first time because someone who attends there invites them. Personal witnessing and inviting are different. Less than 10 percent of church members feel comfortable in personal witnessing, but all church members can invite.” Miller, *The Vital Congregation*, 78.

who are new. From time to time other training will be provided, but the emphasis will be on doing rather than cognitive learning alone.

In addition to the classes, individual personal witness and the utilization of one's spiritual gifts for ministry will be constantly kept before the people as part of the Christian lifestyle. Stories of those impacted by personal witness and ministry will be shared using video, web, live testimony, and print mediums. Unique and creative ways of making friends and building relationships will be highlighted. The congregation will be regularly encouraged to become active in community organizations, clubs, and social events in order to make friends with those outside the church. Getting to know Christ and sharing his love through building relationships will be the primary focus of GVSDA.

Christian Education

Christian education is a large part of what happens at GVSDA. It accounts for nearly 50% of the church ministry budget. It is one of the major means of discipling the young people in the church. As stated in Chapter 2, GVSDA operates an accredited kindergarten through twelfth grade school.³⁰ Home schooling is also promoted within the faith community.

The mission of the school is to help the church's young people become fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ and prepare them to excel in serving the cause of Christ for the good of humanity. GVSDA recognizes that the home, church, and school work together to accomplish this great endeavor. The desire of the church and the school is for

³⁰ In his book, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, Mark DeVries argues that the home is the primary influencer of whether a young person continues going to church after high school. Mark DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

the graduates to be prepared to excel in all areas of knowledge with moral character being at the forefront.

In order to accomplish this GVSDA should constantly uphold its vision and mission of Christian education. SDA schools are not to be like other schools; they are to focus primarily on holistically training young people to become authentic reproducing disciples which are light to the darkened world. White contends,

If a worldly influence is to bear sway in our school, then sell it out to worldlings and let them take the entire control; and those who have invested their means in that institution will establish another school, to be conducted, not upon the plan of popular schools, nor according to the desires of principal and teachers, but upon the plan which God has specified.³¹

There are many visions one can have for a school: becoming large, recruiting unchurched children to attend, financial profit, sports, arts, and academic excellence. Yet while all of these have their place, none of them is the main purpose for Christian education. None of these secondary visions should dilute the primary purpose: to train Christian young people to be missionary disciples.³²

In order for this to happen there needs to be common consensus about what the church and the school are seeking to do. There should be a statement of mission and vision and a clarifying document produced which will enunciate the purposes of Christian education and the approach of GVSDA's local school. GVSDA will seek to produce such a document through the workings of a study committee as appointed by the School Board before the end of 2010.

³¹ White, *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, 25-26), as quoted in Robert H. Pierson, *How to Become a Successful Christian Leader* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing, Association, 1978), 38.

³² A missionary is a fruit-producing disciple of Christ. The term "missionary" here indicates a mindset whereby the church's young people are trained for usefulness in Christ's cause no matter what occupational vocation they choose.

In order for GVSDA's school to thrive it needs to be financially viable. It takes approximately twice as much to educate a student as is usually spent on tuition costs.³³ The remainder of the money needs to come from the church or through private donations (usually by the same donor base as the church). There are several implications because of this. First, in order for the school to be on a firm financial footing it needs to grow at approximately the same rate as the constituent churches' financial support. Another implication of this financial reality is that schools should not recruit heavily from the community. If they do they will: a) sacrifice classroom student/teacher ratios; b) grow to the point where additional staff must be added thus financially straining the constituent churches; or c) charge approximately double tuition to non-constituent students. A non-financial reality to support this viewpoint is that if there are too many unchurched children they can have a greater negative influence than the positive influence of the teacher and other Christian youth.

In order for these kinds of small church schools to be viable there needs to be an endowment fund built up so that in low enrollment years or when unexpected expenses happen there are funds to cover the cost. This endowment fund might grow slowly but would surely help solidify a base for the future of Adventist Christian education.

³³ This is under the current North American Division Adventist system taking into account student/teacher ratio policies, teacher remuneration, Conference educational assistance, and market tuition rates.

CHAPTER 7

THE STRATEGY OF THE PASTOR

The Pastor as a Change Agent

Organisms and organizations that are not changing are usually dying. Effective leaders need to be change agents. In his book, *Managing Corporate Lifecycles*, Ichak Adizes writes, “The role of leaders of organizations is to lead change, integrate to solve the problems created by change, and prepare the system for the next disintegration introduced by the next change.”¹ What is true in the corporate world is also true in the Church. Leading organizations through change is a vital need for the pastorate as well. Schaller agrees, stating,

After more than three decades spent working with thousands of congregational, denominational, seminary, and parachurch leaders from more than five dozen traditions, this observer places a one-sentence issue at the top of that list. The need to initiate and implement planned change from within an organization. That is the number-one issue today for most congregations, denominations, theological seminaries, parachurch organizations, and reform movements.²

Even though it is clear that pastors need to lead change, they should come to terms with the fact that there will be a cost involved and they need to be dedicated to paying the price. This price involves having the perseverance to make sure that the change is seen through to completion. They need to exhibit uncommon tenacity and courage to plan, implement and celebrate the necessary changes. One of the greatest hindrances within Adventism is the mindset that pastors will move every few years. Pastoral change agents need to resist this and know that God has called them to stay the

¹ Ichak Adizes, *Managing Corporate Lifecycles* (Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall Press, 1999), 402.

² Lyle E. Schaller, *Strategies for Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 10.

course even amid very trying circumstances. The pastoral change agent must be willing to continue ministry at a church long enough to see the change process through, which is often measured in decades instead of months or years. GVSDA must have this kind of leadership if there is to be hope for long-term change.

Trust

The first way to lead change is through creating a climate of trust.³ Trust is integral to any positive relationship. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, in their book, *Leadership*, write, “Trust is the emotional glue that binds followers and leaders together. The accumulation of trust is a measure of the legitimacy of leadership.”⁴ An atmosphere of trust can be created by shared purpose, vision and values.⁵ Kouzes and Posner write, “Honest, forward-looking, inspiring, competent: these characteristics have, over the last decade, been consistently selected by all respondent groups as the four most admired leadership characteristics.”⁶ And in *Strategies for Change*, Schaller writes, “Personal popularity wins friends. Competence, commitment, integrity, character, and good judgment earn trust. Except for the founding pastor of a new and fast growing mission, that level of trust usually requires years to create. It does not automatically go with the

³ “Change occurs in two primary ways: through trust and truth or through dissent and conflict. We have tried dissent and conflict and have not changed but have merely become combative.” Warren Bennis, *Why Leaders Can't Lead* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989), 27.

⁴ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), as quoted in Hans Finzel, *Change Is like a Slinky* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2004), 153.

⁵ O'Toole, *Leading Change*, xvii.

⁶ Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility*, 18.

office.”⁷ Because this issue is so important to the change strategy, pastoral leadership at GVSDA must seek to never sacrifice trust. In order to do this the change agent must strategically plan to be trustworthy.

For these reasons, several strategies will be employed at GVSDA in order to promote trust in leadership. First, as pastor I will be accountable for spiritual, moral, and physical growth each week with a fellow pastoral colleague. Second, I will always abide by policies and procedures that others must follow. Pastoral leadership does not have an exception clause. Third, each year church leadership will anonymously give feedback about the pastor’s primary responsibilities in the form of a survey. In addition, the board meeting agenda will include occasions for people to openly share their thoughts about how things are being led. I will also share plans for improvement with others and focus on genuinely listening to others. Time will be given during meetings to allow people to express their thoughts and feelings; I will truly listen and, after reflection, follow through on appropriate ideas. Fourth, manipulation or deceit must never be used in order to promote the agenda. While being honest and transparent at times takes longer, I must always be truthful. Finally, I commit to always treat others with the utmost respect and courtesy. I must think about the positive possibilities of each person and seek to treat them all as very important persons (“VIPs”).

Servant Leadership

Pastoral change agents need to lead by service. Pastors should be willing to do or be anything for the cause of Christ. The strength of this kind of leadership is humility

⁷ Lyle E. Schaller, *Strategies for Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 20-21.

and self-abnegation. They inspire by their servanthood and motivate by their example. O'Toole writes, "The leadership of change does not depend on circumstances; it depends on the attitudes, values, and actions of leaders. Leaders need to begin by setting aside that culturally conditioned 'natural' instinct to lead by push. Leaders should instead adopt the unnatural behavior of always leading by the pull of inspiring values."⁸ This "pulling" by character, inspiration, and values should permeate the attitude of pastoral leadership at GVSDA.

As pastor I can exhibit servant leadership in several ways. First, I can serve in menial ways, helping people to see that nothing is beneath the pastor. Examples might include participating in workdays, cooking for the annual officer's breakfast, and helping clean up at luncheons. Second, I will seek to do what needs to be done.⁹ This does not mean that as pastor I should not properly delegate, but I should simply do what needs to be done for success. Third, I will clearly serve all peoples with no variance or respect to personage: race, finance, position, age, gender, social status, and the like. This brief list does not include all the ways pastors might exhibit servant leadership, yet it is illustrative as one seeks to live according to the mind of Christ.¹⁰

Communicating Vision

In addition to leading change by creating an atmosphere of trust and servant leadership, pastoral leadership at GVSDA needs to be effective at communicating vision.

⁸ O'Toole, *Leading Change*, 36, as quoted in Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church Without Killing It*, 16.

⁹ "Leadership is figuring out what needs to be done and then doing it." Leith Anderson, *Leadership that Works* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), 51.

¹⁰ This is illustrated by Philippians 2:5-8.

Leaders should understand what they want and why it is that they want it, and they should be effective in communicating it to others.¹¹ In addition to future vision they should be able to define the present state of things accurately. In his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge quotes Max DePree,

“The first responsibility of a leader,” writes retired Herman Miller CEO Max de Pree, “is defining reality.” While it is clear that leaders draw their inspiration and spiritual reserves from their sense of stewardship, much of the leverage leaders can actually exert lies in helping people achieve more accurate, more insightful, and more *empowering* views of reality.¹²

Often people will seek to place a negative or positive spin on reality, yet leaders should offer wise perspective. In order to facilitate change the leader needs to let people know the problems with the status quo and then create solutions through the vision.¹³

As pastor of GVSDA, I will communicate vision in several ways. I will share the vision in weekly communication through sermons, banners, signage, art, the church bulletin, emails, my blog, the church newsletter, and announcement times. I will share the vision each month through a special feature video production which highlights various ministries that are carrying out the vision of GVSDA. I will share the vision at all leadership meetings and new member entry meetings. I will use personal encounters with leaders and members to implant the vision. I will communicate the vision through my personal example. I will communicate the vision through funding priorities and

¹¹ James O’Toole, *Leading Change* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 47.

¹² Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1990), 353, quoting Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1989), 35.

¹³ “The strategy begins with discontent. If everyone is completely satisfied with current conditions, it will be impossible to achieve planned change.” Schaller, *The Local Church Looks to the Future*, 225.

fundraising. I will share the vision through updating and recasting of the vision as it is implemented at GVSDA.

Modeling the Spiritual Disciplines

Millionaire philanthropist Andrew Carnegie once stated, “As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do.”¹⁴ In order to teach others spirituality, one needs to be spiritual, and model it effectively. People are looking for concrete examples to inspire them for life change. They need a revelation of spirituality which has been incarnationally lived in the life of the leader who can in turn help guide them into the same experience. Willard writes,

In order to implement something like a curriculum for Christlikeness in the context of local assembly of believers, it will usually be vital to just *do* certain things and not talk a lot about them—at least until some time later. If we are leading such a group, we must first be sure that the curriculum outlined is in fact the substance of our own life. Do we, or are we obviously learning to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?¹⁵

By living the spiritual disciplines, I will be able, as pastor of GVSDA, to lead others through personal experience.¹⁶

Disciplines: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, and Yearly

As pastor I will daily spend an hour studying God’s word, listening, meditating, and talking to God. This will often include *lectio divina*. This spiritual discipline will be

¹⁴ Andrew Carnegie, as quoted by John C. Maxwell, *The Success Journey: The Process of Living Your Dreams* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 188.

¹⁵ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 371.

¹⁶ “A leader will never accomplish what he or she wants by ordering it done. Real leadership must be done by example, not precept.” Abrashoff, *It’s Your Ship*, 32.

a non-negotiable appointment each morning either before my family gets up or after they leave for school. I will also pray, share a devotional thought, and sometimes sing with my family each morning before school. During my sixty-minute exercise routine of swimming or exercising in the gym I will either listen to Scripture and spiritual songs or pray and meditate, in some way communicating with God. I will also seek to take prayer times at the noon hour and evening supper hour. These times will last approximately five to fifteen minutes for communication with God. In addition to this I will spend another hour each day studying spiritual books for insights to share and live. Before bed I will read my list of virtues and pray with my children and wife. I will also plan out the next day.¹⁷

Each week I will take an afternoon and spend it alone with God.¹⁸ During this time of solitude I will enjoy nature and spend time journaling, meditating, praying, and seeking God's direction about current issues. I will call my accountability partner and discuss temptations and God's workings and spend time praying together. My pastoral accountability partner colleague will specifically ask me about my time with God, my diet and exercise, my morality, and my schedule balance. I will attend a small group and a life transformation group. I will also worship and practice sabbathing each week.

Each month I will take a day or two away for a brief spiritual retreat. During this retreat I will practice the disciplines of fasting, solitude, silence, meditation, media

¹⁷ "In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves. . . Self-discipline with all of them came first." Harry S. Truman, as quoted by Maxwell, *Developing the Leader within You*, 50.

¹⁸ Elder H.M.S. Richards comments, "My comment is, is one day a month enough? I don't believe it is. Really, it ought to be a day a week, or at least half a day a week alone with God, the Bible, and one's own soul. I know one of our men, a very busy evangelist, who takes every Tuesday afternoon and goes clear away, where no telephone can reach him." Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 289.

fasting (no cell phones, computer, internet, blackberry, or television).¹⁹ I will also take time to learn and experiment with new disciplines. During this time I will reflect on the past month and seek God's guidance for the month to come. From time to time I will invite others to come with me which will afford opportunities for modeling and mentoring.

Each year I will take a one- or two-week study and visioning retreat. At times I will attend a Doctor of Ministry class at Fuller Seminary or Andrews University; other times I will attend a Renovare Conference or simply spend time alone. At times I will go along with another colleague or someone I am mentoring for ministry. During these experiences I will make appointments with Christian teachers and pastors I highly respect in order to gain insight and spiritual direction.

Even though Christians do not constantly talk about how they are living the disciplines, people can often tell through the blessing of the Lord (Matthew 6:5, 6). When the disciplines are taught from the perspective of personal experience there is inspiration. Teaching the disciplines takes on a tremendous power when they are actually practiced by a leader. Other disciplines such as LTGs, small groups, and retreats are done in group and can be easily modeled.

Modeling Simplicity

It is strategic to GVSDA's plan for people to lead lives of simplicity in order to have time for relationships: with God, family, church family, and the lost. In order for meaningful relationships to be formed time needs to be freed up for it. This should be no

¹⁹ Herrington, Bonem, and Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, 31.

different for the minister. It is hypocritical to preach about reaching one's neighbors if the preachers themselves are too busy to get to know their own neighbors.²⁰ It is hypocritical to tell people to reach their families when the leaders themselves do not spend time with their families. Jere D. Patzer, in his book, *The Road Ahead*, writes,

According to one survey, top American business executives spend fifty to sixty hours per week on the job. A poll of clergy reported that they spend seventy to eighty hours each week. In one church, members were asked to indicate the amount of time they expected their pastor to spend on administration, budget, community outreach, visiting, sermon preparation, etc. The average totaled eighty-two hours a week. One saint expected her pastor to work 200 hours per week, although there are only 168 hours in a week! Actually, that is significant because it demonstrates that fact that expectations are often greater than reality allows.²¹

Church leaders should not spend more than forty-five hours of intentionally planned church work.²² This number does not take into account time with God or making relationships outside of work. Quite honestly, pastors could count everything they do as ministry because a Christian is never off duty. Yet, in order to model a healthy life, pastors should work less and model relational evangelism, family relationships, community service, and the bringing of order to an inherently hectic occupation and life. Of course there will be emergencies and times of rigorous imbalance, yet these times should not be the norm. Life needs to be lived intentionally and “margin” should be built

²⁰ “Over seven out of ten pastors we interviewed shared with us the critical importance of their modeling personal evangelism. Said Wesley, a nondenominational pastor from Michigan: ‘I used to beat up the people pretty badly from the pulpit. Then God convicted me that we would never reach the unchurched unless I myself was obedient to the Great Commission. It seems like we reach people for Christ when I’m obedient; and it seems like the church is dead when I’m disobedient.’” Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, 167.

²¹ Jere D. Patzer, *The Road Ahead* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2003), 69.

²² In order to have maximum effectiveness ministers need to practice spiritual disciplines, exercise, do house chores, have family time, sleep, recreate, eat, and study. If one works more than fifty hours these vital areas of life, as well as additional relationships with the lost, get crowded out. This is a major cause of ineffectiveness in the pastorate and the laity: imbalance in occupation.

into it.²³ Without this margin, there will be no time for the important God-ordained appointments. With less work in the household there might be some financial repercussions, yet with simplicity, material possessions are less important.

Modeling Personal Witnessing

When people come to church because a pastor has made friends and invited them to worship, witnessing is modeled. In an effort to model personal witnessing, I will print up business cards with the church address and worship services time and keep them with me so I can invite people that I meet to attend church. I will intentionally make friends with my neighbors and those I regularly see at places like the gym, stores, and people I do business with regularly.²⁴ I will seek friendship without any strings attached. I will go to their parties and attend community events. I will seek to allow the positive attractions of kindness and love draw them to want to have a relationship with me. Then during Spirit-directed opportunities I will share with them about God and his Church. I will write down each of their names and pray for them regularly. I will also seek to be active in at least two community organizations not associated with GVSDA.

Another area of personal witness will be through strategic visitation. I will bring other believers with me from time to time for modeling and mentoring. These visits might include hospital visits, evangelistic meetings, Bible studies, “get acquainted” times,

²³ In Dr. Richard Swenson’s indispensable book entitled *Margin*, he argues that people need to intentionally unplug from the fast-paced lifestyle that is causing so much sickness in today’s society. He exhorts that people must slow down in order to truly live.

²⁴ “Every church member should feel it his special duty to labor for those living in his neighborhood. Study how you can best help those who take no interest in religious things. As you visit your friends and neighbors show an interest in their spiritual as well as in their temporal welfare.” Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 190.

“missing member” visits, and “felt need” visitations. I will seek to do this visitation on most Sabbath afternoons after lunch appointments. Hamilton suggests a great follow-up plan for first time visitors: after using a creative way to obtain the guests’ names he would go out in the afternoon and bring a gift and visit each home. He would not stay but simply give them a gift, a coffee mug, and thank them for coming. He writes,

This investment of two or three hours a week, preferably on Sunday afternoon, but in no case later than Monday night, was among the most valuable uses of my time in developing the church. Our retention for first-time visitors was very high. In addition, I quickly came to know and build relationships with our visitors because I had stopped by their homes.²⁵

This will be a great opportunity to get to know new guests, build new relationships, and mentor leaders.

Preaching

It is through the “foolishness of preaching” that people are led to repentance (1 Corinthians 1:21). God promised that his word would not return to him empty, but that it would fulfill its work (Isaiah 55:11). Preaching will be a major part of the work at GVSDA. As pastor I will spend approximately twenty hours each week on the ministry of preaching and teaching.²⁶ Occasionally, when preparing for a reaping evangelistic meeting, more time will be spent.²⁷ These messages will be recorded and made available to share, shown on cable access channels, as well as archived on GVSDA’s website.

²⁵ Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls*, 47.

²⁶ “When asked, ‘When do you study?’ Andy Stanley replies, ‘All day Wednesday and half-day Thursday. Then I review and internalize the message on Saturday evenings. I preach an average of thirty-six weekends a year. On most of the weeks I’m off, I still prepare a message.’ Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2006), 195.

²⁷ Each year GVSDA will seek to hold two intentional reaping events taught by the pastor.

Some may think this is an excessive amount of time to spend on sermonizing, yet without that time spent, excellence cannot be achieved. Bob Russell, Pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, a church that has grown from three hundred to be one of the largest congregations in America, writes,

I usually spend about fifteen to twenty hours a week in sermon preparation. I've discovered that the difference between a good sermon and an excellent sermon is about five hours! I could be satisfied after fifteen hours with a pretty good sermon; but if I want it to be excellent, I've got to work harder. Excellence takes time and effort.²⁸

Short, clear, hope- and grace-filled, Spirit-filled, Bible-based, intensely interesting, culturally relevant, and focused sermons will be the goal. Each year GVSDA will publish a sermonic calendar with the texts and topics so worship teams can plan around the topic and people can know it is safe to invite their guests.

Creating an Empowering Atmosphere

There are many ways pastors can create an empowering atmosphere. By exerting empowering leadership, other leaders will be motivated and equipped to do ministry and thus the ministries will grow. This empowering atmosphere can be created at GVSDA primarily through prayer and leadership dynamics.

Prayer

It will be clear that the congregation of GVSDA is seeking God's guidance and power every step of the way through prayer. The church will be led through prayer. C. Peter Wagner, writing on the importance of leading people through prayer, states, "The

²⁸ Russell, *When God Builds a Church*, 114.

second important change that many of us need to make is to realize that prayer really works. Without this, we will never get far beyond rhetoric prayer. By this I mean that if we pray, things will happen that would not have happened if we had not prayed.”²⁹

Members of the church will pray at every meeting, use the church’s intercessory prayer network during worship service, set aside special days of fasting and prayer, hold prayer breakfasts and weekly prayer ministry gatherings, conduct a monthly elders’ prayer time, use prayer chains via email and telephone, and recruit prayer partners. GVSDA will be known as the church that prays. Every member will be invited to start the day praying for the community, the church, and the lost within their circle of influence. GVSDA will acknowledge that prayer is a genuine encounter with God that brings power.

Leadership Dynamics

As pastor I will seek to empower the leadership of GVSDA through teaching and modeling for them several critical leadership dynamics. The first is high expectations which will lead to a culture of excellence. The church will seek to do the best at everything it undertakes. It will encourage leaders to aim high and to be creative yet realistic. The church will also help its people realize that failure is an important part of excellence. Kenneth Callahan, in his book, *Effective Church Leadership*, writes,

There is a direct correlation between the value of excellent mistakes and the level of creativity in an organization. This correlation does not condone a pattern of inept, incompetent, mediocre work. Rather, it encourages the value of creativity. Quite simply, the more positive the recognition for excellent mistakes, the higher the level of creativity in the group. People’s creativity is advanced when the organization encourages improvisation, initiative, spontaneity, and new ideas. In

²⁹ Barna, *Leaders on Leadership*, 286.

many organizations it would help to give an annual award for the best mistake of the year.³⁰

High expectations and a culture of excellence created through the overt teaching of telling leaders to go out and fail will result in empowerment.³¹

The second leadership dynamic of empowerment is through keeping the vision ever before the congregation and leadership. This will create a sense of urgency and focus that will help propel them into action.³² This will be done through a variety of communication methods noted earlier. Sharing the vision and creating a sense of urgency will be primarily accomplished through the monthly Church Ministries Board.

The third leadership dynamic will be to clearly delegate responsibility and authority in order to do ministry. This will result in an environment that grants permission. This will be done through education and coaching. Education will happen each year during GVSDA's Officer Orientation, during Church Ministry Board meetings, and through coaching with elders and the pastor. Delegation of responsibilities will be a regular item on meeting agendas. The pastor will constantly seek to delegate everything that can possibly be successfully delegated.

The fourth leadership dynamic will be to create a simple organizational framework and accountability structure. The organizational framework structure will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8. It will be logical, simple, and user-friendly.

³⁰ Kenneth L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership: Building on the Twelve Keys* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 220.

³¹ "Schoidino Honda, founder of Honda Motors, offered this insight: 'Many people dream of success. To me success can be achieved only through repeated failure and introspection. In fact, success only represents on percent of your work that results from 90 percent of that which is called failure. Very few unacquainted with failure will ever know the true joy of success.'" Maxwell, *The Success Journey*, 129, quoting Schoidino Honda, founder of Honda Motors.

³² Charles R. Hobbs, *Time Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 14.

Accountability, which is gathering others around oneself to help one be successful, will happen in several different ways. First, the congregation will be taught that everyone is accountable, including the pastor and elders. Second, each year the church leaders will have an opportunity to set goals and objectives at the beginning of each year. During the Church Ministry Board meetings there will be breakout sessions where mutual coaching and debriefing of past ministry will take place. Out of these sessions action steps will be established in order to help each leader reach his or her goals. Third, each church ministry will have an opportunity report on its ministry activities at scheduled times each year. Fourth, a yearly ministry review will be conducted by the pastor and an elder (who is assigned to be a consultant/advisor to the ministry).³³ Fifth, GVSDA's concept of doing ministry through teams will naturally help leaders and teams to be accountable to one another. And sixth, the church nominating committee, which meets every other year, will have an opportunity to replace any church volunteers.

The fifth leadership dynamic will be to create an environment where people are highly valued and know it.³⁴ This can be done by showing utmost respect and grace to people, listening to them, and treating them well. Affirming them, celebrating their wins, and publicly recognizing their contributions are all tremendously important.³⁵ These

³³ For some ministries there will be additional coaching provided.

³⁴ "One of the most striking findings in our research is that hard work and high expectations do not differentiate high-performing workgroups. They are necessary, but not sufficient, for high performance. What made the high performing workgroups stand out was that they linked respect for people with those two factors. If the members don't feel valued for their contributions, all the hard work and high expectations in the world will not be enough for the group to be high performing." Susan Lucia, *Contagious Leadership* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004) 50.

³⁵ "One factor that contributes to fatigue is the failure to publicly celebrate the success of the journey. The deep commitment of change leaders and the congregation's progress toward the vision needs to be recognized. This simple act can reenergize the leaders and the congregation." Herrington, Bonem, and Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, 86.

celebrations can be fun and the church should constantly seek to increase the ministry “fun factor.”³⁶

Training and Equipping

A variety of training and equipping avenues will be utilized to prepare members for the work of the ministry. The first avenue will be that as pastor I will continually emphasize that ministry training and equipping should happen constantly through on-the-job training within the teams. This apprenticeship training and equipping should be systemic to the church as a learning organization.³⁷ All leaders will be encouraged to thus mentor a promising assistant.

Second, the Human Resource Team and I as pastor will continually seek to recruit leadership to train and position. This will be done at monthly meetings and through intentional processes when new people join the church. The management of our human resources by this team will be a high priority.

Third, at Church Ministry Board and other ministry team meetings I as pastor will constantly seek to teach and equip. Noel Tichy, in his book, *The Leadership Engine*, writes,

The big difference between winners and losers, whether they are organizations or individuals, is that winners understand that learning, teaching and leading are inextricably intertwined. Teaching is not some ancillary, nice-to-do activity that

³⁶ Miller, *The Vital Congregation*, 26.

³⁷ “Training is a four-step process. Basically, it is performed on the job. a. I do, you watch (observation model). b. I do, you help (limited participation). c. You do, I help (assist, evaluate). d. You do, I watch (fully trained, encourage).” Carl F. George and Robert E. Logan, *Leading and Managing Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 110.

is left to the staffers in the human resources area or, worse yet, to outside consultants. Teaching is the central activity of winning organizations.³⁸

Fourth, I as pastor will look for training events, seminars, materials, and online resources for equipping and will seek to put money in the budget to help pay for these teaching opportunities. Finally, I as pastor will seek to never do ministry alone, but continually seek to mentor other leaders through on-the-job training and teachable moments.

Marketing the Church

The best way to market the church is by being a church that can be marketed.

After this, the best way to market a church is through word of mouth.³⁹ Andy Stanley and Ed Young, in their book, *Can We Do That?* write,

I've also discovered that the best way to market the church is through word-of-mouth advertising. Our surveys indicate that 98 percent of the people who attend FC showed up for the first time because someone invited them. If you have a church that is creative, relevant, and exciting to attend, people will invite their friends---that's given. If your church is boring and irrelevant, you can have evangelism classes 24/7 and it won't matter. People will not invite others to a boring church.⁴⁰

Because the worship service is the largest gathering where people experience the church, people should constantly be challenged and taught how to invite guests.⁴¹ Kincaid writes,

³⁸ Noel M. Tichy, *The Leadership Engine: How Winning Companies Build Leaders at Every Level* (New York: Harper Business Books, 2002), 14.

³⁹ "Not all word-of-mouth epidemics are this sensational, of course. But it is safe to say that word of mouth is – even in this age of mass communications and multimillion-dollar advertising campaigns – still the most important form of human communication." Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 32.

⁴⁰ Andy Stanley and Ed Young, *Can We Do That?* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Company, 2002), 8.

⁴¹ "Further, at these user friendly churches, members realized that inviting people to church was only part of their responsibility. The inviters acknowledged that they also were responsible for accompanying the guest to the church activity, as well as for following up with them. It was not the task of a 'visitation team' or an 'evangelism team' to make the visitor feel welcome. The strategy called for the

“Studies have shown that of all the reasons unchurched people do not go to church, one of the most common reasons given is that they have not been asked. A church historian found that the average person in one denomination invites others to church once every twenty-eight years.”⁴²

Indeed, word-of-mouth, “contagious” Christians will be GVSDA’s primary strategy for marketing the church. In planning for the overall strategy of worship and the preaching calendar, effective advertising to the membership is a must. Helping members understand that the church will be dealing with relevant topics and the problems people face in the “real world” will help inspire them to invite their friends and families. Along with this will be several other drawing items such as: music, free childcare, an event after the service such as a picnic, a special part of the service that the member is involved in, food, and meeting people. Also, the pastor and church leadership needs to seek to ensure that it is a safe place for members to invite friends.⁴³

Second to this marketing approach is to develop internet and television ministries. These avenues will allow the people of Gainesville to view worship services from the privacy of their own homes. Because many people have never even heard of Seventh-day Adventism this will allow people to hear a biblical message and gather conclusions based on this interaction.

person who did the inviting to also provide the on-site hospitality and the post-visit debriefing.” Bama, *User Friendly Churches*, 100.

⁴² Kincaid, *A Celebration of Disciple-Making*, 51.

⁴³ While this is difficult, the church must ask people to leave who persistently seek to propagate negative personal agendas (the mentally unstable, sexually aggressive, pedophiles, cult members, those who try to continually seek to recruit away from sound doctrine, and those who are continually verbally or physically abusive to others).

Third, GVSDA's marketing strategy will employ direct mail, billboards, newspaper advertising, and signage. Of course these are less effective than personal contacts, yet the church will use all avenues possible to go and reach the community.⁴⁴ Many of these are free, such as community calendars and informational spots, while others are quite costly. Yet the cost of doing nothing is much higher.

Funding the Vision

There are several strategic initiatives that need to be employed in funding the vision. The first is to print up new tithe envelopes that are congruent with the local as well as denominational vision. These will be in keeping with denominational goals, yet will highlight local initiatives. Second, GVSDA will establish a special offering for local evangelistic activities each week. Third, the church will establish and promote an endowment fund to help fund church school operations. Fourth, GVSDA will develop a "Committee of 100." Those who join the Committee will donate a set amount of money each year to help fund school operations and capital improvements. Fifth, the church will develop a plan of stewardship education using positive testimonies on how the funds are allocated. Sixth, the church will use yearly commitment cards for people to fill out as a covenant with God during worship. Finally, GVSDA will send out letters promoting stewardship, the commitment cards, and thanksgiving for individual faithfulness to God.

⁴⁴ In speaking about direct mailing Adam Hamilton writes, "Sending out ten thousand two-or three-color brochures cost approximately two thousand dollars. We knew that if even three households joined the church as a result of the mailing, it would pay for itself in the first seven months. But these members would be attending and contributing for far more than seven months. Furthermore, each of these members would likely invite another friend or neighbor to the church in the next year." Hamilton, *Leading beyond the Walls*, 35.

CHAPTER 8

THE CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

GVSDA's objective is simple: to make more authentic disciples of Jesus Christ.¹ The church will seek to connect people to God (through spiritual disciplines); his Body, the Church (through practicing community); their own families (through intentional life planning and simplicity of life); and the unchurched (through service, team ministry, and strategic initiatives).² All these areas are interconnected and work synergistically to produce authentic disciples. In order to effectively reach these objectives, change will be led at GVSDA.

Ten Steps for Leading Change

Step One: The Leader

In order to lead change at GVSDA, change needs to first start with the leader. As pastor I must lead the life I am promoting. First, I will implement my daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly spiritual discipline plan as outlined in Chapter 7. I will share this plan with my accountability partner and be held accountable for following it.³

In order to lead change in other areas I will have the following goals. First, I will budget twenty hours of the week for worship planning and sermon preparation. Second, I

¹ "People are God's method, not techniques and programs. And people become usable to God only as they dwell in his glorious presence." Patterson, *Deepening Your Conversation with God*, 29.

² This is illustrated by the four points of the Cross: "Connect with God" - upward, "Connect with fellow Christians" - to the side, "Connect with family" - to the other side, "Connect with the unchurched" - downward; and Christ is at the center of it all.

³ My colleague and accountability partner will weekly hold me accountable for other discipleship areas also. In addition to this, my Life Transformation Groups will also hold me accountable.

will continue going to my small group and start a second Life Transformation Group which will continue to grow the grassroots movement. Third, through strategic weekly, monthly, and yearly planning, I will make time for meaningful relationships with my family, my friends and neighbors, church community, and civic organizations which I will join by May 2010. I will build “margin” into my schedule so God-ordained appointments with others can take place. These are the critical elements of my personalized discipleship plan. In addition to this I will seek to lead using a checklist of major tasks which were discussed in Chapter 7. This Master Plan Checklist is a monthly guide to help plan board agendas, pastoral work, equipping, and accountability.

Step Two: Prayer Plan

The next step will be the implementation of the prayer plan at GVSDA. This will begin in March, 2010 by meeting with the Prayer Ministries Coordinator and discussing the goals and objectives of the prayer ministry. Each year GVSDA will plan for strategic prayer initiatives that will lead the church to be a church of prayer. Included in this plan will be an email prayer chain, ministry team prayer, worship intercessory prayer, a prayer list, a prayer box, an elders’ prayer meeting, a phone tree prayer chain, weeks of prayer, prayer partners, bulletin prayer promotion, morning prayer initiative, prayer spaces, a prayer team strategy, days of prayer and fasting, an annual prayer retreat, and a prayer promotion plan. After the specific goals for each year are finalized they will be placed on the yearly calendar and delegated for implementation.

Step Three: The Change Team - Strategic Planning Team (SPT)

This step of the strategy is to begin working with the Strategic Planning Team (hereafter, SPT).⁴ This group will begin holding monthly meetings in March 2010. The work of the SPT will be multifaceted. They will study mission and vision, solicit input and feedback concerning the vision, solidify the vision, communicate the vision, deal with resistance to the vision, and help implement the vision.

After an initial study of this ministry focus paper the SPT will begin soliciting feedback and seeking input concerning the vision draft. This will be done through questionnaires and Vision Group Workshops and listening exercises. During these workshops, ministry leaders and church members will be given an introductory view of the vision and will have opportunity to discuss the future vision and offer input and feedback. The various rationales for change and a case for urgent planned change will be made.⁵ Ample time will be given to seek the Lord's direction in prayer.

After this time of congregational and leadership input and prayer, the SPT will solidify the details of the vision by group consensus building.⁶ Senge writes, "The practice of shared vision involves the skills of unearthing shared 'pictures of the future' that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance. In mastering this discipline, leaders learn the counterproductiveness of trying to dictate a vision, no matter

⁴ "The most effective leaders know the value of a vision team. Every visionary needs a small handful of leaders who can help dream the dream. One reason that many of us discover that it is, in fact, lonely at the top is that we have not surrounded ourselves with a vision team to help us accomplish the task. We are often alone because we have chosen to be alone." Southerland, *Transitioning*, 75.

⁵ This sense of urgency will be created out of wise planning, not out of panic or manipulation.

⁶ "Remember that change is most successful when those who are affected are involved in the planning. This is a platitude of planning theory, but it is as true as it is trite. Nothing makes people resist new ideas or approaches more adamantly than their belief that change is being imposed on them." Warren Bennis, *Why Leaders Can't Lead* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989), 150.

how heartfelt.”⁷ Because God speaks through His Holy Spirit to the entire body, a consensus approach is best while the church will in no way compromise the essential principles of discipleship.⁸ Drafts will be written and rewritten, and strategic decisions about the allocation of human and financial resources will be made. What will come forth will be a compelling shared vision which will guide the church into the future.

The next task of the SPT will be to communicate the vision. This will be an ongoing process before and as the vision is being implemented.⁹ Leadership expert Bert Nanus writes,

For a vision to be effective, it must be well understood and widely shared in the organization. Leaders often are amazed to learn that although they are quite sure of their sense of direction, the message hasn't reached lower levels in the organization. Perhaps the vision was not as clear as it should have been in the first place, or it was distorted in delivery. A common symptom of poor communication of vision is an overactive rumor mill, as workers grope for scraps of information about where the organization is really headed.¹⁰

Because of the need for good communication the SPT will seek many avenues to communicate the vision effectively.

⁷ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 9.

⁸ “This emphasis on broad-based support or a consensus also takes us back to the sources of authority. Is membership in a group to be the chief source of authority? Or should greater weight be given to competence or commitment or economy or trust or knowledge or other sources?” Schaller, *Strategies for Change*, 87. While GVSDA will seek to build consensus, it will not give veto power to a vocal minority who supports status quo stagnation.

⁹ “The effort of effective church-based visionaries also demonstrates the imperative of having multiple vision casters. The point person in the ministry is generally the senior pastor. He or she must consistently communicate and staunchly defend that vision. But if the pastor is the only individual who is promoting the vision, the church will not become a vision-driven entity.” George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 144-145.

¹⁰ Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 58.

As noted in Chapter 7, I as pastor will use many different avenues to continually share the vision.¹¹ Yet others need to have a part in communicating the vision as well. The SPT will seek to share the vision in several ways. They can help share the vision at the Newcomers Class by the sharing of personal stories or testimonies of how the vision has positively impacted others. Also the SPT will help recruit individuals who can share testimonies of how the church has helped them personally. These can be brought before the church live or via video. The SPT will also seek to model the vision themselves as actions communicate more effectively than mere words. Other creative methods for communication of the vision can be conceived by the SPT as the vision is being implemented.

The next task of the SPT will be to help execute the strategic vision plan. The SPT will do this by providing counsel to the pastor, help in recruiting those involved with the change, and being a general coalition for change in their respective leadership areas. In addition to this they will help manage the criticism that change and movement inevitability brings. As the change progresses they can help evaluate the change and seek ways for it to be led more effectively.

Step Four: Spiritual Disciplines

Because connecting with God is at the very heart of what is done at GVSDA, teaching people to form a relationship with God and abide with him through exercising

¹¹ The vision will be communicated in the following ways: weekly through sermons, banners, signage, art, the bulletin, emails, the website blog, the newsletter, and announcement times; monthly through a special feature video production which highlights various ministries that are carrying out the vision of GVSDA; at all leadership meetings and new member entry meetings; through personal encounters with leaders and members; through the pastor's personal example; through the use of financial priority decisions and calls for funding; and through updating and recasting the vision as it is implemented at GVSDA.

spiritual disciplines is paramount in the plan. A variety of methodologies will be employed in order to help people discover and make spiritual disciplines a way of life.

First, three individuals will be recruited who have a passion for God and want to help others experience him through spiritual disciplines. These individuals will take special training in coaching, spiritual direction, and the teaching of spiritual disciplines. They will work with individuals who are seeking to develop their own Personalized Discipleship Plans.

Second, the church will seek to teach spiritual disciplines. A series of six sermons will be created which teach the spiritual disciplines and the series will be added to the sermonic calendar. Some of this material will be adapted to be presented during Discipleship 101 Classes. Next, the church will invite two guest speakers each year that will highlight various spiritual disciplines. In addition, promotional literature and resources that teach spiritual disciplines will be available in the foyer. Next, a week of prayer will be scheduled in the fall of 2010 where spiritual disciplines will be taught and practiced. Finally the Master Plan Checklist will be used to ensure that the vision of a lifestyle of spiritual disciplines is kept before the people.

In GVSDA's various small group ministries and team ministries, a lifestyle of spiritual disciplines will be promoted. The church will purchase curriculum for small group leaders to use in teaching spiritual disciplines. The Sabbath school teachers will be trained and equipped to promote spiritual disciplines, and all ministry team leaders will be taught that their effectiveness and the effectiveness of their teams will be a direct result of practicing spiritual disciplines. This training will take place at the annual Officer's Orientation as well as monthly church ministry meetings.

Step Five: Organizational Shifts

In February 2009, at the time of this writing, GVSDA's Church Board voted to dissolve itself. More accurately, they voted to create two separate governing boards, an Administrative Board for administrative issues and a Church Ministry Board for ministry issues. The Administrative Board will be responsible for the nuts and bolts of administration, finance items, building maintenance, general policies, and building related requests. The Church Ministry Board will focus on the work of ministry including discipleship, evangelism, ministry teams, visioning, coaching, communication, coordination, and training and equipping.¹² The two boards will meet jointly for large decisions and for the yearly budget. This will allow for greater accountability and effectiveness within each respective area. This change will be evaluated in six months.

Another structural shift is the move away from using a nominating committee approach for the selection of ministry leaders and volunteers and using a Human Resource Team instead. This team will be recruited and will be activated by March 2010. They will be instrumental in helping people discover their spiritual gifts and placing them into meaningful ministry. They will also work with ministry teams in order to effectively staff ministries. They will meet on a monthly basis and their leader will be on the Church Ministry Board. Every other year the nominating committee will continue to meet for accountability purposes, yet by and large the Human Resources Team will be the key recruiter for ministry.

¹² "The new view of leadership in learning organizations centers on subtler and more important tasks. In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for *building organizations* where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models---that is, they are responsible for learning." Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 340.

Step Six: Equipping

GVSDA will also focus on putting together a system for training and equipping, seeking to make GVSDA a learning organization. Initially the church will put together the curriculum and material for the Newcomers Class and Discipleship 101 Class by July 2010. As stated before, the Human Resources Team will seek to work with every person who is a part of the church in order to help them discover their spiritual gifts and connect them with meaningful ministry; this will be an ongoing process.¹³ Next GVSDA will develop and schedule a class entitled “Contagious Christianity” and give opportunities for people to receive on-the-job training.

All ministry team leaders will be taught and encouraged to do on-the-job training, to lead by teaching, and to mentor an assistant leader. GVSDA’s primary plan is to equip the leaders who will equip others. Leaders will also be taught and reminded of the church’s system for empowerment by delegation of responsibility and authority within the framework of accountability. The church will also teach coaching and allow each ministry to coach each other. These activities will take place at the yearly Officer’s Orientation and through the monthly Church Ministry Board meetings.

Equipping conferences and seminars will be sought out each December/January and strategically shared with the corresponding ministry teams.¹⁴ At this time, the church will also develop and schedule other seminars on time management, life purpose, financial management, biblical hermeneutics (how to study and interpret the Bible), marriage, and parenting. Also, a secure portion of the church website will be developed

¹³The aim will be to help all members discover their purposes and life callings and put them on the pathway to success. The Human Resources Team will seek not to “fill positions” but rather empower disciples for service.

¹⁴ GVSDA will budget monies each year for equipping church ministries.

and used to highlight articles, job descriptions, training videos, and links to help equip people with resources.

Step Seven: Small Groups

GVSDA will focus on helping people understand that in order to be part of the church they need to be part of a small group. GVSDA will not merely be a church *with* small groups, but a church *of* small groups. GVSDA's concept of small groups encompasses traditional small groups, ministry teams, and Life Transformation Groups. In order to accomplish the objectives in this area, the church will recruit a Small Group Coordinator by June of 2010. This individual's goals will be to promote small groups; recruit, train, and coach leaders; and coordinate groups. The Small Group Coordinator will work with a small leadership team in order to carry out the objectives of GVSDA's small group ministry strategy as described in Chapter 6.

In addition to this, Christian community through the small group dynamic will be taught and modeled to the church through a variety of modalities: small group training meetings, small group coaching sessions, leadership meetings, team ministry meetings, and Sabbath school classes – in short, in all small groups. GVSDA will also recruit and teach small group community through preaching, small group recruitment days, and grassroots Life Transformation Group multiplication. During this step, the concept of the family as small group will be taught and the resources and strategies outlined in Chapter 6 will be executed. Many of the resources will be placed in the newly renovated resource area and also on the church website.

Step Eight: Evangelism Plan

GVSDA's approach to evangelism is primarily focused upon developing loving people who will in turn love others for Christ. Through its prayer initiatives the church will constantly be reminded to pray for the lost and show loving care. As stated before, the congregation will be taught to invite their friends to church through "word of mouth" advertising. While at church, guests will be invited to register and be given a gift bag with church promotional material. The worship service each week will be designed to lead people to Christ.¹⁵ The guests will also be invited to the guest fellowship luncheon after the service. During this time the luncheon teams as well as the guests' friends will have an opportunity to mingle with the guests and build relationships with them. Later in the afternoon I or someone from one of the Elders' Teams will drop by the homes of the guests and bring them a gift and thank them for coming, inviting them back. GVSDA will fully implement this plan by March 2010.

In addition to this GVSDA will seek to create a culture of outward focus by teaching church members how to be effective in personal witnessing.¹⁶ This will be done by equipping as outlined in Chapter 7, and by helping set up ministry teams and small groups that have an outward focus. Each year opportunities will be considered and ministries created. Two such teams that will be created this year are the television

¹⁵ The sermonic calendar outlining the worship service speaker will be published each quarter. In this way people will feel comfortable that there will be no "surprises" when their friends or unchurched relatives are there. GVSDA's Worship Team will plan worship to be God-directed, excellent, creative, evangelistic, participatory, culturally relevant, authentic (real and Spirit-filled), and leading toward life-changing surrender toward God.

¹⁶ Stories of those impacted by personal witness and ministry will be shared using video, web, live testimony, and print forums. Unique and creative ways of making friends and building relationships will be highlighted. The congregation will be regularly encouraged to get involved in the community and become active in community organizations, clubs, and social events in order to make friends with those in the community.

ministry team (working in conjunction with the communication team), and a visitation team that meets the first weekend of each month for evangelistic and encouragement visitation.

Finally, each year GVSDA will develop a schedule for reaping meetings and also develop ministry teams in order to help these meetings be successful. The church will seek to have two such meetings each year. During these meetings there will be an intentional emphasis on building relationships with guests and leading people to a commitment to Christ.

Step Nine: Financing the Vision

The next step will be to finance the vision. GVSDA will call for a weekly offering to be designated for local evangelistic activities. GVSDA will also promote and establish an endowment fund in order to fund the future of Adventist education. The church will also establish the “Committee of 100” who will be invited to donate funds toward educational endeavors. Next GVSDA will schedule the stewardship promotion plan highlighted in Chapter 7. These objectives should be in place by August 2010.

Step Ten: Evaluation and Celebration

Each year the SPT will meet with the elders to evaluate the overall church discipleship strategy in order to recommend changes and to set yearly goals. Each part of the process will be examined and areas of improvement recommended. O’Toole writes, “*Change became ongoing*. Because the environment doesn’t stand still and the needs of

stakeholders aren't static, the idea is to institutionalize a process of continuing change."¹⁷
 This "institutionalization of change" will be a time of yearly alignment with the church's purpose.¹⁸

A steady process of evaluation will be set in motion starting February 2010. During regular monthly board meetings, time will be given to listen to people concerning the life and ministry at GVSDA. Each ministry team will have an opportunity to set goals and then report on its ministry to the Church Ministry Board. Other ministry leaders will have opportunity to offer feedback and encourage other ministries by celebrating their victories. Several times throughout the year, team leadership coaching will take place in breakout sessions during the Church Ministry Board meetings. Twice a year, each ministry team will give an in-depth report of activities to the Church Ministry Board. During the final quarter of each year, the pastor and an elder will personally meet with each team leader in an effort to celebrate, evaluate, encourage, and vision for future ministry. Every other year the church will hold elections and a nominating committee will nominate all ministry leaders and teams. Finally, each year both Administrative and Ministry Boards will provide a written evaluation of the pastor's work. I will then follow up with both boards with a report and a plan for improvement.

Celebrating wins and affirming ministries is a very important part of what happens at GVSDA. Every area of church leadership will be taught to try and "catch" those who are doing something well and thank them and show appreciation for their

¹⁷ O'Toole, *Leading Change*, 75.

¹⁸ "The Vision Audit: 1. Does the organization have a clearly stated vision? If so, what is it? 2. If the organization continues on its current path, where will it be heading over the next decade? How good would such a direction be? 3. Do the key people in the organization know where the organization is headed and agree on the direction? 4. Do the structures, processes, personnel, incentives, and information systems support the current direction of the organization?" Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*, 56-57.

work. Each year the Ministry Board will select two lay volunteers that have made a significant contribution toward the mission of the church. In addition to this they will select three ministry teams that have made a positive impact in the previous year. These individuals and ministries will be acknowledged and appreciated during a celebratory worship service. Appropriate gift mementos will be designed and given. Also, as the church reaches key goals, there will be acknowledgement of those who made them happen and praise will be given to God for how he has worked through his people.

Implementation Timeline

As mentioned throughout the presentation of the steps above, the strategy will be initiated during 2010 and 2011. A visual representation of this timeline is expressed in Figure 6. While this implementation timeframe is somewhat aggressive, the groundwork has been laid for its rapid implementation over past few years. Each year the leadership will revise this timeline and plan an additional year's strategic objectives. With God's help GVSDA will bear eternal fruit to the glory of God.

Figure 6. Implementation Timeline for GVSDA’s Discipleship Strategy

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

2010

January	February	March	April	May	June
Step One: Leader’s Life -Disciplines -2 nd LTG - Join 2 Civic Organizations -Officer’s Orientation -Twenty Hours Sermon Time -Family and Work Planning					
Step Two: Prayer Plan -Discuss Goals With Leader -Schedule Events					
Step Three: The Change Team -Reconstitute SPT Team And Start Meeting -Solidify Vision -Work Plans For Change					
Step Four: Spiritual Disciplines Plan -Recruit And Start Training Spiritual Directors -Invite Speakers -Buy Curriculum -Develop Sermon Series On Disciplines -Train Sabbath School Teachers					
Step Five: Organizational Shifts -Train and equip HR Team -Begin Meeting With Administrative And Ministry Boards To Accomplish Plan					

July	August	September	October	November	December
Step Six: Equipping -Newcomers Class Curriculum -Hold 1 st Newcomers Class -Discipleship 101 Curriculum -Hold First Discipleship Class -Develop Contagious Christianity Class -Schedule 2011 Equipping/Training					
Step Seven: Small Groups -Hold First Small Group And Ministry Fair Recruitment -Recruit Small Groups Coordinator -Place Resources In Promotion Areas					
Step Eight: Evangelism Plan -Reaping Meetings -Television Ministry Team -Lay-Led Prophecy Study -Guest Care Plan -Visitation Team					
Step Nine: Financing the Vision -Setup Endowment Fund -“Committee Of 100”					
Step Ten: Evaluation and Celebration -Ministry Leader Evaluations -Pastoral Evaluation -Celebrate Ministries And Wins					

2011

Jan-Feb	Mar-April	May-June	July-Aug	Sept-Oct	Nov-Dec
Leader's Life -Continue LTGs, Small Groups And Disciplines, Civic Clubs, Twenty Hours Sermon Preparation, -Plan Spiritual Retreats -Three Month Sabbatical					
Prayer Plan: -Discuss Goals With Leader -Schedule Events: Weeks Of Prayer, Speakers					
The Change Team: -Reconstitute SPT Team And Start Meeting -Solidify Vision -Work Plans For Change					
Spiritual Disciplines Plan: -Week Of Prayer -Prayer Retreat -Discipleship 101 -Discipleship 101					
Organizational Shifts: -Train And Equip HR Team -Orientation Breakfast -Continue Working With SPT					
Equipping: -Hold Contagious Christianity Class -Newcomers Class -Discipleship 101 -Newcomers Class - Discipleship 101 -Financial Peace University					
Evangelism Plan: -Reaping Meetings -Reaping Meeting -Television Ministry Continued -Lay-Led Prophecy Study -Discover Bible School Continued -Guest Care Plan Continued -Visitation Team Plan Continued					
Step Nine: Financing the Vision - Endowment Fund Promotion -Stewardship Education Plan -"Committee of 100 Promotion					
Step Ten: Evaluation and Celebration -Ministry Leader evaluations -Setting Team goals -Pastoral evaluation -Celebrate ministries and wins					

CONCLUSION

This paper has described a biblically centered, theologically informed paradigm for discipleship, conversion, disciple recruitment, and leadership, in the context of the Gainesville Seventh-day Adventist Church. Further, it has outlined a contemporary, contextualized, strategic plan that will facilitate this change process.

Christian discipleship is the relational process whereby people grow into the likeness of their master Jesus Christ. This will be facilitated by a discipleship cycle which cultivates spiritual growth through the following phases or waymarks: faith and doctrines 101, commitment to Christ and his Church, a personalized spiritual growth plan, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual gifts all practiced in the context of Christian community. These waymarks work together synergistically to produce growth. This plan is intentionally simple, systemic, and non-linear in nature.

Further, this ministry focus paper recommends a praxis model for accomplishing this purpose of growing authentic disciples. Strategies for small groups, ministry teams, empowerment of families, spiritual mentoring, the ministry of the laity, Christian education, effective preaching, training and equipping, marketing, functional structures, evangelism, corporate worship, personal witness, as well as the change process itself have been outlined. Action steps and a clear timeline have also been given.

As the members of GVSDA study this vision and strategy, and prayerfully work together toward its implementation, a paradigm shift will occur; strategies, plans, and energies will be refocused toward a core value of spiritual formation within discipleship. While there will be adjustments, detours, and obstacles during this process, the church

can be assured that there are more than enough resources to succeed because “all power” has been transferred to Christ (Matthew 28:18).

The only other alternative is non-discipleship, which Willard powerfully describes: “Non-discipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated throughout by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God’s overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, it costs exactly that abundance of life Jesus said He came to bring.”²⁹¹ For GVSDA that cost would be far too high. Christ’s invitation to Christian discipleship is clear and compelling. The process must occur; the paradigm must change.

²⁹¹ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 132.

Appendix A

Personal Discipleship Growth Plan

Name: _____

Date: _____

Realizing that spiritual growth does not happen by accident, I believe that God is leading me to formulate a plan for next year in order to grow as a disciple. No two plans will be identical. Each disciple has various spiritual goals and differing areas of growth. Plans should be personally reviewed weekly and updated at least yearly.

Date Initiated: _____ Date Reviewed with Spiritual Director: _____

Date met with Human Resource team member to be interviewed as to where God would have you work for Him for a life of significance: _____

What small group or ministry team am I planning to be a part of?

Accountability Plan: Who will call/meet with me each week to ask if I am following my plan for Spiritual Growth?

1. Describe in a paragraph how you envision your daily spiritual exercises. Things might include: prayer, fasting, journaling, meditation, Scripture memorization, spiritual songs, family worship, time allocation, etc.

(If more space is needed write on the back or use additional paper)

2. Weekly Plan: Write down how you envision growing during a typical week. Plans might include: attending worship service, attending Sabbath school class, sabbathing, participating in service, small groups, additional disciplines, fasting, planning for simplicity and balance, etc.

3. Monthly/Quarterly Plan: Describe any monthly or quarterly plans for spiritual growth. Ideas might include: spiritual retreats, appointments with a spiritual director, classes, etc.

4. Yearly Plans: Describe your yearly plans for spiritual growth. Plans might include: leadership development, personal counseling, courses of study, lifestyle simplification planning, reviewing your life core values, vision, mission and goals planning, spiritual pilgrimages, mission trips, seminars, etc.

5. What spiritual goals do I have for this next year? (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Timely) Include items 1-4. Plans might include: reading goals, Scripture memorization, breakthrough of sinful strongholds, new habits, etc.

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