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**ABSTRACT**

**RECOVERING DISCIPLESHIP:**

**EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS**

**OF THE WALK TO EMMAUS GROUP REUNION MODEL**

by

Young Joe Harrington, III

One of the reasons for the problem of declining church membership is a lack of true Christian discipleship among members. Today's church needs a way to strengthen discipleship. This research project evaluated the Walk to Emmaus Group Reunion model for its effectiveness in strengthening the discipleship of participants. Depth of Christian discipleship is not a measurable quality but is implied by behavior. This research, therefore, evaluated effectiveness by comparing behavior of participants.

The study included only participants who had attended a Walk to Emmaus or similar weekend and classified them into three groups based on the length of their participation in a group reunion. Project participants completed the Christian Spiritual Participation Profile (CSPP) and a researcher-developed demographic questionnaire. The CSPP measured behavior of members of each of the three groups. The effectiveness of the group reunion was evaluated by comparing behavior among the groups.

Analysis of the CSPP scores supports the hypothesis that participation in the group reunion correlates with higher Christian behavior and deeper discipleship. Analysis does not support a correlation of such behavior and discipleship with the length of participation in a group reunion. The conclusion is that the group reunion model of the Walk to Emmaus is an effective tool for discipleship formation.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

RECOVERING DISCIPLESHIP:

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS

OF THE WALK TO EMMAUS GROUP REUNION MODEL

presented by

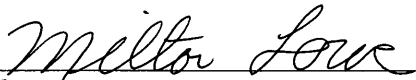
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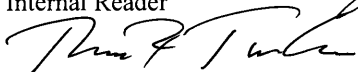
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RECOVERING DISCIPLESHIP:  
EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS  
OF THE WALK TO EMMAUS GROUP REUNION MODEL

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Ministry

by  
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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **PROBLEM**

#### **Introduction**

The decline of church membership and attendance in today's culture is a growing problem. This decline is particularly evident in the mainline Protestant churches in the United States. At the same time that church attendance is declining, interest in spiritual matters is rising. The observed behavior of other Christians and a perception that Christianity is irrelevant to daily life are among the reasons that many people cite for their lack of interest in the church.

The perceived impact of Christianity on the personal behavior of individuals is one reason for decline in the church membership as a whole. Christians have confused Christianity with citizenship (Jelen 273) and patriotism (LaMothe 415). Many people perceive waving the flag and supporting the government to be more appropriate than following the teaching of Jesus Christ (Stassen 91).

Some research questions whether churches are teaching Christians the meaning of being a disciple of Jesus Christ (e.g., Glover and Lavy; Hunt; "Make Disciples"; Song). In early Methodism, society members were required to learn the meaning of discipleship (Scott and Scott, *Restoring the Wesleyan Class-Meeting* 2). Christians can learn from their forebears.

Historically, the United Methodist Church is the successor to one of the fastest growing evangelical churches in modern times. John Wesley initiated a movement that changed the society of eighteenth-century Britain. The spiritual revival evident in the Methodist societies and its impact on the behavior during the eighteenth century were

among the prominent factors that prevented duplication of the French Revolution in Britain.

After the movement came to America, the Methodist churches in the new nation of the United States grew into the largest denomination on the expanding frontier. In recent years the United Methodist Church has lost millions of members. In order for the denomination to survive, the church must be restored to its former position in the culture.

The Walk to Emmaus and *Cursillo* movements are among the programs that have shown some promise in revitalizing the church (Crandall 65). The group reunion is a long-term continuation of the movement. The group reunion is a small group with accountability for intentional discipleship (Bryant 7). This group model is very similar to the model used by Wesley for the class meetings. This model can be an effective means of reversing the declining trend in churches.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to measure the effectiveness of the group reunion model on discipleship formation, as measured by the Christian Spiritual Participation Profile (CSPP), in individuals who have participated in the Walk to Emmaus. The effectiveness was determined by comparing the behavior of nonparticipants and participants over an extended time. This study evaluated the overall effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus as a discipleship program.

### **Research Questions**

In order to measure the effectiveness of the group reunion, the behavior of participants and nonparticipants was compared using the CSPP. To determine the effects



of time, the behavior of short-term and long-term participants was also compared.

Correlation of any differences tends to point out causes of change.

### **Research Question #1**

What is the correlation between individuals' measureable behavior, according to the CSPP, and their involvement in a reunion group following the Walk to Emmaus?

### **Research Question #2**

What are the top three behaviors, according to the CSPP, of those participating in reunion groups compared to those who do not participate?

### **Research Question #3**

What influences, other than the reunion group, may have affected individuals' measureable behavior according to the CSPP?

### **Definition of Terms**

Several terms in this study have specific contexts of meaning. These contexts are defined as follows.

### **Christian Discipleship**

Christian discipleship is the worldview of following the teaching of Jesus Christ. It is measureable by observing behavior. The level of Christian discipleship is reflected in the frequency of participation in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, repentance, worship, Bible reading, meditation, examen of conscience, evangelism, fellowship, service, and stewardship (Thayer, "Constructing a Spirituality Measure" 201).

### **Fourth Day**

Fourth day refers to the remainder of a participant's lifetime after completion of a Walk to Emmaus/*Cursillo* retreat. Walk to Emmaus/*Cursillo* and similar movements are

referred to as *fourth-day movements* because of the emphasis placed on follow-up activities such as worship gatherings and accountability groups after the three-day retreat.

### **Group Reunion**

The group reunion is a small group as defined in the Walk to Emmaus literature (Bryant 7; Wood, *Day Four* 39). Generally, the group consists of four to six individuals who meet together regularly to review and account for their Christian discipleship. Most groups consist of members who meet weekly and are of the same gender.

### **Walk to Emmaus/*Cursillo***

Walk to Emmaus/*Cursillo* communities as used in this research refer to the loosely organized groups of Christians who have participated in a fourth-day retreat. *Cursillo*, Spanish for *little course*, is the original form of this program, which began on the island of Majorca. Walk to Emmaus is an ecumenical version sponsored by the Upper Room, a division of the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship.

### **Ministry Intervention**

This project was a post-intervention research study evaluating the effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus group reunion model. The intervention was already in place in the population being studied. The members of the subject Walk to Emmaus communities have all voluntarily chosen to participate or not participate in the follow-up group reunion program. I used this self-intervention factor to segment the sample in order to correlate participation with the behavioral characteristics of discipleship.

I conducted this project with a one-time survey of the self-selected sample from the population of these Walk to Emmaus communities. I expected a high degree of correlation between participation in the group reunion and the behavioral characteristics

of discipleship. An even greater correlation was expected in the behavioral characteristics of long-term participants.

### **Context**

The overall context of this study is the greater Christian community in the United States. This community is very diverse culturally. Numerous denominational churches, nondenominational churches, and parachurch organizations represent this group of Christians. The common factor is a claim to be disciples following the teachings of Jesus Christ. However, the depth of this discipleship varies greatly among individuals.

The Walk to Emmaus/*Cursillo* community exists within the greater Christian community. This community consists of Christians who have expressed a desire to deepen their discipleship by participating in an intensive program of Christian formation. Some of the individuals who participate in this program continue to be involved in any of several ways, which include providing leadership, conducting retreats, attending monthly worship gatherings, and participating in a regular accountability group reunion.

Christians who participate in the Walk to Emmaus program are organized into local communities. For example in the North Georgia area, the following communities exist: North Georgia, Atlanta South, Pathways East, Athens, Mountaintop, and Northwest Georgia. All of these communities have branched from the original North Georgia community. These communities are denominationally ecumenical, although approximately half of the members are United Methodist. Other communities are organized in a similar fashion depending on community size and geographic area.

## **Methodology**

This research study was an explanatory non-experimental quantitative study designed to determine the effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus group reunion model as a means of increasing Christian discipleship. Members of various Walk to Emmaus communities were surveyed for two types of data.

Demographic data was collected from members concerning the length of time they have been members of the community and whether they have participated in the fourth-day group reunion program. Those members who have participated in the group reunion were asked the length of time they participated. This data was collected in order to classify participants based upon these variables.

I also collected behavioral data in the area of spiritual disciplines to indicate the depth of Christian discipleship. This data consisted of the self-perceived frequency of participation in certain spiritual practices. These practices were prayer, repentance, worship, meditation, examen of conscience, Bible reading and study, evangelism, fellowship, service, and stewardship (Thayer, "Constructing a Spirituality Measure" 204). I correlated the behavioral data to the demographic data in order to evaluate the effectiveness of participation in the group reunion.

### **Participants**

I invited approximately seven thousand members of various Walk to Emmaus communities to participate in the study. The sample was self-selected in that those invitees who voluntarily chose to complete the survey instrument constituted the sample. This self-selected sample included members of the communities who have not

participated in a group reunion and members who have participated in a group reunion for various lengths of time.

### **Instrumentation**

I made the survey using an instrument developed by O. Jane Thayer, the Christian Spiritual Participation Profile. This instrument was designed to measure the behavior of respondents in ten different spiritual disciplines. The level of behavior indicates the depth of Christian discipleship (“Christian Spiritual Participation Profile”).

I also collected some demographic data using researcher-designed questions. This data contained no identifying information about the participants. This instrument requested only the minimum amount of data to correlate discipleship with group reunion participation.

### **Variables**

Intervening variables such as age, gender, and denomination were not considered. Limited control was exercised on age. Participation was restricted to those who have participated in the Walk to Emmaus weekend program, which is not open to youth younger than fifteen. Participation in the weekend program also requires self-identification as Christian, although no specific denomination is required.

Other intervening variables were related to the methods of invitation and data collection. The method of invitation assumed that all invited participants had Internet access. Anyone without a valid e-mail address or Facebook account was excluded by not receiving an invitation as were those without Internet access. At any point in time during the data collection, the hosting service could have been interrupted. The hosting company claims server uptime of 99.5 percent and availability of 100 percent with shared servers.

The anonymous nature of data collection also opened the possibility of untrue responses. Respondents could indicate participation in the group reunion when, in fact, they do not participate. The same limitation applied to the CSPP. Accuracy of responses was assumed but not guaranteed. The large sample size mitigated the effects of any of these intervening variables.

### **Data Collection**

The data collected included a one-time response to the CSPP by each participant. I received responses over a period of five weeks. After that time, the online system was closed, preventing any additional responses.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed the collected data using descriptive statistics. I used criteria in the demographic data to summarize the collected results for comparative analysis among the three populations. I correlated the depth of discipleship as shown by scores on the CSPP to the length of participation in the group reunion.

### **Generalizability**

Defining the population as members of the subject Walk to Emmaus communities delimited this study. Individuals who have participated in other spiritual renewal programs or who have not participated in any organized spiritual renewal program were excluded. I limited the study to small groups based only on the Walk to Emmaus/*Cursillo* model and considered respondents who participate in small groups based on other models to be nonparticipants. The entire population has participated in the intensive spiritual retreat that initiated them into the Walk to Emmaus community, making them more likely

to exhibit behavioral characteristics of discipleship than the total population of Christians (Clark 100-01; Crandall 65; Estep 121; Williams 215-17).

Other factors also limited this study. I invited the subject population to participate, but only those members of the population who voluntarily completed the survey instrument were included in the sample. The preparer of the survey instrument demonstrated a high degree of reliability possessed by the instrument. However, the instrument objectifies subjective self-perception of the participants. I used computer technology to present, complete, and evaluate the survey.

This research is useful particularly to the subject Walk to Emmaus communities. It evaluates the perseverance programs that are already in place. This usefulness can extend to a lesser degree to other communities using the Walk to Emmaus/*Cursillo* model. Much literature exists on small-group ministry and the Walk to Emmaus/*Cursillo* model, but very little literature concentrates on the effectiveness of the group reunion portion of this model. Anyone in the practice of ministry who is interested in using a small group accountability program to increase discipleship among Christians in their community can use this study.

### **Theological Foundation**

Jesus defined the meaning of Christian discipleship:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:24b-26, NIV)

He also said, “They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them” (John 14:21, NRSV). These statements make a very basic definition of

discipleship. In order to be a true disciple, one must be willing to follow Jesus. As he told his listeners, disciples must be willing to deny themselves and take up their cross. M. Eugene Boring, in his commentary on the passage, points out that denying oneself is more than just giving things up. To be disciples, individuals must also take up the cross and live as Jesus lived (352).

In the upper room discourse as related in John's gospel, Jesus made a statement about love and commandments (John 14:21). Shortly before making this statement, Jesus had given to his disciples a new commandment: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). This new commandment is simply a restatement of some of Jesus' earlier teachings, such as his extending the *shema* to include love of neighbor.

Another succinct summary of discipleship could be drawn from the golden rule: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12). Discipleship is primarily a matter of living out the teachings of Jesus, not simply believing in him. Following Jesus means acting on his teaching.

As the Sermon on the Mount closed, Jesus pronounced several warnings to those listening to the sermon. One of the more ominous is, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). This statement clearly indicates that being a Christian disciple requires more than simply knowing Jesus or even calling on his name. A true Christian disciple hears the teaching and actually lives the life (cf. Jas. 2).

The final parable in the sermon describes the wise and foolish builders. Jesus again told the listeners that followers who hear his words but do not act on them set



themselves up for a great fall. Allison A. Trites reminds Christians that these warnings are as valid today as they were two thousand years ago (192). Unfortunately, many Christians today fail to heed this warning. To them, discipleship means attending church on Sunday and living in the world Monday through Saturday.

Scripture also gives advice on how to remedy shortfalls: “[B]ear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Christians are called to help each other be accountable for following Christ’s teachings. Christians can play out this calling by coming together into groups for the purpose of holding each other accountable for discipleship.

In Paul’s farewell message to the Ephesian elders, he admonished them to watch over themselves and the rest of the flock (Acts 20:28). In other points in his letters, he emphasizes the importance of gathering together as the church in order to support one another. The same importance in the gathering of believers can be seen in all of the churches described in the book of Acts.

Jesus taught that whenever two or more are gathered in his name, he will be there with them (Matt. 18:20). These passages mean that in addition to being willing to follow Jesus, Christians need the support of other Christians to keep them on the right path. Jesus understood that disciples could not persevere alone.

This gathering together was the idea behind the societies and classes that John Wesley established for the people he called Methodists. An important factor in the success of revivals led by Wesley and his followers was the fact that he initiated this follow-up program. To assure the continued discipleship of society members, Wesley required regular attendance at class meetings. In these meetings, individuals were called

upon to account for their discipleship. This accountability encouraged members to live the lives they claimed and to become true followers and not simply hearers of the teachings of Jesus.

People have become too individualistic in today's culture. Everyone wants to stand alone. However, as humans, standing alone is not entirely possible. Christians need to reclaim this mutual support available when Christians gather.

### **Overview**

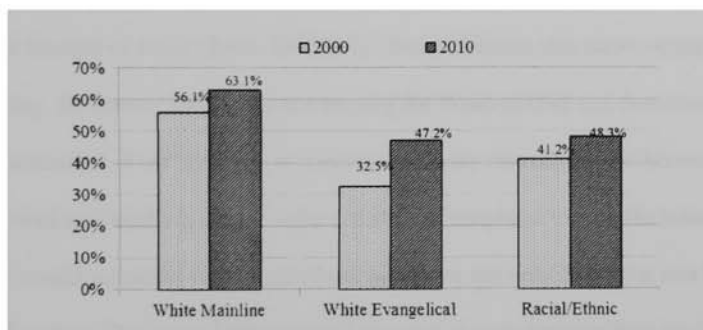
Chapter 2 reviews literature on the problem of declining significance of the church in today's culture, Christian discipleship, small-group ministry in the Wesleyan tradition, and research methods. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the project design, research methods, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 contains the detailed results of this research. Chapter 5 includes conclusions drawn from the research and possible applications in the practice of ministry.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The decline of church attendance in today's culture is a continuing problem. This problem is particularly evident in the mainline Protestant denominations. David A. Roozen, the director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, regularly studies the trends in American congregations. Figure 2.1 shows his findings that congregations are becoming smaller in this century. His studies confirm the long-standing decline in attendance within the mainline congregations. He also finds as the twenty-first century opens that the decline has spread to both evangelical denominations and racial ethnic congregations (*Decade 13*).



Source: Roozen, *Decade 13*.

**Figure 2.1. Congregations with attendance under one hundred.**

Many writers and commentators cite various reasons for the decline. Steve Hewitt summarizes some of the reasons:

- Seeker friendly churches have watered down true Christianity and have embraced the things of the world.
- Traditional churches have lost touch with the needs of our society and are simply ministering to their dying membership at the expense of reaching new people.
- It is a “sign of the times” that there will be a great falling away, so some simply accept it and don’t sweat it.
- Our government has become “anti” Christian and therefore has hurt the efforts and ministry of the church.
- Our nation has left the righteous teaching of the church because of declining morals. (3-4)

Most of Hewitt’s reasons relate to the loss of Christian discipleship and spirituality.

Whether through preaching or teaching ministries, the church is failing to communicate true Christianity to its members.

Mark Kelly, writing for Lifeway Research, found in a survey of unchurched people that 72 percent of those surveyed believe that churches are full of hypocrites. This finding also confirms that church members are not truly understanding the meaning of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Donald G. Bloesch blames this shortcoming on preaching. He states, “People are not hearing the Word of God and therefore are not being convicted of sin” (92). He is concerned that the church today is becoming too secularized and teaching secular values instead of scriptural values. He believes that if the church taught scriptural values, members would see not only their own sins but also the sins of society. They would then commit to social change because they are filled with a self-giving love (101).

Roozen also found in his study a significant decline in spirituality along with the decline in attendance at mainline churches. His studies showed that in 2005, 42.8 percent of congregations reported high spiritual vitality. In 2010 this percentage had slipped to 28.4. His comparative studies of mainline congregations showed that 74.1 percent of

congregations emphasized the spiritual disciplines in 2000, but by 2010 only 63 percent were emphasizing the disciplines (*Decade 14*).

An editorial in *Christianity Today* titled “Make Disciples, Not Just Converts” claims that the evangelical churches are more into the marketing of Christianity than they are into the making of disciples (28). This practice results in members seeing Christianity as cheap grace and never truly learning how to be a disciple. Dan Glover and Claudia Lavy share examples of churches and pastors who have no idea what to do with a new convert after she has committed her life to Christ (11).

These studies indicate that a problem exists in churches: “America is simultaneously the most professedly Christian of the developed nations and the least Christian in its behavior” (McKibben 32). A majority of churches today are failing to lead members from conversion to discipleship. When new Christians fail to learn discipleship, they are unable to make the lifestyle changes necessary to follow Christ. Without a changed life, Christians are perceived by outsiders as hypocrites or at least perceived as no different from non-Christians. As a result of this perception, churches lose credibility. Many people can see no reason to be in church if church has no effect on their lives.

Within the United Methodist Church alone are a number of models intended to recover discipleship. These models include the Walk to Emmaus, *Companions in Christ*, the series of Disciple Bible studies, and *A Disciple’s Path* to name just a few. The purpose of this research and study was to investigate and evaluate one of many possible models for recovering the discipleship that seems to be lost in the church today. This

study takes the Walk to Emmaus and concentrates on the follow-up portion of the model called the Group Reunion.

### **Theological Framework**

The most basic requirement for discipleship was stated by Jesus in Matthew 16:24b-26. In order to be a disciple, individuals wishing to follow Jesus must be willing to deny themselves. Jesus also says that only by giving up one's life will one find the true life. Boring writes that these requirements are not for becoming disciples but rather for living as disciples. He points out that the New Revised Standard Version's rendering of "become my follower" is not true to the Greek θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἐλθεῖν (*thelei opiso mou elthein*). He also points out that the call to self-denial is not a call to asceticism or self-abuse but a call to live life without focus on self (350-52). Michael S. Poteet writes that taking up the cross "does not mean to endure the problems and pains that arise in human life.... No, Jesus is speaking of suffering one actively and voluntarily chooses to embrace as a consequence for faithfulness to him" (47). Joseph Keller interprets this call as a displacement of ego in order that one might focus on the neighbor (164). According to Richard Henry Drummond, the Buddhist philosopher and essayist Keiji Nishitani reads the passage differently. He challenges Western culture to understand the Zen concept of religion and nothingness. He bases his reading on Jesus' statement that whoever loses his life will find it and on Paul's emphasis of the self-emptying of Jesus (133).

Jack M. Suggs has written an excellent analysis of this passage of Scripture, which relates the passage to the call of all Christians. In order to follow Jesus, one must first understand just who Jesus is and where he is going. Jesus' Lordship comes not from strength or authority, but from "humility and even humiliation" (89). Going to the cross

was an act of obedience to the divine will. When the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees called for Jesus to prove he was the Son of God by coming down from the cross, he proved it by his obedience even to death. This proof was confirmed on Easter morning when Jesus rose from the grave. The first-century Christians understood the call and expected that following Jesus meant following him in obedience to God's will (89-90).

Suggs goes on to show how modern Christians expect their faith to protect them from suffering, not lead them to it. The key to following Jesus requires Christians to "overcome our habit of thinking of the cross simply as Jesus' way of death—it was his way of life as well" (90). To follow Jesus and live like Jesus means that the cross must become believers' way of life as well. Worship and adoration are not enough. Discipleship requires the same humble obedience that Jesus demonstrated by submitting to the cross (90-92).

Suggs then addresses the meaning of denying one's self. He agrees with other writers (e.g., Boring; Keller; Poteet) that self-denial does not mean asceticism. He does admit that asceticism can be spiritually beneficial for many. At best avoiding creature comforts is only a "symbol of true renunciation" (91). At worst this type of renunciation can become sinful if it is a matter of pride. He reminds readers of Jesus' warning against the way hypocrites make a show of their religiosity. Self-denial is not renouncing any particular material or immaterial thing. Self-denial is denying oneself (92-93).

### **Sermon on the Mount**

The Sermon on the Mount takes up a substantial portion of Matthew's gospel. While not presented by Matthew as a sermon, substantially all of three chapters are presented as Jesus' teaching, without narration. The first part of the sermon is descriptive

of disciples, but the substantive portion is imperative. Much of the imperative portion is antithetical to the then common understanding of Jewish law. The following are some examples of Jesus' antithetical commands:

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. (Matt. 5:21-30)

Not only are these sayings antithetical, but on the surface they appear to be impossible to obey. For example, self-blinding does not seem reasonable for merely looking lustfully at a woman. Jesus' sayings are hard.

As hard as the sayings may be, Jesus concludes this teaching with a declaration of his seriousness:

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers." Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears



these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall! (Matt. 7:21-27)

Matthew then says that after hearing this discourse the crowds were astounded at his words. Other translations describe the crowds as amazed, astonished, or surprised. The crowds were not left unaffected by these teachings. Jesus taught them as no one else had taught; he taught with authority.

In his reflections on this teaching taken as a whole, Boring presents several ways that the hardness has been viewed over the years. The first way is to assume that the teaching applies to everyone. The view prevalent in the early Church is to take Jesus literally at his word. He presented the rules for living in the kingdom and expects disciples to follow him with obedience. Others have taken these teachings in an idealistic way. The teaching presents a way of living that is impossible to achieve but is intended to provide a goal for which to strive. Some in the Lutheran tradition have viewed the Sermon on the Mount much as Paul presents the Law. The purpose is to show that Christians are incapable of living by the rules and must depend solely on grace. This view can lead to cheap grace (221).

Boring describes the second major historical approach as stating that the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is only meant for some people. This view, popular in the middle ages, holds that expecting everyone to live by the teachings is unreasonable, but certain religious orders can be expected to live in this special way. Those groups, withdrawn from general society, live by the Sermon on the Mount as a “testimony to God’s will for all” (221-22).

The third approach holds that the Sermon on the Mount only applies to a particular time. Dispensationalists maintain that the Sermon on the Mount was not intended for Jesus' original hearers or for believers today but as a description of life in the fulfilled kingdom of God. Another variation, no longer advocated by scholars, was that Jesus expected the "apocalyptic end of the world" (Boring 222) very soon and presented these teachings as an interim way of life. The final view is that the Sermon on the Mount represents Jesus' presentation of the paradoxical now/future breaking forth of the kingdom of God. This view allows the teachings to be presented in their historical context but viewed also eschatologically (222).

The Sermon on the Mount has been studied and dissected by many scholars through the ages. Sheri Adams, writing soon after the near simultaneous deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, describes what she calls "Sermon-on-the-Mount Christians" (591) who obey Jesus' commands. She begins by describing the cultural dream or fairy tale embodied in the life of Princess Diana. She contrasts Diana's life to the life and ministry of Mother Teresa, with which very few people could identify (589-90). She speculates how different the world would be if everyone took the Bible seriously, becoming Sermon-on-the-Mount Christians. She claims that these people would be wise enough to hear Jesus' words and act on them, wise enough to know that little sins of the heart are harmful, wise enough to build their houses upon the rock (592).

J. Daryl Charles claims that the importance of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel is due to the fact that Matthew was writing as the church was shifting from being predominately Jewish-Christian to being Gentile-Christian. Matthew's emphasis on the Law provided a common ground, enabling the two groups to share a

common ethic. In Charles' view, Matthew was critiquing the established religion based on ethics, not theology (50).

Matthew wanted to assure the Jewish-Christians that Jesus was not presenting new teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was not a new lawgiver and was not presenting a new Torah; rather, he was affirming the old (Charles 51). Jesus used the Sermon on the Mount to expose the corrupt practice of the Mosaic Law. In the antithetical sayings, Jesus was exposing current practice and returning to the moral intent of the Law (60). To Matthew, a disciple is one who does the word of God.

James P. Danaher writes about how Jesus' teaching defies context. Jesus always said what was unexpected. This unexpectedness is present in the parables as well as in the teaching. In the story referred to as the Prodigal Son, Jesus turns all expectations upside down. The bad son turns out to be good and receives the love of his father. The good son, who appeared always to do the right thing, turns out to be bad when he refuses to join the party. Jesus was criticizing the Pharisees who were "lost in their goodness" (266). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus never identified the man on the side of the road, whether Jewish, Samaritan, or Gentile. Jesus was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" He answered not with who but with how to love the neighbor. The question was misguided because everyone is the neighbor (267). Danaher characterizes the Sermon on the Mount as too radical for the hearers. Its overall thrust is that evil ends with forgiveness. Love is the important part of discipleship (268-69).

Kendell H. Easley presupposes an inaugurated eschatology and believes that Jesus was directing his teaching only to his disciples, those who had already repented and were seeking to follow him (33). Easley defines disciple, for purposes of his study, as "one

who follows” (34). This definition is the general usage in the Acts of the Apostles and the occasional usage in the Gospels. More often in the Gospels, the term disciple refers to the twelve (34). Easley describes as the “religious duties” (35) those behaviors commanded by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount but distills them down to three duties reflecting the Great Commandment: giving to the needy—love of neighbor, fasting—love of self, and prayer—love of God (35). His thesis is that “Jesus’ teaching about the religious duties he expects of his followers becomes an invitation to grow in what Jesus said mattered most: love for God, love for others, and love for self” (45). To Easley, also, love is the important part of discipleship.

Daniel J. Harrington agrees that the Sermon on the Mount is about “almsgiving, prayer, and fasting” (37). Stanley Hauerwas emphasizes Jesus’ nonviolent teaching and believes that the Sermon on the Mount is not about rules but virtues (154). It provides directions for life. F. Burton Nelson shows that Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s ethics flow more from his early studies of the Sermon on the Mount than from his struggle with the Nazis (25). Nelson uses Bonhoeffer’s definition of costly grace:

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field, for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy for which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. (Bonhoeffer 45)

To Bonhoeffer and Nelson, the Sermon on the Mount defines the way and cost of discipleship.

Joshua Thomas Searle writes that through the ages the church has attempted to moderate the demands of the Sermon on the Mount. Thomas Aquinas interpreted it as a double standard—commands for the clergy, counsel for the laity (38). Searle draws upon

Glen Harold Stassen and James McClendon to bring together spirituality and morality in the Sermon on the Mount. The teaching envisions a kingdom of God where the imperatives can be kept by all Christians (40).

Robert McQueen Grant investigated the ways in which the Sermon on the Mount was interpreted by the early Church fathers. He found that the letter of James emphasizes the doing of God's word (216). Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthian church, rebuked them for behavior that stemmed from belief that the kingdom described in the Beatitudes had already been fulfilled (216-17). *The Didache* emphasizes love of neighbor (217-18). The letters of Clement refer to the demands of the Sermon on the Mount (218-19). Origen, generally an allegorizer, took the Sermon on the Mount literally (227). Grant concludes that the early Church interpreted the Sermon on the Mount literally and attempted to follow its commands.

Many interpretations and opinions about the Sermon on the Mount are found in the literature about the Gospels. Jesus was teaching the disciples a way of life. The imperativeness of the teaching indicates that Jesus expected anyone who wished to follow him to obey to the best of their ability. Discipleship is based on behavior and the most appropriate way to attempt to measure discipleship is by observing that behavior.

### **The Letter of James**

The letter of James, although doubtfully an actual letter, is another scriptural passage concentrating on the behavior of Christians. Grant relates its content directly to the Sermon on the Mount (216). Luke Timothy Johnson in his commentary and reflections describes James as a collection of essays on moral subjects (178). It emphasizes doing not just hearing God's word (1:27; 2:18-26). Pheme Perkins says that

almost all of the references that James makes to Jesus are references to the Sermon on the Mount (84). She sees in James an emphasis on doing justice for those within the societal framework of poor—widows and orphans (90-91). James indicates that the true measure of discipleship is behavior not simply belief.

### **Gathering Together**

Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” When he sent the disciples out to minister to the people, he sent them two by two so that they would not be working alone.

In Acts the early Church devoted themselves to fellowship. They spent time together in temple. They worshiped together and shared bread with each other. Gathering together was not just for fellowship. Earlier in Matthew 18, Jesus outlined the procedures to take when one of the disciples strayed. After speaking to the sinner one on one, a group of two or three were to gather to speak to the lost disciple. This passage is an early example of group accountability in the church. The fifth chapter of James admonishes Christians to confess their sins to one another, another example of mutual accountability.

### **Classical Christian Literature**

Throughout the history of Christianity, exemplary individuals within the church have attained extraordinary degrees of discipleship. Just as Jesus included the admonition to “[b]e perfect, therefore, as your father in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48) within the Sermon on the Mount, Christian perfection or sanctification is synonymous with discipleship.

The most famous classic of Western Christian spirituality is *The Imitation of Christ* (Tyler xxvii). Thomas à Kempis seems to be writing to Christians who are

already on the journey toward discipleship. He has very little, if anything, to say about the justification, the new birth, or regeneration, providing instruction and guidance for the “interior life” (47) or more contemporarily the spiritual life. He does recognize that a Christian cannot obtain this perfect imitation of the image of Christ without grace. He writes in Book III, “There is no holiness, O Lord, if You withdraw Your comforting hand” (96). Thomas consistently uses the life of Christ as the ultimate example of holy living. The disciple is encouraged to imitate this life in order to live the holy life as a preamble to receiving sanctifying grace. Like Brother Lawrence, Thomas writes as if living a life in perfect imitation of Christ will bring sanctification. He maintains, also like Lawrence, that sanctification comes by grace alone. He attributes to Jesus in one of his dialogues the statement, “You receive these gifts not because of your way of thinking or because of any exertion on your part, but solely through the good favor of heaven’s grace and the divine regard” (151). Thomas emphasizes the holy life but attributes it to grace not to individual efforts.

The entirety of Thomas’s fourth book concerns the benefits to be received from a regular and frequent participation in Holy Communion. Addressing Christ, he writes, “[I]t is most necessary that by frequent prayer, confession and the devout reception of Your Body, I be renewed, cleansed, and have my soul enkindled, lest, perhaps, by abstaining from Your Body for too long a time, I fall away from my holy resolve” (186-87). This means of grace is the sustainer of the holy life.

Thomas does not neglect the external life. He includes a chapter on the need to do works of charity. However, to Thomas, motive is more important than the deed itself. He says, of course, that evil deeds should never be done. Even good deeds, if not done from

love, are worthless. Deeds done from love are always meritorious no matter how small or insignificant the deed. Thomas also sees the need of a disciple to forgive and not judge others (19-21).

Thomas writes at length about self-denial. Recalling Jesus' command that to be his disciple one must deny themselves, Thomas claims that all selfish wants and desires must be eliminated. Thomas' detail descriptions of what Jesus wants from his disciples leans quite far toward asceticism, but given Thomas's context that is to be expected (132-33).

The center of Thomas' discipleship is indicated in the title of his work—*The Imitation of Christ*. In the Gospels Jesus called for disciples to take up the cross as he did. He asked the sons of Zebedee if they could drink from his cup. His call was for disciples to live like him, to think like him, to imitate him. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul claims to be imitating Christ and asks the church to do likewise. Imitation of Christ is the basic form of discipleship.

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection describes his life as a disciple. He “was always governed by love, with no other interest, and without concerning himself as to whether he would be damned or saved” (27). Brother Lawrence devoted himself not to extraordinary works but simply to a life of exemplary humility and love of his neighbor. However, Brother Lawrence's life was also lived in that tension between human effort and divine grace. He encouraged others to approach a holy life “[b]y force of habit and by frequently calling his mind to the presence of God” (96). At the same time, he encouraged them not to “go faster than grace. One does not become holy all at once.... He will come in His own good time, and when you least expect it” (65). In the same way,



Wesley maintained that the gift of complete sanctification “is so often communicated in the midst of works of piety, mercy, and the like” (Collins 291). Lawrence was willing to take on any task for anyone, just as if the request had been made directly by God. In this way he showed perfect love of neighbor and was a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

A somewhat more modern classic explanation of discipleship is Charles M. Sheldon’s work, even though his book is fiction. The basic premise of the story is that of a church community in a small Midwestern city. One Saturday, the pastor is busily preparing his sermon when he is interrupted by a tramp seeking help. The pastor brushes him off. The next morning the tramp appears in church and speaks about his life. He reminds the congregation that “[t]he minister said,... ‘[I]t was necessary for the disciple of Jesus to follow his steps, and he said the steps were, obedience, faith, love, and imitation’” (13). He then collapses and soon dies. The next Sunday, the pastor, convicted by what the tramp had said, challenges the congregation to live for a year asking, “What would Jesus do?” before taking any action. The remainder of the story follows the pastor and a handful of congregants who make the pledge through the next year. All that happens is not good. Of course some results are good but many suffer reversals, at least in the eyes of the culture. One suffers a financial disaster; another becomes prominent in his field. In the closing scene, the pastor has a vision and sees those congregants who have followed Jesus for the past year. He could see the change in the spiritual well-being of each of them, despite the way they had faced the world and business. He could not see the future, and he questioned whether or not this movement would spread or die out.

Sheldon’s book has remained popular through the years. Due to a failure to handle the copyright properly, it has been republished many times. Several years ago his idea

was revived within the Christian community. Bracelets, shirts, jewelry, and many different items inscribed with WWJD became very popular as badges of claimed discipleship. Some question whether or not Jesus would have sold such items. Nevertheless, the story is a classic tale of discipleship achieved and creates a vision of how a community becomes disciples together.

Another modern classic is Richard J. Foster's *Celebrations of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. Foster explains the need for practicing the classical spiritual disciplines in the lives of disciples (1). He has chosen the disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. These disciplines, listed in his table of contents, correspond to the inward, outward, and corporate aspects of life. Other writers might prepare a slightly different list or include some of the same disciplines named in a different manner.

Meditation is the ability to listen and hear God's voice (Foster 17). Foster explains the need to meditate on God's word. He also makes suggestions on where and how to accomplish this meditation. A disciple cannot obey God's commands if he or she is unable to hear them.

Prayer is more often a dialogue with God. Prayer sometimes involves simply listening to God, but Foster tends to place it more in the area of meditation. Everyone feels unable to pray effectively from time to time and needs instruction. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Foster points out that when Jesus prayed, he never closed with "if it be thy will." Foster calls this type of prayer a halfhearted hopeful prayer, not a sincere prayer (37). Prayers should be for others and for self.

Fasting is a discipline much neglected. Foster reminds his readers that throughout the Bible, fasting is a common practice. He says, "Fasting reveals what controls us" (55). He goes into a great detail of practical advice such as how to fast and how to keep from becoming ill while fasting. Years ago, fasting was common and everyone knew how to fast properly. Today, few have any idea what to do.

Study is another important discipline. A disciple must know the word of God in order to follow that word. Study does not include just Scriptures but also related works that might help to enlighten one as to God's will.

According to Foster, "[s]implicity is freedom" (79). Modern life has become much too complex. Culture and society demand so much time and money. Simplifying life releases one from the pressure of the culture. Foster is not calling for anything approaching asceticism. Simplicity is a lifestyle centered around what one needs, not around what the neighbors have. Food, clothes, housing, cars, and so many other things are necessary but not extravagant excess. Extravagance indicates a self-centered life, not an other-centered life.

Culture drives people to crowds and noise; they fear being alone (Foster 96). The Gospels often tell of Jesus going off to be alone with God, especially after a major encounter with crowds or after performing a miracle. Solitude gives the freedom to meditate, to pray, to study, or to recharge the spiritual batteries. Foster suggests a regular withdrawal of a few hours (107). Long solitary retreats are not necessary, but time with God is.

Jesus said that in order to follow him disciples must deny themselves. This denial is submission of self to God. Submission is countercultural. Many people want to be in

control of life, self, and others. Foster explains that in Ephesians, Paul directs those who are already subordinate, wives, children, and slaves, to submit to their dominant party. The only thing unusual about calling those in submission to submit is that Paul was treating them as free agents. Then he turns the concept over and also calls for husbands, parents, and masters to submit as well (118-19). Jesus submitted to God's will. If disciples are to follow, they must submit as well.

In the upper room, Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. He set the example for service to others. The discipline of service covers many things. It can mean serving subordinates, as Jesus did that night. It can mean works of mercy for others. Jesus calls disciples to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to visit the sick and the prisoners. Service is loving one's neighbor.

Confession is difficult. Many people think of the community of faith as being saints and, therefore, fear confessing shortcomings to those who have none (Foster 145). Paul says, "[A]ll have sinned and fall short of glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The fear of confessing to a sinless neighbor is baseless. Numerous times in the New Testament Christians are told to confess and repent. In the letter of James, the author writes to confess before the body. Confession brings forgiveness, both from God and from our neighbors.

Worship is a corporate discipline. Christians are commanded to worship God and God alone. The Decalogue says, "[Y]ou shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3). A problem with many worship experiences today is self-centeredness. The purpose of worship is to glorify God, not to be entertained or to be fed spiritually. If worshipers are more concerned about singing the right songs, hearing the right sermon, and being

fulfilled in worship, they are approaching worship in the wrong manner. God is the object.

Guidance, both individual and corporate, is also a discipline. Foster writes that in the Middle Ages, no one attempted a spiritual journey without a spiritual director (185). The purpose of spiritual guidance is to be led toward God, not manipulated.

The final discipline that Foster describes is celebration. Christians should experience joy in the presence of the Lord. They should celebrate by singing, dancing, and making noise (197). They should celebrate freedom in God.

Discipleship and spirituality are not qualities that can be measured directly. They are internal matters of the heart. The practice of spiritual disciplines is observable and measurable. Every writer's list of disciplines may vary slightly. Foster describes the twelve presented in this study. His list is neither all inclusive nor definitive. Regardless of the list used, practice of the spiritual disciplines can be an indicator of the level of discipleship and the depth of spirituality.

### **Wesleyan Class Meeting**

One of the greatest strengths of the Wesleyan movement was the class meeting structure. As the Methodist societies began to form in England, bands were included within each society based on the Moravian model that Wesley had admired. Membership in a band was voluntary. Five or six individuals would join together for mutual support on the journey toward Christian perfection. The primary activity of the bands was prayer and confession. Membership in bands was homogeneous—segregated by gender, age, and marital status. The idea of segregation was to provide for openness in sharing as

members tended to share similar life circumstances. "Select bands" were later instituted for individuals who were leading exemplary lives (Heitzenrater 104, 118).

The makeup of the societies changed drastically in 1742. Wesley had assumed the building debt for some of the meeting houses and did not have sufficient income to retire the debt. One of his society leaders in Bristol proposed the idea of every member contributing a penny each week to pay off the debts. The collection was to be facilitated by dividing the entire society into small groups of twelve. The leader of each group was responsible for collecting from the members and had to make up for any who were unable to pay. This procedure placed every member in a small group called classes. The bands and select bands were voluntary and composed of the more spiritually mature members. Classes were also organized geographically rather than by gender or age. The class structure soon spread from Bristol to all the societies (Heitzenrater 118).

The classes very quickly assumed a much more important function than simply collecting subscription dues. As the class leader met with his or her members to collect the dues, he or she began to see needs, both physical and spiritual, among the members. The class leader became the spiritual overseer of the members of his or her class. Class membership was mandatory for all society members. Members who attended and followed the rules were given tickets that allowed them to be members of the society. Those who did not were either placed on trial or expelled from the society (Heitzenrater 118, 123).

According to James B. and Molly Davis Scott, the class meeting was the essential definitive mark of Methodism through the years of flourishing. The class was where members were nourished and pastored. Members of a class came from all economic and

social backgrounds but were received equally. The rich helped the poor. In Wesley's original plan, the class leader paid dues for any member who could not afford to pay. The class meeting is where discipleship and spirituality were taught and developed. Class groups worked together to minister to the poor and needy. Members were held accountable to one another (*Restoring the Wesleyan Class-Meeting* 7-11).

D. Michael Henderson has done an analysis of the Wesleyan method of discipleship formation. He believes that Wesley's system was among the most effective methods of disciple formation in the history of the church. Study of this system can give modern Christians insight into designing methods for disciple formation today (13).

In analyzing the effectiveness of the class meeting system, Henderson looks at each phase as reflecting a different mode of learning theory. The class meeting itself is in the behavioral mode. A significant strength of the class meeting was the fact that it was intended to deal with sin. The Puritan ethic dreaded the existence of sin, and the deists ignored its seriousness. Wesley expected sin, so the class meeting dealt with it. Class leaders were prepared to deal with backsliding members (103).

Henderson summarizes the strengths of the class meeting system:

- It was an experiential environment for developing discipleship.
- It purged deadwood from the system.
- It trained leaders.
- It was able to handle large numbers of people.
- It facilitated collecting finances.
- It had an immediate record of membership.
- It forced participation.
- Everyone had a voice.
- It facilitated conflict resolution. (110)

These strengths enabled the class meeting system to persevere as the Methodist movement continued to grow. This system helped to promote the growth.

The next step in the system was the bands that facilitated affective redirection (Henderson 112). The bands provided accountability for society members truly striving to reach perfection. Membership in the bands required honesty and accountability. At each meeting the members answered questions about their spiritual lives since the previous meeting. Henderson also classifies the learning modes of the remaining groups. The select society, or select bands, were in the training mode. These members appeared to be closer to perfection and provided the leaders of the societies (121-25). The final group, penitent bands, included those who could not live up to the rules of the class. These bands provided for the rehabilitation of members. Attendance at meetings kept members from their old habits. Successful participation led to restoration to membership in the class meeting (125-26).

The Scotts have reproduced excerpts of a number of early works by Methodist clergy and laity within their book *Restoring the Wesleyan Class-Meeting*. Some of these are journals and diaries telling of the lives of extraordinary disciples, many of whom were class leaders. Others are early descriptions and manuals for class leaders and meetings. One in particular stands out, describing the importance of the class meeting to the success of Methodism: “The class-meeting is an essential part of Methodism. It is the differentiating characteristic” (Murray 67). Later, Gilbert Murray writes, “[T]o ask Methodists to surrender the class meeting is to invite them to commit an act of self-destruction, to wield a sword which certainly will accomplish their own ruin” (73). The abandonment of the Wesleyan class meeting contributed to the current decline in the Methodist churches. Class meetings were a strong part of the Methodist system until the twentieth century, when they began to decline. By 1940, the class meeting was all but



extinct. Methodists have voluntarily surrendered this important aspect of the system, and unfortunately Murray's prediction appears to be coming true.

Much research has been done in recent years based on this system of nurture and discipleship formation developed by Wesley. A sampling of recent dissertations includes those by the following authors:

- Brett Snowden, whose work included the analysis of spiritual gifts in relation to the classes and bands to develop a small group ministry at a local church in Massachusetts;
- Louis McKendra Strickler, who compared the class meeting structure to modern cell churches;
- Christine A. Prescott, who studied the discipleship formation in various models ranging from the New Testament house church to the current Willow Creek model, including the Wesleyan class meetings;
- Grace S. Pak, who developed a small-group plan based on the class meeting and spiritual gift inventories;
- Christopher Paul Momany, who studied covenant discipleship groups using the General Rules of the United Societies and class meetings;
- Matthew D. McClung, who implemented groups based on the classes to work in the *40 Days of Community* program;
- Betty Holley, who also worked with spiritual gift inventories and small groups based on the classes;
- Gregory Kevin Brown, who found that the Wesley class meeting bridges the gap between Pentecost and modern systems theory; and,

- William Lyn Sorrells and Stuart C. Greene, who both developed small-group ministries based on the class meeting.

The Wesleyan class meeting has been shown to be a very effective model for small-group ministry and discipleship formation.

### **Discipleship Lost**

As stated earlier, a major problem with Christian churches today is a loss of biblical discipleship. At the same time, the United Methodist Church claims as its mission, “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the World” (*Book of Discipline* par. 120). A serious disconnect exists within today’s church. To accomplish the mission of making disciples, the church needs to equip itself for disciple making.

Glover and Lavy relate the story of a young woman, who was new to church, experiencing a conversion moment and committing herself to Christ at the altar. After making the commitment, she asked the pastor what to do next, and his reply was to return to her seat. The answer may have been sufficient for the moment, but someone should have been in a position to lead her to the next step in becoming a disciple (11). As seen from the Sermon on the Mount, more is involved than simply committing to Christ.

Philip Yancey writes about his own quest for spiritual growth and his striving to understand Jesus’ admonition to be perfect. He laments the shortfall of life as it is and life as it was meant to be. He also describes Tolstoy’s striving to become perfect by making rules he could not keep (39).

An editorial in *Christianity Today* reports such things as superficial discipleship in England, ethnic cleansing by Christians in Africa, and other examples of Christians without discipleship. The editorial bemoans the fact that evangelical churches put so

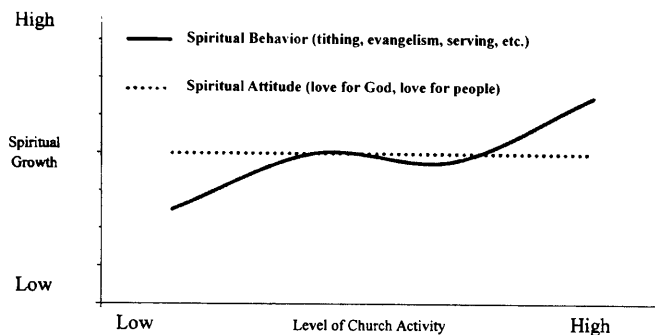
much emphasis on conversion but very little on disciple making. In an attempt to rectify this situation, the First International Consultation on Discipleship was formed. The editorial points out that even with this consultation, all the emphasis was on prayer and Bible study. Very little was said about any other spiritual disciplines. Nothing was said about the work of the Holy Spirit or the kingdom of God. The church is still struggling to understand how to make disciples (“Make Disciples” 28).

Anne Hunt writes about the disconnect between the rich and poor. The Sermon on the Mount and other teachings of Jesus constantly talk about love of neighbor and taking care of the needy. Parables such as the Rich Fool, the Shrewd Manager, and the Rich Man and Lazarus warn against the accumulation of wealth at the expense of the poor. Jesus explicitly stated, as recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, that neglect of the poor, the hungry, and other needy groups can result in Jesus’ disclaimer of those who think they are Christian disciples (34). Hunt tells of Pope John Paul II’s concept of a social mortgage attaching to physical wealth. Those disciples with wealth have an obligation to care for the poor. However, a quick look at the financial disparity in predominately Christian countries such as Hunt’s Australia and the United States show that this social mortgage seems to have no effect on reality (35).

### **Discipleship Recovered**

In 2003, Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson conducted a study of the congregation at Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago. Willow Creek was one of the best known and fastest growing megachurches in the United States. Everything seemed to be going well—attendance was growing, finances were good, and church activity was multiplying. The purpose of the survey was to determine which church

programs were contributing most to spiritual growth or discipleship. Church leadership wanted to be able to concentrate on those areas. The results were surprising. They found practically no correlation between church activity and spiritual attitudes (35). Figure 2.2 shows the lack of correlation. Church programs were producing members, very active members, but not producing disciples.

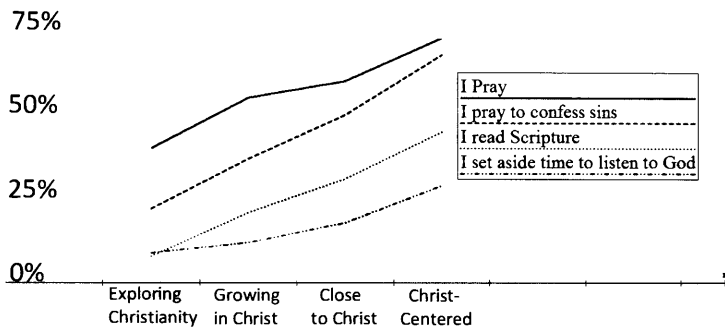


Source: Hawkins and Parkinson 35.

**Figure 2.2. Connection between church activity and spiritual growth.**

The study team immediately began to look for the factors that do affect spiritual discipleship. The original purpose of the study had been to enhance programs that developed disciples for the kingdom of God. If church programs do not produce disciples, the quest then became to determine what must be changed. Further research found that personal practices did correlate with discipleship. Figure 2.3 shows the correlation they found. Willow Creek then began to reconsider the type of programs offered and work toward the original mission of producing disciples for Jesus Christ.

One key aspect of the Willow Creek study was the use of behavior to determine spirituality. The lead researcher had wished for something strong enough to see into the hearts of individuals. Hawkins and Parkinson found a high predictive correlation among behavior, emotions, and attitudes.



Source: Hawkins and Parkinson 43.

**Figure 2.3. Influence of spiritual practices on spiritual growth.**

Authors Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg describe the model of discipleship based upon life in the Jewish community of the first century AD. They specifically describe the way in which Jesus related to his disciples. Spangler and Tverberg say that many Christians today believe that discipleship simply involves knowledge and belief. These authors suggest that the Eastern model of discipleship is more appropriated for biblically based disciples. This model involves knowledge and belief but also “recognizes that Jesus lived transparently in front of his disciples in order to teach them how to

live” (64). True disciples of Jesus should live thusly in order to teach others to live in the manner that Jesus lived. Behavior defines one’s discipleship.

The religious marketplace contains many models for spiritual growth and disciple formation. Many of the models in use in the United Methodist Church are based partially on the Wesleyan class meeting.

### **Disciple Bible Study**

The Disciple Bible Study program began in the 1980s with the intent of developing disciples through an intensive program of Bible study. The original course ran for thirty-four weekly gatherings of 2½ hours plus daily individual reading and study. Later renamed Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, the course provided an overview of the entire Bible with application to daily life. The study material is developed, produced, and distributed through United Methodist channels but is intended as an ecumenical program. Thousands of graduates have testified to the effectiveness of this study.

The Disciple Bible Study program has been extended through the years to include three more studies with similar curriculum. Into the Word concentrates on the Pentateuch and the Book of Acts. Remember Who You Are covers the prophetic books of the Old Testament and Paul’s Letters. Under the Tree of Life is a study of the miscellaneous writings of the Old Testament, the non-Pauline letters of the New Testament, and Revelation.

Later two slightly different programs were added: Jesus in the Gospels and Christian Believer. Jesus in the Gospels leads the participants into a better understanding of how Jesus is seen and understood by the gospel writers. Christian Believer is not based

wholly on Scripture but on the writings of church leaders through the centuries. Its goal is to build faith through understanding.

The small group size of these studies (ideally eight to fourteen) and the systematic emphasis on daily application have made these programs very effective in the development of Christian disciples. Unfortunately, due to the demands of current life, many individuals have been unable to commit to the extended schedule of thirty-two to thirty-six weekly sessions. In the last few years, a series of short-term Disciple studies have been issued. These programs are more limited in scope and only require commitments of eight to eleven weeks. Similar in format to the original Disciple studies, they include studying of the Word and then move to how the Word influences discipleship. Studies providing overviews of the Old and New Testaments, as well as individual studies of Genesis, Psalms, John, and Romans are available in this series (“Disciple Home”).

### **Companions in Christ**

Companions in Christ was developed by the Upper Room ministry of the General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church. Like Disciple Bible Study, it is intended to be an ecumenical program and is currently being used by churches in different denominations as well as by independent churches. Designed for a small group environment, the initial unit is a twenty-eight-week foundational program introducing the small group experience and spiritual disciplines. Companions in Christ also includes a prequel unit called Exploring the Way, which is intended to lead new Christians into the foundational program. After completion of the foundational program, other resources are available to continue the journey. Resources are also available that adapt the program for

children and youth. The intended purpose of this program is to assist individuals into a closer walk with Christ and develop the spiritual disciplines individually and corporately (“Companions”).

### **A Disciple’s Path**

James A. Harnish and Justin LaRosa have written a guide for United Methodists who desire to deepen their relationship with Christ. Intended for small groups, the package includes a leader guide, CD-ROM, daily workbook, and companion reader for a six-week journey into the spiritual disciplines. Written from a Wesleyan perspective, this program includes a session on the history and organization of the United Methodist Church before introducing the spiritual disciplines. This program is not ecumenical in nature but could probably be adapted for other churches in the Wesleyan tradition. Participants are guided toward discipleship by teaching the spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, stewardship, service, and witness. Published in 2012, the effectiveness of *A Disciple’s Path* has not yet been determined by experience, but my review of the material indicates that it can be more effective with a smaller formal commitment than some of the other programs. Because of this smaller formal commitment, participants would likely need to continue with other resources, such as Foster or any of the many published guides to the spiritual disciplines (*A Disciple’s Path: Daily Workbook*; *A Disciple’s Path: Leader Guide*).

### **The John Wesley Great Experiment**

In 1965 a Sunday school teacher at the John Wesley Methodist Church in Tallahassee, Florida, named Sam Teague conceived an experimental restoration of the Wesleyan class meeting concept. He called for *ten brave Christians* to band together for



purposes of mutual study, prayer, and accountability. Those who participated experienced a closer walk with Christ and became much better disciples. Danny Morris documents the story of this experiment. After publishing this story, the experiment caught on at churches throughout the nation.

### **Kingdom People**

In addition to their work *Restoring the Wesleyan Class-Meeting*, the Scotts have devised a discipleship development program called *Kingdom People*. This program is in the form of a short-term group meeting for twelve weeks, but the Scotts intend it to lead to the establishment of long-term groups similar to the classes or bands of the Methodist societies. The premise is calling people from casual Christianity into a full discipleship within the kingdom of God. It involves making a life plan and periodic assessments of one's spiritual life.

### **Other Models**

Numerous other models for disciple development exist, including quite a few based on the Wesleyan tradition. Sondra Higgins Matthaeei analyzes the way individual faith and discipleship were developed by the early Methodists. Her work is directed more toward those who intend to develop discipleship programs than to those seeking fully developed programs.

### **Walk to Emmaus**

The Walk to Emmaus is a spiritual renewal program with several models blended into an overall program. The purpose of the Walk to Emmaus is to build up leadership in the local church. This purpose is accomplished through a variety of methods to develop

the spiritual maturity and discipleship of individual participants and then to direct them back to the local church for service.

The Walk to Emmaus has grown out of a program that began on the island of Majorca shortly after the Spanish Civil War. The war had drained the strength of the church in Spain of most of the young laity and priests. The *Cursillo de Cristiandad* (small class of Christianity) was formed to help alleviate this shortage of trained men. The program was designed around the theme of a pilgrimage. The program spread in the Roman Catholic Church and was brought to the United States during the 1950s by a group of Spanish Airmen on exchange posted to a US Air Force Base near San Antonio, Texas. Gradually the *Cursillo* was adopted and modified by Protestant groups in the United States (Wood, *Early History* 21-22; Crandall 56).

During the 1970s, Morris, then director of Upper Room Ministries for the United Methodist Church, attended a *Cursillo* sponsored by the Lutheran Church. He returned from the weekend and immediately began making arrangements to develop a Methodist *Cursillo* within the ministries of the Upper Room. Morris and Robert Wood conducted the first Methodist *Cursillo* weekend in 1977. Wood came to the Upper Room staff as director of the new *Cursillo* ministry. Consistent with the nature of Upper Room ministries, the Methodist *Cursillo* was designed to be ecumenical and based on the Wesleyan theology (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Directors' Manual* 7; Wood, *Early History* 16-19).

The National Secretariat of the Roman Catholic *Cursillo* objected to the ecumenical nature of the Methodist *Cursillo*. The Secretariat had instituted a policy licensing the copyright to other denominations on the condition that they would limit

sponsorship of participants to their own denomination. In 1981, an agreement was reached whereby the Upper Room developed a new program based on the *Cursillo* model removing all terminology derived from the original Spanish *Cursillo*. The original pilgrimage model was changed to be based on the disciples' journey to the village of Emmaus related in Luke's Gospel. The ecumenical Walk to Emmaus program is the result of that agreement (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Directors' Manual* 8; Wood, *Early History* 21-22).

### **Basic Outline**

The weekend program of the Walk to Emmaus is a seventy-two-hour sequestered retreat. Normally it is conducted from Thursday evening until Sunday afternoon. Men and women participate on separate weekends. The Walk to Emmaus is a lay-led program, but the weekend has clergy support on the team. Participants, called pilgrims, are assigned to small groups called table groups. During the weekend they will hear fifteen talks, ten by laypersons and five by clergy. After each talk each table group discusses the message and makes some sort of creative response to the message. Time is set aside for praise and worship as well as contemplative time in a chapel environment. Opportunities abound for fellowship and fun within the group of pilgrims and the conference room team, who are sequestered for the entire seventy-two hours. The entire weekend is supported by prayer and agape love throughout the Emmaus community. Each retreat has a support team, which is outside of this sequestered group. The support team provides meals and any other services needed for the weekend (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 55).

## Team

The leadership in the conference room is referred to as the team. All members of the team, laity and clergy, are required to have previously participated as a pilgrim. The team is made up mostly of laity and is under the direction of an experienced Lay Director and three assistants. Depending on the number of pilgrims, generally six table groups will be formed. Each table group is led by a Table Leader and one Assistant Table Leader. Two or three musicians lead the praise and worship time. The team members are selected by a committee of the local Emmaus community based on a model of progressive servanthood. This model is designed so that new team members will generally serve as Assistant Table Leader or musician. On subsequent service opportunities, he or she will assume more responsibility, possibly presenting a talk. With more experience will come an opportunity to serve as Assistant Lay Director and eventually as Lay Director for a weekend (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 23).

Spiritual support is provided by a Spiritual Director and four Assistant Spiritual Directors. The Spiritual Director is usually a United Methodist elder, but clergy with equivalent credentials in other denominations may also serve in this role. The Assistant Spiritual Directors are all ordained or licensed clergy with a theological education (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 29-30).

The support team varies in makeup depending upon the requirements of the facility used for the retreat. Typically one group is responsible for meals, either cooked on site or brought in from outside. Another group will be responsible for housekeeping arrangements and another for preparing and maintaining the worship chapel. One additional group is responsible for supplies and refreshments in the conference room.

Depending on the procedures of each local Emmaus community, support team members may be present for the entire weekend, especially if the retreat is held at a remote location. In other communities, support team members may only be present at the facility when performing their functions.

### **Pilgrims**

*The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus* emphasizes the importance of sponsorship of pilgrims. To participate as a pilgrim, an individual must be sponsored by a member of an Emmaus community. The stated purpose of the Walk to Emmaus is the development of leadership in the local church. Individuals invited to participate as pilgrims should have a solid Christian faith, be active in a local church, and be ready for the next step in the journey to discipleship and service (Bryant and Gilmore 13-18).

Men and women participate separately. Most communities hold retreats in pairs, with men participating one weekend and women the weekend immediately following. The Walk to Emmaus policies encourage the implementation of an “Equal Commitment Rule” whereby husbands and wives make equal commitments to participate. The reasons for this rule are not theological but are based on practical experience. This rule prevents the Walk to Emmaus from becoming divisive in marriages. The rule is not law but a guideline. Cases may and frequently do arise when circumstances in the family indicate that this rule not be followed. It also does not in any way discourage participation by single individuals (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 18-19).

### **Team Training and Preparation**

Preparation for a Walk to Emmaus retreat begins long before the scheduled date. About three or four months before the retreat, team members must be selected and

assigned duties, including talk presentation. Talks have basic outlines, but the details must be prepared by the team members who present the talks. Team members begin meeting together around two months prior to the retreat. At these meetings they develop a team spirit, are trained for their assigned duties, review and critique talks, and pray together. The entire community begins praying for the team and pilgrims before any of them are selected.

### **Talks**

Fifteen talks are presented during the weekend. Ten are by laity and five by clergy. Talks are based on prescribed outlines but presented as the team member's own work. By using prescribed outlines and a particular ordering of the talks, the fifteen talks present one unified message to the pilgrims. Five talks are presented each day. On Friday, talks include Priority, Prevenient Grace, Priesthood of All Believers, Justifying Grace, and Life of Piety. Saturday's talks are Grow through Study, Means of Grace, Christian Action, Obstacles to Grace, and Discipleship. Finally, on Sunday the talks are Changing Our World, Sanctifying Grace, Body of Christ, Perseverance, and Fourth Day.

**Priority.** The priorities talk is always presented by an Assistant Lay Director. The talk sets the stage for the weekend message. It emphasizes the importance of priorities in one's life. This talk is presented without mention of God, Christ, or church (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 9-16).

**Prevenient grace.** The talk on prevenient grace is presented by an Assistant Spiritual Director. All of the clergy talks concern God's grace. This talk presents Wesley's concept of prevenient grace before one even knows about God and how God

pursues individuals to offer grace (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 17-24).

**Priesthood of all believers.** The priesthood of all believers talk is also presented by a Table Leader or Assistant Table Leader. Its purpose is to show the pilgrims that everyone is involved in ministry and has an important place in God's plan. Laity serve a more important role in mission than do the clergy (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 25-32).

**Justifying grace.** The talk on justifying grace is also presented by an Assistant Spiritual Director. This talk is about how God's grace leads one to make the decision to accept God's offer of free grace. This talk also introduces the pilgrims to the fact that individuals outside of the retreat are praying for them and want to show them God's love (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 33-40).

**Life of piety.** A Table Leader or Assistant Table Leader presents the talk on a life of piety. It introduces the concept of spiritual disciplines and the importance of discipline in the journey to discipleship. Pilgrims are guided into participation in the disciplines (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 41-50).

**Grow through study.** The talk on growing through study, given by a Table Leader or Assistant Table Leader, explains the discipline of study. It stresses the importance of various means of increasing knowledge including studying the Bible, Christian classics, and current Christian literature. The pilgrims are guided into creating their own plans (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 51-62).

**Means of grace.** The means of grace talk is presented by the Spiritual Director. It is much longer than the other talks. The sacraments are explained and other means of

grace are presented. Special emphasis is placed on communion, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 63-82).

**Christian action.** A Table Leader or Assistant Table Leader presents the talk on Christian action. This talk is about being the hands and feet of Christ. It introduces the discipline of service and completes the triad of discipleship: heart—piety, mind—study, and hands—action (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 83-94).

**Obstacles to grace.** The obstacles to grace talk is presented by an Assistant Spiritual Director. It describes sin as those actions and attitudes that block God's grace in one's life. It also shows how Christ has overcome humanity's sins on the cross (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 95-110).

**Discipleship.** Discipleship is the last talk of the day, presented by a Table Leader or Assistant Table Leader. This talk brings together the disciplines of piety, study, and action to create a disciple. It describes maturity in Christian faith (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 111-18).

**Changing our world.** The changing our world talk is presented by a Table Leader or Assistant Table Leader. It takes the concept of discipleship one step further and tells the pilgrims that the task of a disciple is transformation of the world. Pilgrims are shown how to create a plan for that transformation (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 119-30).

**Sanctifying grace.** The talk on sanctifying grace is presented by an Assistant Spiritual Director. In the Wesleyan tradition, disciples not only have a task in the world but they are to strive for holiness before God. This talk shows how God's sanctifying



grace enables the Holy Spirit to bring disciples to Christian perfection (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 131-42).

**Body of Christ.** The body of Christ talk is the last one given by the table leadership. It moves the focus from the individual to the church. It shows the pilgrims how the body of Christ works together to multiply the service of individuals (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 143-54).

**Perseverance.** The talk on perseverance is presented by the Lay Director. This talk is the climax of the weekend message. The pilgrims are told that the sequestered time is over and now they must prepare to face the outside world. The follow-up plans in the Walk to Emmaus program are presented (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 155-62).

**Fourth day.** The final talk concerning the fourth day is presented by an Assistant Lay Director. It prepares the pilgrims to enter the outside world with enthusiasm and a plan for ministry (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 163-72).

## **Worship**

Each morning begins with a meditative chapel service. The closing chapel on Thursday is meditative as well. Friday and Saturday evening close with a contemplative service, including an examination of conscience. Another meditative service is held immediately after the Life of Piety talk.

Communion is celebrated daily. During the Friday morning chapel service, the meditative silence, which has been in effect since Thursday evening, is broken by celebrating communion. Communion is celebrated with sponsors and the greater community at the close of Sunday afternoon.

Late Saturday morning a chapel service is held immediately following the Means of Grace talk. The service is an opportunity for pilgrims to have a time of confession and to feel the grace of forgiveness, followed by celebration of communion. This service is referred to as Dying Moments and is one of the special events of the weekend (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Directors' Manual* 133).

Another very special event takes place on Saturday evening. The community gathers in the chapel for worship and communion. Afterwards, chapel lights are extinguished and the pilgrims enter the chapel lit by candles. The community sings the *Jesus* song and then quietly departs. Pilgrims are then told by the Spiritual Director that community members, including family and sponsors, have traveled to the retreat facility for the purpose of showing God's love and have then departed for home. This service is referred to as the Candlelight (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Directors' Manual* 138).

### **Follow-Up**

The weekend retreat is only the beginning. The most important day of the three-day program is the fourth day. Fourth day is the term used in the Walk to Emmaus to indicate the rest of one's life after the three-day retreat. The Walk to Emmaus program has four areas of follow-up within the program.

**Sponsorship.** The graduate, who is now a community member and no longer considered a pilgrim, is encouraged to consider prayerfully sponsoring others as pilgrims. Continuing sponsorship keeps the community growing and active (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 17).

**Service to the community.** Community members serve the community in several ways. One is to serve on a team for a subsequent weekend retreat. Following a plan of progressive servanthood, new members generally serve on the support team before being assigned to the conference room. Another way is to be present at the Candlelight service and the weekend closing service to show love for the pilgrims. Community members also provide cards, letters, and novelty gifts for pilgrims to convey God's love. A final way to serve the community is through the organized community governance. Each community is governed by an elected board of directors and various committees to facilitate the weekend retreat planning (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 159).

**Gatherings.** The community gathers for worship and fellowship monthly. The gatherings are held at local churches around the community. The time together includes a fellowship meal (or sometimes light refreshments), praise and worship, testimony, and communion (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 159).

**Group reunion.** Members are strongly encouraged to participate in a group reunion for fellowship and accountability. A group reunion is a gathering of three to six individuals who have attended a Walk to Emmaus weekend, although prior attendance is not a requirement. Groups are expected to meet weekly although some groups meet on a different regular schedule. Most groups are segregated by gender and broadly by age. The Walk to Emmaus has no requirement for segregation, but just as Wesley found with the bands, mixed gender and widely diverse ages may tend to inhibit openness of discussion (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 115-123).

The group reunion plan was presented to the pilgrims by the Lay Director during the Perseverance talk. He or she is encouraged to describe his or her group reunion

experience—participation is a requirement for assignment as Lay Director (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 33, 121). Emphasis is given to the four necessary qualities of a group. The group must be serious, sincere, discreet, and regular (*Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 158-59). During the talk, pilgrims are each given a Group Reunion Card. This trifold card easily fits into a wallet or purse. Figure 2.4 shows both sides of this card. The card is then explained in detail along with how it relates to the group meeting.

One side of the card is a reminder of the three areas of discipleship: piety—giving one's heart to God, study—giving one's mind to God, and action—giving one's hands and feet to God. Each area includes a list of several disciplines and activities that contribute to discipleship.

The other side of the card is the Order of the Reunion. The Order of the Reunion is also included in the worship book the pilgrims receive at the beginning of the weekend. (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Worship Booklet* 47). Each item in the order is described and explained by the Lay Director. The procedure during a meeting is that after the opening, each member responds to the first six items (*Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 159).

The meeting opens with the Prayer to the Holy Spirit. This prayer calls upon the Holy Spirit to be present with each member at the meeting. This prayer should be familiar to members because it was prayed before every talk on the weekend except the Priority talk.

## GROUP REUNION CARD

Christ needs you: your heart, your mind, your hands and feet. He needs you committed in faith, so that your life in grace may bear witness to that faith in Christ through:

### YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE/PRAYER

Morning devotion

Prayer/meditation on Christ

Journaling—  
How do you nourish your relationship with God?

Worship (at home and at church)

The Lord's Supper

Spiritual retreat

### YOUR STUDY

You will realize God's presence through:  
Reading holy scriptures  
Daily spiritual guides

Your horizons will expand through reading:  
Religious publications  
Denominational newspapers  
Religious magazines

You will grow in your religious understanding by attending:  
Bible studies  
Church school classes  
Religious seminars

### YOUR ACTION

What have you done during the week so Christ will be better known and loved in your

Family?  
Vocation?  
Local community?  
Small group?  
Christian community?

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. —Acts 2:42 (NRSV)*

### ORDER OF THE REUNION

#### Prayer to the Holy Spirit

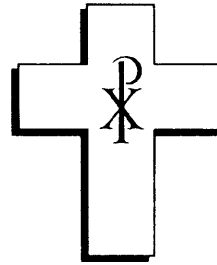
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

1. Review your Group Reunion Card—Prayer, Study, Action.
2. Closest to Christ—At what moment this past week did you feel closest to Christ?

3. Call to Discipleship—At what moment during this week did you feel you were responding to God's call to be a disciple? Where did you participate this week in being the church, the heartbeat of Christ?
4. Discipleship Denied—When was your faith tested this week through failure?
5. Your Plan—What is your plan for prayer, study, and action for the week to come?
6. Reunion Group Activities
7. Prayers for Special Needs—Pray for those who are absent.
8. Prayer of Thanksgiving—Almighty God, who lives and reigns forever, we give you thanks for all the gifts you have bestowed upon us. Amen.

E10



**CHRIST  
IS COUNTING  
ON YOU**

**Figure 2.4. Group reunion card.**

The ordinary practice of the meeting then follows on a prescribed outline:

- *Review the Group Reunion Card.* How have you practiced the spiritual disciplines?
- *Closest to Christ.* Tell when you felt close to Christ this week.

- *Call to Discipleship.* When during the week did you respond to God's call?
- *Discipleship denied.* What were your spiritual failures during the week? *Your plan.* How do you plan to be a disciple this week?
- *Activities.* This item varies. It can be some group activity to serve the community, prepare for an upcoming retreat, or other act of service.
- *Prayers for special needs.* Pray for those absent and for any special needs in the group or community.
- *Prayer of Thanksgiving.* A closing prayer thanking God for all God's gifts (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Talk Outlines* 159; *Walk to Emmaus Worship Booklet* 47).

The group reunion meeting is very similar to the bands in Wesley's class meeting structure. The group is small, usually no more than six. Honesty and openness are required. Members bear each other's burdens and hold each other accountable. Members encourage each other. It facilitates discipleship and encourages holiness.

### **Other Studies**

Ronald K. Crandall has published a short article that contains a very comprehensive evaluation of the Walk to Emmaus program. He presents the origin and history of the movement and describes the basic flow of the weekend. He describes the philosophy and purpose as strengthening Christian faith and discipleship to produce leaders for the church. Crandall also evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

Crandall sees the strengths of the Walk to Emmaus movement as being chiefly prayer, preparation, agape love, sound teaching, community, and follow-up. Prayer is of

first importance to the Walk to Emmaus program. The community begins praying for the team and pilgrims before the individuals are selected. During the retreat the community undertakes a seventy-two-hour prayer vigil. Someone from the Emmaus community is in prayer at any given time during the weekend. Additionally, members of the support team or community gather in the chapel for prayer with each speaker before and after he or she presents a talk and remain in prayer during the presentation (61-63).

The weekend is also bathed in agape love. The support team voluntarily handles all the details behind the scene during a weekend, including meals, housekeeping, and any other task needed. Generally the support team even pays for their own room and board to come and work for the pilgrims. The community provides prayer, cards, letters, and little reminders of love for the pilgrims. Many community members travel to the retreat facility, some from long distances, for the sole purpose of showing agape love (Crandall 63).

Crandall also lists and refutes some common objections to the Emmaus program. The requirement that pilgrims be sponsored by someone who has already attended a weekend is seen by some as creating an elitist organization. However, no one is being prevented from attending. The sponsorship requirement assures that someone familiar with the program and the candidate has prayerfully considered whether or not the Walk to Emmaus is appropriate for this candidate at this time. If a pilgrim attends in a spiritual state of unreadiness, a once in a lifetime opportunity is missed. Sponsorship also ensures that family needs are met and that individual prayer support is provided for each pilgrim. The monthly gatherings and group reunion meetings are often viewed as cultic. They are open to all, including those who have not attended a weekend. Nothing takes place in

secret—gatherings are a time of worship and celebration. Reunion meetings require a discreet confidentiality, but the nature of what goes on is not a secret. The details of someone's spiritual struggles should not be discussed with strangers (63-65).

Another criticism is that Emmaus is manipulative. Like any spiritual enrichment activity, the weekend is carefully planned and activities are guided by the team leadership. No one is required to do anything to which they have objection. Everyone is free to leave at any time if they do not wish to continue participation. One more objection concerns the local church. Some believe that Emmaus pulls leaders away or creates a division within the church. The goal is to provide leadership for the local church. At all times participants are reminded that their local church has priority over the Emmaus community. Unfortunately, sometimes an over enthusiastic graduate will convey to others the idea, "I have been changed, but you have not." This event should not happen if the spirit of humble discipleship has been developed in the graduate (Crandall 63-65).

A sampling of recent work includes John Norman Blackwell's study of the use of ritual to alter emotional responses during an Emmaus weekend. The main concentration of his work appears to center on manipulation of male emotions to elicit particular responses. The responses that he claims are to be elicited are crying and showing affection by hugging ("Walk to Emmaus" 446). Blackwell's study took place in 1991-92. At this time in the development of the program, local communities often made substantive alterations to the model presented in the *Upper Room Handbook* and manuals. Later, by the end of the 1990s or the beginning of the current century, the Upper Room staff began to enforce the model more strictly by withholding sanction from communities that used procedures substantially different from those prescribed.



Blackwell's very detailed description of the men's weekend shows that the Arizona community was not in compliance at that time (*Walk to Emmaus* 18-133). The weekend he describes included many additional ceremonies and omitted other important procedures. This alteration often created the very rituals that Blackwell considers manipulative. Blackwell's study is of limited value in evaluating the Walk to Emmaus today.

Daniel Joseph Grimes used the Walk to Emmaus model in 1995 to introduce spiritual formation and develop English language fluency with Russian college students. Due to the very limited scope of his study, it is not helpful in evaluating the Walk to Emmaus model in the United States.

Woody Lynn Davis' study in 1991 concerned gender differences and stereotypes. Among the groups he studied were graduates of a Walk to Emmaus retreat. He selected these participants because the men and women do not participate together. He was interested in the difference in response based on gender. Like the Grimes study, the scope of Davis' work is too limited to evaluate the Walk to Emmaus model effectively.

Russell M. Clark, John F. Williams, and David Allen Estep have all conducted studies evaluating the use of the Walk to Emmaus as a model for spiritual formation. Clark and Williams both studied the local church environment in 1988 and 1998, respectively. Estep's study involved churches throughout an entire annual conference of the United Methodist Church in 2011. Since Estep's work was more broadly based and more recent, it was chosen to review more closely.

Estep conducted an anonymous survey of laity in the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Invitations to participate were sent to all

congregations in the conference. He received responses from 217 voluntary participants. The respondents were roughly equally divided between the 48 percent who had attended a Walk to Emmaus (or similar) weekend and the 52 percent who had not attended (109).

Estep used several instruments to evaluate the spiritual strength of respondents. He chose the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith, the Duke Religion Index, and the Age Universal Religious Orientation Scale. His findings indicate a statistically significant correlation between attendance at a Walk to Emmaus and the various measures of spiritual strength (119-20). His only finding relative to the reunion participation was that only 44 percent of respondents who have attended a weekend program participate in the reunion (132).

These studies and others have made use of the Walk to Emmaus program for various purposes, including evaluation of the effect on spiritual formation of individuals and congregations. Little study has been done on the causative effects of participation. No study that I have seen concentrated on a single aspect of the follow-up program such as the group reunion. This aspect warranted further study and was the purpose of my study.

### **Research Design**

This research project was a post-intervention study of individuals who have attended a Walk to Emmaus or similar fourth-day spiritual formation program. The ministry intervention was participation in a group reunion, one of the recommended follow-up activities in the Walk to Emmaus model. The intervention was self-applied by participants who voluntarily chose to join a group or not to join.

## Sampling

The sample data was collected on an anonymous and voluntary basis. E-mail invitations were sent to approximately seven thousand members of three Walk to Emmaus communities in Metropolitan Atlanta. Invitations were limited to those with valid e-mail addresses due to the method of contact. The same invitation was also posted on the Facebook page of the Walk to Emmaus group. This group is a voluntary association of approximately 5,400 persons who use the Facebook social medium and have an interest in the Walk to Emmaus. A substantial overlap exists in the two methods of issuing invitations because the Facebook group was started in the Metropolitan Atlanta communities. Responses were anonymous and voluntary. One general reminder invitation was sent by the same method. The reminder went to all who had been initially invited, because I was unable to determine who were nonresponders due to the anonymous nature of responses.

In 2003, Alexandra Ekman et al. sent survey invitations to 96,000 women in Sweden soliciting completion of a Web-based survey instrument in an epidemiology study. At that time approximately 80 percent of the general public in Sweden had ready access to the Internet. They later sent a paper version of the same questionnaire to nonrespondents. They received a total of 47,859 responses. The response rate for the Web-based questionnaire was 41 percent, with an additional 31 percent responding to the paper questionnaire (103). Statistical analysis of the responses showed no significant bias between the Web-based questionnaire and the paper questionnaire (106).

Also in 2003, Charles R. Fikar and Latrina Keith posted a general invitation on the Internet directed to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Medical Librarian

special interest group. They received a total of 152 responses to their Web-based survey instrument. They made no comparison to paper surveys as none were used, but they determined that the sample produced statistically valid results (53).

More recently, in 2008, Jane A. McElroy, Kevin D. Everett, and Isabella Zaniletti conducted a study of tobacco use among self-identified sexual and gender minorities (SGM). The sample was in two segments: a paper questionnaire distributed publicly at a local Black Pride festival and a Web-based questionnaire. Invitations to complete the Web-based questionnaire were posted on several electronic sites of interest to SGM individuals. An opportunity to win an MP3 player was included with the questionnaire (441). Results were biased racially, educationally, and by age. All of these biases were attributable to the populations sampled rather than the method of sampling (443).

Christopher W. Winship and Robert D. Mare studied two methods of dealing with the bias introduced by out-of-bounds responses. They determined that truncating the sample was the preferred method of handling these responses (330).

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument chosen for this research was the CSPP developed by Thayer at Andrews University. This instrument was designed to measure the intensity of Christian behavior in the area of spiritual disciplines. It was also designed to highlight certain learning modes used in the spiritual formation process. A significant amount of testing was done by Thayer in the development of this instrument ("Constructing a Spirituality Measure" 199-203).

This instrument is widely known as a reliable instrument based on learning theory. In recent years it has been utilized in several studies. Rebecca Ruth Luman

selected the CSPP as the sole instrument in her 2005 study of spiritual maturity of small discipleship groups. A. Perry Hancock used the CSPP along with another instrument from the Search Institute Minneapolis to study the spiritual maturity of students at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Several studies in 2008 used the CSPP as their instrument of choice. Chandra Bennett used it to determine the spiritual maturity of Southern Baptist African-American adults. John Andrew Breon administered the instrument for pretest and posttest measurement of a teaching program on Christian doctrine. The results showed significant change after the teaching session. In 2009 Anthony Lee Hoffman used the CSPP to measure dependent variables to compare against the independent variable determined by the Cyberporn Compulsivity Scale. He was studying the spiritual disciplines of pornography users.

### **Summary**

A number of studies have indicated that church attendance and participation are declining and that a major reason is the perceived behavior of church members. This perception by those individuals outside the Christian community indicates that many churches are not teaching the true meaning of Christian discipleship. A number of different models have been developed to accomplish this goal.

A disciple is one who follows a teacher and learns from that teacher. Jesus himself gave the basic requirement of self-denial for Christian discipleship in Matthew 16:24. This short passage has been the subject of much study and commentary, concentrating on the ideas of denying self and taking up the cross.

Self-denial has been understood by many as a requirement to forego the pleasures of life, even to the extent of severe asceticism. In the context of Jesus' statement, self-

denial is more accurately understood as living a life focused on others and not on self.

Self-denial is the very nature of Jesus.

Taking up the cross is also frequently misinterpreted as bearing the burdens and sufferings of life. Jesus took up his cross voluntarily in obedience to the will of God. To a true disciple, taking up the cross means humble obedience. A disciple's way of life is the way that Jesus lived his life.

Jesus described that way of life in great detail in the Sermon on the Mount. The three-chapter-long discourse in Matthew is one of the most studied passages in the Gospels. Many of the studies center around the purpose of this discourse. Scholars are divided as to whether Jesus was describing himself, the ideal of discipleship, or the life he truly expected of a disciple. Throughout the history of the Church, various scholars have supported all three positions. Most current scholarship echoes the early Church in that the Sermon on the Mount reflects the inaugurated eschatology of the current and future kingdom of God (Easley 33). Jesus was teaching a way of life encapsulating the great commandment: love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self. The love is reflected in giving to the needy, praying, and fasting (35).

Jesus also emphasized the strength of discipleship that comes from gathering together as a fellowship of Christians. Disciples are rarely found working alone in the Scriptures. James also gives examples of how mutual accountability strengthens discipleship.

Classical Christian literature through the ages has described the need to follow Jesus. The hearts of some of the better known works are captured in the titles: Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*, Sheldon's *In His Steps*, and Foster's *Celebration of*

*Discipline.* The key to discipleship is living a disciplined life, imitating Christ, and following him.

In the early days of the Methodist movement, the concepts that named the movement were methods designed to encourage and develop discipleship in the members. Wesley and his associates developed a system of small groups and required all society members to participate. They established class meetings for teaching the disciplined life of a disciple, bands to reinforce discipleship and provide a mutual accountability, select bands for those nearer to perfection of love, and penitent bands for restoration of those who had failed. This system has been shown to be very effective for discipleship formation.

Unfortunately, in more recent years, this system, once required of all Methodist members, has slipped into disuse. Without a systematic means of learning discipleship, many Christians never grasp the meaning of following Jesus. If new Christians exhibit no apparent change in lifestyle or behavior, non-Christians perceive them as hypocritical and see no benefit to Christianity.

A number of programs designed to increase discipleship among members are used in today's church. Some, such as Disciple Bible Study, Companions in Christ, and A Disciple's Path, emphasize teaching of Christian discipline. Other programs such as The John Wesley Great Experiment and Kingdom People are designed to replicate the Wesleyan structure of classes and bands. The Walk to Emmaus includes both—an intense weekend of instruction followed by a lifetime of mutual accountability.

The Walk to Emmaus model is very structured. The seventy-two-hour retreat follows a strict pattern of worship, fellowship, and instruction. The instruction consists of

a series of talks on spirituality and discipleship presented by lay and clergy persons followed by activities designed to facilitate the assimilation of learning. Many participants complete the weekend with a thorough understanding of the meaning of discipleship.

The strength of the Walk to Emmaus program is in the follow-up. Graduates are encouraged, but not required, to participate the three areas of follow-up—gatherings, service, and reunion. The gatherings are monthly services designed to replicate the atmosphere of the weekend in a miniature scale. They consist of an evening of worship, fellowship, and instruction. Service is actively participating in either the support or teaching team for subsequent retreats or the community at large. Reunion consists of participating in a small group that meets regularly for fellowship and mutual accountability. This group reunion is modeled closely after the bands in Wesley's structure.

Discipleship is a quality that is not directly measurable. It can be inferred from the personal behavior of individuals. Thayer's CSPP was designed to measure the level of behavior of Christians in the areas of spiritual disciplines and learning. This instrument has been used in several studies. The behavior measured has been used to evaluate teaching, small group activity, and for comparison to other areas of activity. I have chosen this instrument as appropriate to measure the behavior of members in the Emmaus community.

Based on the several studies I reviewed, I determined that the method of survey could produce valid results. Web-based survey questionnaires have been shown to be as reliable as paper questionnaires. Bias should be minimized due to the sample size. A low



percentage response rate was expected due to the voluntary nature of participation, but the large number of invitations was expected to offset the low rate of response.

The Walk to Emmaus is one of the most widely used programs of spiritual renewal and discipleship formation, especially in the United Methodist Church. Numerous studies have determined the overall effectiveness of the program. However, little study has specifically focused on the follow-up program of the group reunion. This study was intended to begin that focus. It was concentrated on the behavioral aspect of the reunion but should lead to further study of the causative effects.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Problem and Purpose

Church membership, attendance and volunteerism are declining in the twenty-first century (Weems 10; Roozen, *Decade* 1; Smietana 85). However, at the same time, many Americans are experiencing a desire for spirituality without the need for religious participation (Marler and Hadaway 289; Zinnbauer et al. 561; Saucier and Skrzypińska 1288), yet the spiritual vitality of American congregations is declining (Roozen, *Decade* 1).

The public perception of Christian behavior is one reason for decline in church membership as a whole. Many church members have confused Christianity with citizenship (Jelen 273) and patriotism (LaMothe 475). Many people perceive waving the flag and supporting the government as being more appropriate than following the teaching of Jesus Christ (Stassen 91). Emile Durkheim, when writing about the French Revolution, makes a point that is true in America today: “[T]hings purely laical by nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred” (214). Recent research by the Barna Group indicates that the majority of youth and young adults view Christians as hypocritical and judgmental. This perceived behavior is the exact opposite of the merciful and pure-hearted behavior Christ requires in the Sermon on the Mount.

Much research indicates that churches are not effectively teaching discipleship (e.g., Glover and Lavy; Hunt; “Make Disciples”; Song). Many churches have confused patriotism with discipleship (e.g., Jelen; LaMothe; Stassen), and the American civil religion has influenced and effectively replaced Christian discipleship (Bellah 12).

When the Methodist movement was beginning, attendance at class meetings was required of all society members. At these meetings members learned discipleship (Scott and Scott, *Restoring the Wesleyan Class-Meeting* 2). Historically, the United Methodist Church is the successor to one of the fastest growing evangelical churches in modern times. Wesley initiated a movement that changed the society of eighteenth century Britain. The spiritual revival evident in the Methodist societies and the revival's impact on the behavior during the eighteenth-century were believed by many to be among the prominent factors that prevented duplication of the French Revolution in Britain (Keefer 10-11).

After the Methodist movement came to America, the Methodist churches in the new nation of the United States grew into the largest denomination on the expanding frontier. United Methodists have lost millions of members in recent years. A way must be found to restore the church to its former position in today's culture.

The Walk to Emmaus and *Cursillo* movements are among the programs that have shown some promise in revitalizing the church (Crandall 65). The group reunion is a long-term continuation of the movement (Bryant 7). The group reunion is a small group with accountability for intentional discipleship. This group model is very similar to the model used by Wesley for the class meetings. This model can be an effective means of reversing the declining trend in the church.

The purpose of this study was to measure the effectiveness of the group reunion model on discipleship formation, as measured by the CSPP, in individuals who have participated in the Walk to Emmaus. The effectiveness was determined by comparing the behavior of both nonparticipants and participants over an extended time. This study,

therefore, helps to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus as a discipleship program.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The research questions all pertained to the behavior of the respondents. Since the discipleship level of any respondent was not observable, it was inferred from the impact on behavior as measured by the CSPP. The perceived behavior was determined by summarizing a series of behavioral practices influenced by the level of discipleship. The respondents were classified into groups based on demographic questions added to the qualitative instrument used.

#### **Research Question #1**

What is the correlation between individuals' measureable behavior, according to the CSPP, and their involvement in a reunion group following the Walk to Emmaus?

The composite results of the CSPP were correlated with the participation and duration of participation in the group reunion to determine the relationship between deeper discipleship and participation in the Walk to Emmaus group reunion. The response to this question provided the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the group reunion.

#### **Research Question #2**

What are the top three behaviors, according to the CSPP, of those participating in reunion groups compared to those who do not participate?

The individualized results of the CSPP for each of the ten evaluated spiritual disciplines were compared and correlated with participation in the group reunion to

determine a response to this question. The answer to this question provided data to evaluate the areas in which the group reunion model is most effective.

### **Research Question #3**

What influences, other than the reunion group, may have affected individuals' measureable behavior according to the CSPP?

The composite results of the CSPP were correlated to the participation in other areas of follow-up in the Walk to Emmaus program. The answers to this question helped to evaluate whether or not the group reunion model was strengthened by other factors.

### **Population and Participants**

The population studied in this project consists of the members of three Walk to Emmaus communities in Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, and one online community. The communities selected were the North Georgia Walk to Emmaus, Pathways East Walk to Emmaus, Atlanta South Walk to Emmaus, and the two Walk to Emmaus open Facebook groups. Community members are those individuals who have attended a Walk to Emmaus weekend retreat or a retreat sponsored by another fourth-day community recognized by the International Walk to Emmaus and who have voluntarily associated themselves with a community. The majority of community members reside within a prescribed geographic area, but local residence is not a requirement for community membership. Members of the Facebook groups may be located anywhere in the world. Some individuals travel to other areas for their weekend experience and choose to remain associated with the sponsoring community. Others may have relocated away from the area yet still remain associated with the community. The communities include those who

have participated in the youth programs associated with Walk to Emmaus or other fourth-day communities.

The communities include members of both genders. Couples are encouraged to participate together but not required to do so. A generally accepted observation is that more single women than single men participate, causing the population to be very slightly skewed to the female gender. The minimum age to participate in the youth programs is 15. Participant ages, therefore, may range from 15 to include some who may be over 90 years old. All races are represented although the Emmaus communities appear to be weighted toward more participation by whites than blacks. Racial identity was not included in the demographic information collected.

All of these communities use electronic means of communication to share news and information. Communication takes place by means of electronic mail or Small Message Service, also known as SMS or texting. Over time some of the contact information becomes obsolete through changes and failures of the members to update their changed information. The accessible population was, therefore, those members of the selected Walk to Emmaus communities for which valid contact information was available. Using the electronic communication systems already in place, I issued invitations to all members of the accessible population. The sample was self-selected as those who voluntarily chose to participate.

### **Design of the Study**

This project was a post-intervention study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus group reunion as a means of discipleship development. The ministry intervention was participation in a group reunion. This intervention has been voluntarily

applied based on the participants' choice to join a group. In order to isolate the effects of group reunion participation, the population studied included only individuals who have completed a Walk to Emmaus weekend program or an equivalent program sponsored by a recognized fourth-day community.

The sample was self-selected from the accessible population by voluntary completion of the research instruments. Responses to the demographic instrument were used to segment the sample into a control group and two additional groups to compare with the control group. The control consisted of respondents who had not participated in a group reunion or who had participated for three months or less. Three months was arbitrarily selected as the cutoff point because of the assumption that three months of participation was necessary for the participant to become acclimated to a group and to begin receiving any benefit of participation.

The other two groups consisted of respondents who actively participated in a group reunion segmented at the arbitrary criterion of five years of participation. This point was chosen on the assumption that after participation had become an integral part of respondents' spiritual lives, discipleship behavior would be significantly different.

Evaluation was accomplished by the comparison of discipleship characteristics between the control group and the other groups and by comparison of discipleship characteristics between the two participant groups. Effectiveness of the group reunion was reflected in the increase over time of behavior indicating Christian discipleship.

## **Instrumentation**

The research data was collected through the use of two instruments. The principal instrument was the standardized questionnaire CSPP (see Appendix D). Additionally, respondents completed a researcher-designed demographic addendum.

The demographic addendum helped exclude any respondents who have not participated in the Walk to Emmaus or an equivalent program. It also segmented the respondents into the three participant groups. The only questions in the demographic addendum were those related to participation or nonparticipation and the duration of participation in Walk to Emmaus follow-up programs (see Appendix E).

Thayer developed the CSPP at Andrews University based on the assumption that processes of learning and processes of spiritual growth are analogous (“Constructing a Spirituality Measure” 195). This instrument measures participation in certain spiritual disciplines and how participants use the four spiritual development modes. The level of participation in the spiritual disciplines was an indicator of Christian discipleship. Thayer suggests that this instrument be restricted to use among Christian evangelical individuals (204), which includes alumni of the Walk to Emmaus program. The CSPP has been used in various research studies that consider the spiritual development of individuals (e.g., Bennett; Breon; Hancock; Hoffman).

Thayer based the design of the CSPP on Kolb’s learning theory. Thayer used a five-stage process of testing the results of three separate samples of adults and college students to develop the final instrument. Internal consistency coefficients on the four scales, ranging from .84 to .92, indicated that the instrument was reliable. (“Constructing a Spirituality Measure” 199-200). Comparison of the CSPP test samples with scales



based on other instruments tested the validity of the CSPP. A group of theologians and religious educators reviewed the items and their classification (202).

Thayer designed the CSPP as a pencil and paper instrument to be scored by a scanning of the completed forms. Results were scored on a Likert scale of 0-6, corresponding to participation levels ranging from never to very frequently. For this study I modified the profile in manner of delivery and completion by conversion to an online instrument. I transferred the fifty questions to the online questionnaire, maintaining the exact wording and order as in the paper instrument, and re-presented the participation scale in the form of radio-button input fields. I made no alterations or modifications of the CSPP that could in anyway affect the reliability or validity of the instrument. Thayer, the copyright holder, granted permission to make these modifications (see Appendix F).

### **Intervening Variables**

Intervening variables such as age, gender, racial identity, and denomination were not considered. The only control exercised on age is the fact that only those individuals who have participated in the Walk to Emmaus weekend program were invited to participate in the study. Only adults and youth over 15 may participate in the Walk to Emmaus. Participants in the Walk to Emmaus also must self-identify themselves as Christian.

The methods of invitation and data collection presupposed that all participants had Internet access. Anyone without a valid e-mail address or Facebook account was excluded by not receiving an invitation. The Web-hosting company claims server uptime

of 99.5 percent and availability of 100 percent with shared servers but did not guarantee no downtime.

The anonymous nature of data collection also left open the possibility of untrue responses. The data analysis assumed accuracy of responses but accuracy was not guaranteed. The large sample size helped to mitigate the effects of any of these intervening variables.

### **Reliability and Validity**

In order to be a useful tool, an instrument must be reliable and valid. The measure of reliability indicates both internal consistency and stability over time. Validity indicates that the analysis of responses provides useful predictions when applied to the larger population. Thayer tested the CSPP for reliability and validity during its initial development.

Thayer used two separate testing processes to indicate reliability of the CSPP. Her first measure was internal consistency of the instrument. The overall test of fifty questions produced a coefficient alpha of .956, a very high value. When the individual spiritual disciplines were measured separately, the coefficient alphas of nine of the ten disciplines ranged from .811 to .882, indicating an acceptable level of reliability. The spiritual discipline of confession was represented by only two of the fifty questions and produced a coefficient alpha of .678. With such a high overall coefficient alpha, the score on this one subset does not affect the overall reliability. The test-retest for stability over time did not produce correlation scores as high as the internal consistency test. The overall score was .880. However, the specific questions relate to learned behavior, which

may well have changed between the initial test and the retest (*Assessing Participation* 128-30).

Testing the validity of the instrument was more subjective. The content-related test of validity with respect to the spiritual disciplines was conducted by a group of theologians and religious educators. Each of the fifty items in the instrument was correlated to each of the ten disciplines. For the final scoring guidelines, each item was assigned to the discipline with the highest degree of correlation (Thayer, *Assessing Participation* 133-35). The results of the test samples were also compared to results obtained by other existing instruments designed to measure spiritual development. The other instruments used were Moberg's Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire, Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Allport and Ross' Religious Orientation Scale, Batson and Ventis' Religious Life Inventory, and Paloutzian and Ellison's Spiritual Well-Being Scale ("Constructing a Spirituality Measure" 202).

### **Data Collection**

I collected the data using an online survey made up of the demographic instrument and the CSPP. The first step in the process was to write by e-mail to the Community Lay Director and Reunion Group Chair in North Georgia, Pathways East, and Atlanta South Walk to Emmaus Communities. This e-mail described the project, its purpose, and the confidentiality of responses. It then requested permission to send an invitation, a reminder, and a thank-you note to all of the valid e-mail addresses in the respective membership databases using their method of e-mail communication. I did not obtain copies of the e-mail addresses (see Appendix A).

I entered into a hosting agreement for Web server space under an existing personally owned domain name—the-harrington-house.com. I then created three Web pages on this site. The home page contained a description of the project, its purpose, and the use of data collected. It also contained the informed consent statement with two buttons labeled “No thank you” and “Yes, continue,” which contained hyperlinks. The “No thank you” button hyperlinked to a page that thanked the respondents for their consideration and instructed them to exit the site. The “Yes, continue” button linked to the actual survey questionnaire. The third page was a thank-you statement automatically hyperlinked from the completed online instrument (see Appendix C).

After creating a subdomain for this project called research.the-harrington-house.com, I created the online instrument using *LimeSurvey* software (Schmitz et al.). The online instrument was divided into two sections, corresponding to the demographic instrument and the CSPP. The URL for the online instrument was not a published address. The online instrument was only accessible by hyperlinking from the site home page after agreement with the informed consent statement.

To begin collecting data, I sent e-mail invitations through the e-mail communication systems of the local Walk to Emmaus communities, posted the invitation on the Facebook pages of open Walk to Emmaus groups, and opened the Web site for respondents to begin completing the instruments. The invitation also offered the opportunity to enter a drawing for a participation incentive (see Appendix B). Three weeks later I sent a second e-mail through the same system with a reminder of the invitation. I posted the same reminder on the Facebook pages of the Walk to Emmaus groups. After five weeks I closed the instrument and sent a third e-mail informing

recipients that the survey was closed and thanking them for their consideration. After closing the instrument, I downloaded response data from the Web site to my local computer for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed the collected data using statistical analysis software (*PSPP*). I calculated means and standard deviations using summed scores for each of the ten spiritual disciplines and for the total summed score for the CSPP. These scores were calculated based on all responses and on responses grouped into the three categories corresponding to the research questions.

Higher scores indicate a more active participation in the spiritual disciplines, which implies a greater level of Christian discipleship. The hypotheses were that respondents participating in group reunions will show a greater level of discipleship than nonparticipants and long-term participants will show an even greater level of discipleship. These hypotheses were tested against the null hypothesis by *t*-tests comparing the statistical significance of differences between nonparticipants and participants and between short-term participants and long-term participants.

### **Ethical Procedures**

In all communications, beginning with the request to utilize e-mail address databases, I assured everyone that participation in the research was both voluntary and anonymous. The same assurances were repeated in the invitations to participate and in the reminder e-mail. The home page of the research Web site contained a welcome message that again repeated that participation was voluntary and anonymous.

The final paragraph of the home page contained informed consent language including the same assurances. This paragraph also informed the respondents that by clicking on the continue button to access the instrument, the respondents were agreeing to the informed consent and waiver of liability statement. If the respondents failed to click on this button, they did not receive access to the instrument.

During the collection process, all data was maintained in a database on the Web host's server system. This database was backed up daily. After closing the instrument, data was downloaded to a local computer and converted to flat tables for analysis. After analysis the data was stored in a compressed and encrypted archive. At no time did the data include any information that was identifiable with a particular individual. Due to the anonymous nature of the data, confidentiality was never at risk. Summaries of the findings were offered to the Walk to Emmaus Community Lay Directors and will be provided to any interested parties who inquire.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### **Problem and Purpose**

Many churches today are declining. Attendance growth has slowed or in many cases reversed. Financial health in many congregations has eroded (Roozen, *American Congregations* 5). Studies by the Barna Group have found that many outside of the churches perceive Christians as hypocritical. This perception indicates that churches today are much like the religious establishment that Jesus so often criticized in the Gospels. Examples abound, indicating that discipleship no longer has the place of prominence that it once held (e.g., Glover and Lavy; Hunt; “Make Disciples”; Song). I believe that this lack of Christian discipleship in the church contributes to the general decline in membership and participation. Works by Hawkins and Parkinson and by Spangler and Tverberg indicate that lifestyle and behavior are more important marks of discipleship than simply faith and belief.

A large number of programs and models designed to enhance discipleship formation are available today. The Walk to Emmaus is one program that appears to be having some success in deepening the faith and discipleship of participants (Clark 100-01; Crandall 65; Estep 121; Williams 215-17). Numerous dissertations and articles studied the effects of participation in the Walk to Emmaus (e.g., Clark; Crandall; Davis; Estep; Grimes; Williams). None of these studies focused primarily on the follow-up portions of the program. This study was intended to bring focus on that portion of the Walk to Emmaus program. The purpose of this study was to measure the effectiveness of the group reunion model on discipleship formation, as measured by the CSPP, in

individuals who have participated in the Walk to Emmaus. This evaluation was based upon the behavior of participants, as indicated by the CSPP, and measured over time.

### **Participants**

Participants in the study were voluntarily self-selected. Invitations to participate were sent to members of the North Georgia, Atlanta South, and Pathways East Walk to Emmaus communities who had current contact information. Invitations were also posted on the Atlanta South and Pathways East Walk to Emmaus Facebook pages and the Facebook page of an open Walk to Emmaus group. The various lists contained a total of about twelve thousand addresses. A substantial overlap exists in the manner invitations were issued. I was granted use of the mailing lists but not access to the names and addresses. I had no way of knowing the actual extent of overlap but estimate that approximately seven thousand individuals received invitations. An incentive was included by offering respondents the opportunity to enter a random drawing for a \$50.00 gift card to be used at Amazon.

The survey questionnaire was accessed 257 times. Anonymous respondents completed 225 CSPP profiles. Due to the anonymous nature of the responses, no record was maintained to indicate whether or not the thirty-two accesses in excess of completed profiles represented individuals who declined to complete a profile or who simply deferred completion to a later time. The survey software did not allow for saving and returning to incomplete profiles. Demographic question D1 was answered “no” by four respondents, indicating that they had not attended a Walk to Emmaus or other fourth-day program. The CSPP profiles of these respondents were disregarded. Table 4.1 summarizes the responses to the survey.



**Table 4.1. Survey Responses**

Invitations Issued	Individuals Invited	Survey Accesses	Completed Profiles	Invalid Responses	Valid Responses
≈12,000	≈7,000	257	225	4	221

The CSPP profiles of the 221 valid respondents constitute the population that was analyzed for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the group reunion model. Answers to some of the demographic questions created smaller subpopulations for some computations. A complete tabulation of the responses to the demographic questions can be found in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2. Responses—Demographic Questions**

Question	n	No	Yes	Responses to Sub-Questions				
				<1 yr	1-5 yr	5-10 yr	10-15 yr	>15 yr
D1 Participate in WTE	225	4 0.18%	221 98.22%	14 6.33%	36 16.29%	45 20.36%	59 26.70%	67 30.32%
D2 Attend monthly gatherings	221			Never 29 13.12%	Rarely 59 26.70%	Occ. 73 33.03%	Often 31 14.03%	Regularly 29 13.12%
D3 Serve WTE team	221			39 17.65%		84 38.01%		98 44.34%
D4 Other WTE service	221	117 52.94%	104 47.06%					
D5 Participate in group reunion	221	110 49.77%	111 50.23%	<3mth. 5 4.50%		3 mth-5 yr. 39 35.14%		>5 yr. 67 60.36%
				Rarely 2 1.80%	Occ. 7 6.31%	Monthly 20 18.02%	Biweekly 30 27.03%	Weekly 52 46.85%
D6 Participate in other account. group	221	143 64.71%	78 35.29%	1 1.28%	9 11.54%	18 23.08%	12 15.38%	38 48.72%
D7 Participate in other group	221	86 38.91%	135 61.09%	0	4 2.96%	21 15.56%	9 6.67%	101 74.81%

**Notes:** Questions are abbreviated—see Appendix E for exact wording. Percentages for sub-questions are based on Yes answers only.

### Research Question #1

Research question #1 deals with the overall effectiveness of the group reunion model. The question was, “What is the correlation between individuals’ measureable behavior, according to the CSPP, and their involvement in a reunion group following the Walk to Emmaus?” Finding an answer to the question was the principal reason for basing this study on the CSPP.

Each valid CSPP profile included the answers to fifty questions about Christian behavior. Each question was quantitatively scored based on a six-point Likert scale. A mean for the answers to all fifty questions was calculated. Summed scores would have produced the same results, but the mean scores were used for consistency with calculations required to answer research question #2. The population of mean scores was divided based on the individual respondent’s participation in the group reunion. The *PSPP* determined the means of each group; a Levene’s Test discovered the equality of variance (see Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3. Overall Behavior by Participation in Group Reunion**

Group Reunion	N	$\bar{x}$	s	SE	Levene’s Test		
					F	p	Equal Variance Assumed
Yes	106	4.03	.36	.03	9.81	.00	No
No	115	3.77	.49	.05			

A simple observation of these means shows that the mean score of group reunion participants was higher than the mean score of nonparticipants ( $\bar{x}_{\text{yes}} > \bar{x}_{\text{no}}$ ). In order to obtain valid inferential statistics from this observed result, John W. Creswell

recommends use of *t*-test or analysis of variance to compare continuous dependent variables with a categorical independent variable (191). David S. Moore, George P. McCabe, and Bruce A. Craig prefer *t*-tests with a single independent variable and analysis of variance with more than one independent variable (637-38). Therefore, *t*-tests were performed on each pair of mean scores in order to accept or reject the null hypothesis that the true population means were equal ( $H_0: \mu_{\text{yes}} = \mu_{\text{no}}$ ) over the alternative hypothesis that the means are not equal ( $H_a: \mu_{\text{yes}} \neq \mu_{\text{no}}$ ).

The results of these *t*-tests indicated that  $H_0$  could be rejected with respect to the overall behavior. Therefore  $H_a$  was accepted, implying that the means of the two populations are, in fact, different. The computed lower bounds of the differences imply that mean scores of reunion group participants are higher than the mean scores of nonparticipants (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4. Comparisons—Overall Behavior by Reunion Participation**

<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two tailed)	M	SD	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
4.55	208.91	.00	.26	.06	.15	.37

Research question #1 can be answered by stating that with a confidence level of 95 percent the measured behavior of individuals who have attended the Walk to Emmaus or similar fourth-day program and who participate in a group reunion is higher than that of individuals who do not participate.

### **Research Question #2**

Research question #2 relates to the specific behavior in each of the ten spiritual disciplines that are measurable based on the CSPP. The question was, “What are the top three behaviors, according to the CSPP, of those participating in reunion groups compared to those who do not participate?” Finding the answer to this question required analyzing the individual spiritual disciplines.

When she designed the CSPP, Thayer related each question to one of the ten spiritual disciplines she chose to measure. Since the number of questions related to each discipline was not constant, means of the summed scores were calculated for each discipline in every individual profile. Statistical computations were based upon these mean scores rather than the answers to individual behavioral questions. The population of mean scores was divided based on the individual respondent’s participation in the group reunion. Using the statistical software to extend the testing required for research question #1, means of each group were determined and equality of variance tested by Levene’s Test. The three disciplines with the highest mean scores among participants in the group reunion were worship, prayer, and examen of conscience. However, these same disciplines also ranked high among nonparticipants (see Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5. Spiritual Disciplines by Participation in Group Reunion**

Discipline	Group Reunion	N	$\bar{x}$	s	SE	Levene's Test		
						F	p	Equal Variance Assumed
Prayer	Yes	106	4.47	.40	.04	16.11	.00	No
	No	115	4.29	.55	.05			
Repentance	Yes	106	4.26	.53	.05	5.31	.02	No
	No	115	4.05	.69	.06			
Worship	Yes	106	4.56	.50	.05	6.89	.01	No
	No	115	4.36	.60	.06			
Meditation	Yes	106	3.66	.65	.06	1.26	.26	Yes
	No	115	3.50	.60	.06			
Examen of conscience	Yes	106	4.42	.40	.04	11.53	.00	No
	No	115	4.23	.52	.05			
Bible study and reading	Yes	106	3.75	.55	.05	1.23	.27	Yes
	No	115	3.46	.64	.06			
Evangelism	Yes	106	3.60	.67	.07	11.87	.00	No
	No	115	3.11	.96	.09			
Fellowship	Yes	106	3.86	.48	.05	21.65	.00	No
	No	115	3.50	.87	.08			
Service	Yes	106	3.63	.60	.06	4.13	.04	No
	No	115	3.27	.80	.07			
Stewardship	Yes	106	3.75	.56	.05	2.25	.13	Yes
	No	115	3.52	.68	.06			

A simple observation of these means shows that in all cases, the mean score of group reunion participants was higher than the mean score of nonparticipants ( $\bar{x}_{yes} > \bar{x}_{no}$ ). Therefore, *t*-tests were performed on each pair of mean scores in order to accept or reject the null hypothesis that the true population means were equal ( $H_0: \mu_{yes} = \mu_{no}$ ) over the alternative hypothesis that the means are not equal ( $H_a: \mu_{yes} \neq \mu_{no}$ ).

The results of these  $t$ -tests indicated that  $H_0$  could be rejected with respect to the overall behavior and behavior in each spiritual discipline except the discipline of meditation. For these disciplines  $H_a$  was accepted, implying that the means of the two populations are, in fact, different. The computed lower bound of the difference implies that mean scores of reunion group participants are higher than the mean scores of nonparticipants. With respect to the discipline of meditation,  $H_0$  was accepted because the  $t$ -test results showed that at the 95 percent confidence level the possibility of equal means could not be ruled out.

Those spiritual disciplines with the highest observed mean differences were evangelism, fellowship, and service. These same spiritual disciplines also showed the highest standard error of the difference and, therefore, the highest lower bound of the difference (see Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6. Comparisons—Spiritual Disciplines by Reunion Participation**

Spiritual Discipline	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two tailed)	M	SD	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Prayer	2.71	208.65	.01	.17	.06	.05	.30
Repentance	2.63	212.77	.01	.22	.08	.05	.38
Worship	2.74	217.06	.01	.20	.07	.06	.35
Meditation	1.97	219.00	.05	.16	.08	.00	.33
Examen of conscience	2.91	212.51	.00	.18	.06	.06	.31
Bible reading and study	3.57	219.00	.00	.29	.08	.13	.45
Evangelism	4.40	204.59	.00	.49	.11	.27	.70
Fellowship	3.84	180.38	.00	.36	.09	.18	.55
Service	3.83	211.07	.00	.36	.09	.18	.55
Stewardship	2.78	219.00	.01	.23	.08	.07	.40

With a confidence level of 95 percent, the measured behavior in each of the spiritual disciplines, other than the discipline of meditation, of individuals who have attended the Walk to Emmaus or similar fourth-day program and participate in a group reunion is higher than that of individuals who do not participate. With respect to the spiritual discipline of meditation, this statement cannot be made. With respect to this one discipline, the test results do not imply a statistically significant difference at a confidence level of 95 percent.

Research question #2 can be answered by stating that the spiritual disciplines of evangelism, fellowship, and service were the top three ranking disciplines in comparing the behavior of individuals participating in the group reunion with the behavior of individuals not participating.

### **Research Question #3**

Research Question #3 begins to address the subject of causation. The question was, “What influences, other than the reunion group, may have affected individuals’ measureable behavior according to the CSPP?” An infinite number of factors can affect the behavior of individuals. This study was designed to evaluate a specific portion of the follow-up phase of the Walk to Emmaus program. Only factors related either to the Walk to Emmaus program or small group participation were considered with respect to this question.

To find the answer to this question, additional questions were included in the demographic portion of the survey. Data was gathered concerning

- attendance at Emmaus community gatherings,
- service on Emmaus teams (conference room and support),
- other service to the Emmaus community,
- participation in accountability groups not based on the Emmaus model, and
- participation in other small groups.

This demographic data was used to determine any correlation with the measured behavior based on the CSPP. Questions related to community gatherings and team service were scored on Likert scales of 0-5 and 0-2 respectively. In order to perform independent sample *t*-tests, these answers were recoded into yes/no answers. For purposes of this recoding, community gathering attendance of never, rarely, and occasionally were considered to be answers of no and attendance of often and regularly were considered to be yes. Emmaus team service answers of never and occasionally were recoded as no and answers of regularly were recoded as yes.



Using testing procedures similar to those described for research question #1, the composite means of each CSPP profile were divided according to the answers to these demographic questions. The results of the *t*-tests were interesting. For each of the demographic factors considered, except participation in an accountability group not based on the Emmaus model,  $H_0$  was rejected with a 95 percent confidence level.  $H_0$  was not able to be rejected with respect to the accountability groups other than Emmaus group reunions at this confidence level. The demographic factor of participation in a small group not based on accountability produced both the highest difference of means and the highest lower bound of the difference. This result implies that participants in these small groups can be expected to have a higher mean score relating to Christian behavior than participants in the group reunion (see Table 4.7).

**Table 4.7. Comparisons—Spiritual Disciplines by All Demographic Factors**

Demographic Factor	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two tailed)	M	SD	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Group reunion	4.55	208.91	.00	.26	.06	.15	.37
Gathering attendance	3.17	219.00	.00	.21	.06	.09	.33
Team service	2.77	219.00	.01	.17	.06	.05	.28
Community Service	3.81	219.00	.00	.22	.06	.11	.34
Accountability group	1.48	190.61	.14	.09	.06	-.03	.20
Other small group	5.50	219.00	.00	.32	.06	.20	.44

Research question #3 can be answered by stating that the increase in Christian behavior is also affected by factors such as attendance at Emmaus community gatherings,

serving on Emmaus teams, serving the Emmaus community, and small group participation. The effect of participation in other types of accountability groups on the difference in Christian behavior is not statistically significant. Factors not related to the Walk to Emmaus program or small group participation were not considered. These factors would include such items as age, gender, denominational background, and ethnic group.

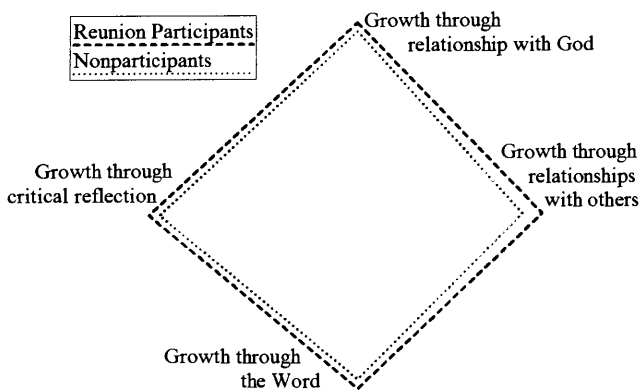
### **Other Findings**

The data gathered and analyzed produced two other findings. These related to the effect of long-term participation in the group reunion and the use of learning modes.

My original hypothesis concerning length of participation would show a significant relationship to more Christian behavior. The data did not support such a hypothesis. A regression analysis comparing the mean behavioral scores to length of participation in the group reunion produced a regression coefficient of .27 and  $r^2$  of .07. This result indicates that only 7 percent of the change in behavior can be related to length of participation in the group reunion.

The other finding relates to the learning modes used by individuals. Thayer built into the CSPP a summation of answer responses to relate to learning modes based on Kolb's theory of experiential learning. This learning theory classifies the learning experience into four modes placed on opposite ends of two axes. The grasping axis shows learning by concrete experience and abstract conceptualization. The transforming axis includes learning by reflective observation and active experimentation ("Constructing a Spirituality Measure" 196). In the instructions for administering the CSPP, Thayer relates the four modes to spiritual formation. This relationship is growth through relationship

with God as concrete experience, growth through the Word as abstract conceptualization, growth through relationships with others as active experimentation, and growth through critical reflection as reflective observation. Plotting the mean scores obtained by grouping the individual scores according to Thayer's assignment to each mode produces a chart that shows both the extent each learning mode is being used and the balance between the modes. A perfect balance will produce a square box on the chart. These scores were computed for the two subpopulations of group reunion participants and nonparticipants, (see Figure 4.1). The chart produces two roughly square boxes, skewed slightly toward growth through relationship with God on the grasping or vertical axis and growth through critical reflection on the transforming or horizontal axis. The box created by nonparticipant scores fits entirely within the box created by participant scores. The boxes are approximately the same shape, opening slightly at the point of growth through relationships with others.



**Figure 4.1. Learning modes by group reunion participation.**

After observing that the box of nonparticipant mean scores fit entirely within the box of participant mean scores, I performed the same *t*-test on the differences in these scores that I had performed on the difference between spiritual discipline mean scores. This test indicates that with a confidence level of 95 percent the mean extent of learning mode use by group reunion participants is greater than the mean extent of learning mode use by nonparticipants with respect to all four modes of learning (see Table 4.8).

**Table 4.8. Comparisons—Learning Modes by Reunion Participation**

Growth through Learning Mode	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (two tailed)	Mean Diff.	SE Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Relationship with God	3.70	208.58	.00	.21	.06	.10	.33
the Word	3.10	219.00	.00	.21	.07	.08	.34
Critical reflection	3.30	219.00	.00	.22	.07	.09	.34
Relationships with others	4.50	198.58	.00	.39	.09	.22	.57

I reviewed the frequency distributions of the responses to individual questions in the CSPP discovered some interesting differences. I did not perform sufficient tests on the individual responses to draw statistically significant conclusions. However, I found that some differences were significant enough to mention. These differences appear to indicate extremely high activity by participants in the group reunion or extremely low activity by nonparticipants. Responses to selected individual questions are found in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9. Responses—Selected Questions in the CSPP**

Question	Participants		Nonparticipants	
	n	%	n	%
1. When I pray, I am confident that God will answer my prayer. Very frequently	66	59.46	51	46.36
8. When I confess and repent of my sins, I experience the assurance of being forgiven by God. Frequently and Very frequently	100	90.09	82	74.55
11. My worship of God is a response to what God has done for me. Very frequently	69	62.16	57	51.82
13. My participation in the Lord's Supper draws me into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. Very frequently	80	72.07	67	60.91
19. When I examine my life, I recognize my great need for God's redemptive work for me. Very frequently	72	64.86	54	49.09
24. Even though evil seems to be so powerful and persuasive, I feel confident that God will ultimately provide justice. Very frequently	86	77.48	63	57.27
25. Even when a situation seems unbearably difficult or painful, I have confidence that through his providence, God can bring something good out of it. Very frequently	78	70.27	58	52.73
27. I read or study the Bible to learn the will of God. Very frequently	53	47.75	36	32.73
28. When I read or study the Bible, I attempt to learn the enduring principles being taught by the specific passage. Very frequently	44	39.64	30	27.27
32. I read devotional articles and/or books. Very frequently	51	45.95	32	29.09
33. I read or study the Bible: About 1-2 hours a month.	13	11.71	28	25.45
37. I pray for people and/or organizations that are working for the salvation of the unsaved. Very frequently	23	20.72	9	8.18
43. I serve in a church ministry or community agency to help people in need. Never and Very rarely	0	0.00	14	12.73
45. I depend on God to help me accomplish the work he calls me to do. Very frequently	70	63.06	53	48.18

### Summary of Major Findings

The statistical analysis of the data provided insights into the effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus group reunion model as a means of discipleship formation. Analysis of the CSPP profiles grouped according to various demographic categories indicates that participants in the group reunion produce higher mean scores in all of the spiritual disciplines examined but one:

1. The analysis indicates with a confidence level of 95 percent that the mean overall scores on the CSPP are higher for reunion participants than for nonparticipants ( $t[208.91]=4.55$ ;  $p<.005$ ).

2. The analysis indicates with a confidence level of 95 percent that the three spiritual disciplines showing the greatest differences are evangelism ( $t[204.59]=4.40$ ;  $p<.005$ ), fellowship ( $t[180.38]=3.84$ ;  $p<.005$ ), and service ( $t[211.07]=3.83$ ;  $p<.005$ ).

3. The analysis indicates no statistical correlation between mean scores on the CSPP items related to the spiritual discipline of meditation. The  $t$ -test scores do not reject the  $H_0$ , indicating that the population means may be equal ( $t[219]=1.97$ ;  $p=.05$ ).

4. The analysis indicates very little correlation between higher mean scores on the CSPP and length of participation in the group reunion ( $R=.27$ ;  $r^2=.07$ ).

5. The analysis indicates with a confidence level of 95 percent that participants in the group reunion utilize all four of Kolb's learning modes to a greater extent than do nonparticipants—CE ( $t[208.58]=3.70$ ;  $p<.005$ ), AC ( $t[219]=3.10$ ;  $p<.005$ ), AE ( $t[198.58]=4.50$ ;  $p<.005$ ), and RO ( $t[219]=3.30$ ;  $p<.005$ ).

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Major Findings

Lovett H. Weems reports that over most mainline denominations church attendance has steadily declined since 2001 (10). Roozen extends the study into more detail and shows a sharp decline in spiritual vitality and spiritual practices (*Decade* 14). For the church to remain an influential force in society, these trends must be reversed.

A recent study by the Barna Group of the perceptions of teens and young adults—ages 16-29—shows that many perceive Christianity as being “hypocritical, judgmental, and too political.” The young adults also made comments like, “Christianity today no longer looks like Jesus.” Because these perceptions are widespread and common, they must have some truth behind them. Apparently Christianity often does not look like Jesus and may be hypocritical and judgmental. The church today is made up in part by nominal Christians who are not disciples of Jesus Christ.

Hawkins and Parkinson studied the surprising perception that the Willow Creek church was becoming stagnant. They determined among other things that “[t]he health of your church is not just about the numbers. It’s about the movement of people toward Christ, toward deep love for God and genuine love for others” (8). In other words the health of the church depends on the discipleship of the members.

Spangler and Tverberg wrote about how the Jewishness of Jesus influenced the gospel. One theme in their work dealt with discipleship. They found that many Westerners believed that making disciples meant teaching about beliefs and educating about doctrine. They found that the Eastern form of discipleship was more in line with

the gospels. This view of discipleship involved living intimately with the master and learning to live the lifestyle and behavior exhibited by the master (64).

Many programs are designed to enhance discipleship formation. I examined several in Chapter 2. One program that appears to show promise of being effective is the Walk to Emmaus (Clark 100-01; Crandall 65; Estep 121; Williams 215-17). My personal experience with the Walk to Emmaus has indicated to me that it can be very effective in forming disciples. My perception of the Walk to Emmaus is that the weekend retreat provides much knowledge and can be effective and change hearts—the Western form of making disciples. When the follow-up portion of the program is added, the Walk to Emmaus appears to change lives and transform behavior—the Eastern form of making disciples. For this reason I have concentrated on examining the follow-up program and specifically on the group reunion.

### **Correlation between Group Reunion Participation and Discipleship**

My experience of over seventeen years of participation in the Fellow Reunion Group, a part of the North Georgia Walk to Emmaus community, has influenced my life and behavior. The intimacy of a prolonged association with other Christian men has enabled each of us to grow in discipleship. Two of our members have made the journey from pew to pulpit as part of the transformation. This experience of belonging led me to believe that the statistics would support this belief of a positive correlation between the group reunion and discipleship formation.

The statistical analysis of the CSPP profiles did support this positive correlation. The mean scores of participants were compared to the mean scores of nonparticipants. A *t*-test with a confidence level of 95 percent supported the rejection of the null hypothesis



( $H_0: \mu_{\text{yes}} = \mu_{\text{no}}$ ;  $t[208.91] = 4.55$ ;  $p < .005$ ). The results and the lower bound of difference calculated by the test indicated that not only is  $\mu_{\text{yes}} \neq \mu_{\text{no}}$ , but that  $\mu_{\text{yes}} > \mu_{\text{no}}$ .

The group reunion model is designed to follow the general format of the Methodist class meeting. Scott and Scott have assembled a collection of writings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries describing the lives of class leaders and members (*Restoring the Wesleyan Class-Meeting*). All of the men and women they described would certainly be classified as strong disciples of Jesus Christ. Most attributed the transformation of their lives to the class meetings.

One of the works Scott and Scott included in their collection was a late nineteenth century description of the class meeting by Murray. Murray described the class meeting as an “essential part of Methodism” (67) and as a “training ground for spiritual work” (70). He concludes by saying, “[Methodism’s] future continued success depends on the continued supply of men and women of like character and quality” (75). The church must continue to develop true discipleship in its members in order to regain the success that it once enjoyed.

The Walk to Emmaus literature states that the group reunion is intended not only to hold members accountable to one another but also to encourage the practice of spiritual disciplines (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 118). This particular practice is likely one of the factors that makes the group reunion transformative. Transformation is essential for the formation of disciples.

In the gospels, the group of Jesus’ disciples followed him around the countryside as Jesus preached, taught, and performed miracles. Jesus taught them by example. He taught values such as association with those whom others shunned (Matt. 9:9-13), proper

prayer (Luke 11:1-4), and gender equality (Luke 10:41-42). Most importantly, he taught them how to serve others with love (John 13:3-15, 34-35). Other biblical examples of discipleship learned by constant association include that of Moses and Joshua and that of Elijah and Elisha.

The Walk to Emmaus literature does not restrict use of this model to Emmaus graduates (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 115; Bryant 27). Small groups based on the model of the Walk to Emmaus group reunion could be established in local churches. Utilization of these small groups could enhance the discipleship formation in the local churches. Discipleship requires both belief and action (Harnish and LaRosa, *Disciple's Path: Daily Workbook* 16). The constant company, accountability, and role modeling present in the group can enhance both aspects of discipleship formation.

### **Greatest Correlation with Evangelism, Service, and Fellowship**

My experience with participation in a group reunion led me to expect that the discipline of fellowship would certainly be strongly represented in the study. The statistics supported this expectation ( $t[180.38]=3.84; p<.005$ ). The intimate relationships that form with the group lead to an increase in the practice of fellowship.

One of the recommended activities in the group reunion meeting is planning and executing acts of service (Bryant and Gilmore, *Upper Room Handbook* 119). The discipline of service was also among the three disciplines with the greatest mean differences ( $t[211.07]=3.83; p<.005$ ). The group to which I belong has performed several acts of service over the years. Beneficiaries of these acts have included other group members, the Walk to Emmaus community, new pilgrims on weekend retreats, and the staff of the restaurant that hosts our weekly meetings.

Evangelism is not specifically addressed in the group reunion literature. However, as discipleship develops, the disciple wants to tell others about the changes in his or her life. I was a little surprised that evangelism showed the highest mean difference ( $t[204.59]=4.40; p<.005$ ), but was not surprised that it was among the highest differences.

Worship, prayer, and examen of conscience showed the highest mean scores among the group reunion participants but also ranked very high among nonparticipants. This ranking indicates that the strength in these disciplines is not specific to the group reunion. Each of these disciplines showed positive correlation in line with the overall inference of increased discipleship.

Literature concerning the Methodist class meeting indicates that while the classes were originally formed to collect dues to pay the debt on meeting houses, they quickly became centers of fellowship and care (Heitzenrater 118). Scott and Scott describe how the rich helped the poor and the classes worked together to minister to the poor and needy (*Restoring the Wesleyan Class Meeting* 7-11).

Jesus and his disciples lived together, travelled together, and ate together. They shared a fellowship that was quite intimate. Jesus also spoke about fellowship on a different level. He told stories about banquets, weddings, and parties. He ate with sinners and associated with prostitutes and tax collectors. Fellowship was important in the gospel.

Matthaei proposes an ecology of faith formation that would include preaching, teaching, instruction, witness, pastoral care, opportunity for service, and fellowship (33-34). A small group based on the group reunion model could provide at least witness,

opportunity for service, and fellowship. The group reunion model can form an essential part of the proposed ecology of faith formation.

### **No Correlation with Meditation**

Of all the spiritual disciplines measured by the CSPP, only meditation did not show a statistically valid correlation. Meditation is a solitary discipline. The discipline involves the disciple alone with God or with God's Word. Foster devotes an entire chapter to meditation (15-32). Jesus often went away alone to spend time with God. Meditation is not conducive to development in a group setting. The results of the testing indicated no statistically significant difference in the population means among participants and nonparticipants.

### **Little Correlation with Length of Participation**

A regression analysis of comparing the strength of mean scores of discipleship with the length of time participants had belonged to a group reunion showed  $r^2$  of only .07, indicating that only approximately 7 percent of the difference in mean scores was attributable to length of participation. I had expected a much greater correlation. Possibly the lack of correlation was caused by the skewness of the sample. Only 4.5 percent of participants had participated for less than three months, while over 60 percent had been members for over five years.

### **Utilization of Learning Modes**

Utilization of learning modes was a bonus statistic provided by the study. I had not planned to use this statistic to evaluate the effectiveness of the group reunion model as a means of discipleship formation. The design of the CSPP provides the data relative to learning modes (Thayer, "Constructing a Spirituality Measure" 196). Computing the

scores and plotting the results was a very easy exercise. Interestingly the results showed a very balanced utilization for both participants and non-participants. The resulting graphs (see Figure 4.1, p. 93) were almost square with a very slight skewing toward the more finite mode. These modes were growth through relationship with God on the grasping axis and growth through relationships with others on the transforming axis. The resulting graph also showed that the plot of nonparticipant scores fit entirely within the plot of participant scores. This observation was supported by *t*-tests comparing the mean scores. This result infers that as group reunion participants grow in discipleship, they also more effectively utilize the modes of learning.

### **Implications of the Findings**

The analysis of data for this research project indicates a definite strengthening of discipleship among individuals who have attended the Walk to Emmaus when they continue to participate in the group reunion. The Walk to Emmaus retreat is a once-in-a-lifetime event (Bryant and Gilmore, *Walk to Emmaus Directors' Manual* 98). Participation in the follow-up phases of the program is necessary to keep the fourth-day vibrant. This study shows that the group reunion is effective in that respect.

This study also implies that a program designed based on the group reunion model could be effective in populations that have not attended a Walk to Emmaus. Some other method of teaching and instruction would need to be in place alongside this program because these factors are also necessary for the formation of disciples (Matthaei 33).

This study may also be used to strengthen the Walk to Emmaus communities. I have observed that in the communities to which I belong, participation in all phases of the

program is in decline. These communities have experienced more difficulty in filling positions on weekend teams and promoting sponsorship of new pilgrims. This study implies that a concerted effort to involve new community members in group reunions might be expected to alleviate some of this decline.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was conducted at a point in time with volunteer participants. The sample size was somewhat smaller than anticipated but did provide for statistical validity at a 95 percent confidence level for most of the tests conducted. An incentive was offered with the invitation to participate, but surprisingly only 69 percent of respondents provided contact information required to qualify for the incentive. A larger sample might have mitigated the effect of some skewness in responses to a few of the demographic questions.

Research question #3 asked what other factors might have affected the increased discipleship behavior measured in the CSPP profiles. The results of testing showed that small group participation, gathering attendance, service to the Walk to Emmaus community, and service on weekend teams all showed a positive correlation with discipleship behavior. Small group participation showed a correlation that was stronger than that of the group reunion participation. The other factors showed correlation that was weaker than the correlation of the group reunion participation.

Looking at these factors brings into play the question of causation. Some of these factors could be more closely related to the behavioral characteristics measured by the CSPP than to the categorical factor under study. Service to the community could result in

stronger discipleship, but it could also be the result of deeper discipleship. This study made no effort to determine causation for any of the behaviors measured by the CSPP.

Other factors that might affect discipleship formation and the behavior of individuals were not considered. These factors would include age, gender, ethnicity, church membership, and denominational background. Many other factors can also affect the behavior of individuals.

### **Unexpected Observations**

One surprise was the sample size. I expected a larger response because a very substantial portion of the invitations were directed to Walk to Emmaus graduates to whom I was known. During the past twenty years, I have served three separate terms on the governing board of the North Georgia Walk to Emmaus community and participated as a team member on almost thirty weekends. The North Georgia e-mail list alone contained over five thousand individual addresses. The Atlanta South list was much smaller, closer to one thousand addresses. I am currently serving on the governing board of that community.

The literature indicated that voluntary responses to open invitations to participate in a survey can vary widely. Ekman et al. sent 96,000 invitations; almost half responded (103). Fikar and Keith posted a general invitation on the Internet and received only 152 responses (53).

I was very surprised to find that the data did not support a strong correlation between length of participation and depth of Christian behavior. My personal experience and observation cause me to believe that such a correlation does, in fact, exist. I perceive two problems with the data as gathered for this correlation. First, I included only three

categories of participation length—less than three months, three months but less than five years, and five years or more. Second, the sample was skewed toward longer term participation—only 4.5 percent in the shortest category and over 60 percent in the longest category. If I conducted this test again, I believe allowing the respondent to enter a length of participation in years rather than to select a range would provide a better sample. The regression computation in this study was made with a dependent variable with continuous values on a scale of 0-5 and an independent variable with discrete scores of 0, 1, or 2. Allowing the independent variable to be scored on a continuous open-ended scale would provide a much more accurate regression.

One other unexpected observation was the geographic spread of respondents. The demographic questions did not solicit any data on geographic location or specific Walk to Emmaus community membership. Several respondents chose to make comments voluntarily on the invitation posted to the open Facebook group. Many of the comments included geographic locations such as Texas, Ohio, North Carolina, United Kingdom, and Australia. Such diversity helped to enrich this study.

### **Recommendations**

I believe that the findings of this project are strong enough that copies should be distributed to the governing boards of the Walk to Emmaus communities that were directly involved in the study. Some of the statistics from the study might be incorporated in presentations to new community members, encouraging them to join a group reunion. It should also be made available to any other Walk to Emmaus community governing board.



I believe that after seeing the results of this study, local Walk to Emmaus communities should place even more emphasis on group reunion participation. If such emphasis increases participation, the local communities can become more vital and produce more true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Summaries of the findings of this study should be made available to local churches. Local churches should be encouraged to incorporate the group reunion model into small group ministries. Basing the small groups on this model will enhance the discipleship formation value of the small group ministry.

A repetition of this study with more refined demographic questions might be expected to produce more useful results. Many of the more generalized factors that influence behavior should be collected and correlated with the behavioral scores. A more open scale of length of participation would produce a more valid regression in order to correlate the length of participation with deeper discipleship behavior. I would expect that length of participation and deeper discipleship are much more strongly correlated than this study indicated.

This study only very lightly touched on the concept of causation. Causation is difficult to explain. Statistical analysis might show that changes in variable  $x$  and changes in variable  $y$  are strongly related. This relationship does not show that changes in variable  $x$  actually cause changes in variable  $y$  (Moore, McCabe, and Craig 134). A very closely designed study with tight controls on all variables, including lurking variables, is required to attempt to show causation.

I would recommend that a longitudinal study be made of the association between group reunion participation and deeper discipleship. Such a study extended over a long

period of time using the same sample over time could be very valuable in explaining this association. I would suggest that a large sample of new community members be selected and asked to complete the CSPP and appropriate demographic questions immediately upon completion of their pilgrim weekend. The same individuals should be surveyed again at discrete intervals over several years. Sample size should be large enough to allow for attrition. Data for year zero should be eliminated with respect to an individual who cannot be located in year five. In this longitudinal study, changes in the independent variable can be related to changes in dependent variables. The new study would provide much more valuable information than the current study where only categories of independent variables are related to values of dependent variables.

Responses to several individual questions in the CSPP showed differences that appeared to be greater than the mean differences that were used for the statistical computations in this study. Particular attention to these behaviors in the longitudinal study might provide some insight into the development of deeper discipleship and possibly into causation.

### **Postscript**

I made my pilgrim Walk to Emmaus almost twenty two years ago. At that time the pastor serving the local church where I was a member knew very little about the Walk to Emmaus. He was willing to approve my application if I felt that I really wanted to attend the weekend. My life has changed greatly since that time. Looking back to 1991, I would classify myself in those days as a nominal Christian. Attending the Walk to Emmaus gave me the impetus to begin changing my life and moving toward becoming a true disciple.

Even more important in my discipleship formation experience is my participation in the Fellow Reunion Group for almost eighteen years. This group of Christian men has lifted me up when I was low. They led me through discerning my call to ministry. They supported me spiritually when I left my job to attend seminary full-time. The Sunday that I preached my first sermon to a real world congregation, these men and their spouses were present at that little country church. They were present at my ordination.

This experience was not all about my life. In recent years we have led another member through the discernment of call. We offered emotional support for him when he was called to a local church and installed as a licensed pastor. Other members have fought cancer or experienced marital discord. The group has provided support for them as well.

Today many pastors in the United Methodist Church still know little about the Walk to Emmaus. Generally pastors in other denominations know even less. Some are even suspicious of the Walk to Emmaus. I can understand because I have seen the movement abused to the extent of splitting congregations. For every abuser, I see many who have become disciples. I encourage all pastors to become more familiar with the Walk to Emmaus. I encourage them to use it within their congregations to build stronger and better churches that make stronger and better disciples.

**APPENDIX A**  
**REQUEST FOR DATABASE ACCESS**

From: Joe Harrington <joe@the-harrington-house.com>

To: Doug Harper <doug4hoosiers@gmail.com>; Carol Berry <berryweb@bellsouth.net>

Sent: Wed, July 25, 2012 8:49:38 PM

Subject: Doctoral dissertation and Emmaus

Doug and Carol,

I am currently working on my ministry project/dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Ministry at Asbury Theological Seminary. The title of my dissertation is Recovering Discipleship: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus Group Reunion Model. This research will be helpful in evaluating and promoting participation in the group reunion. As part of my research, I intend to solicit voluntary responses to a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire will be in two parts. The first part will simply ask a few questions about the Emmaus experience and participation in a reunion group. The second part consists of qualitative questions concerning discipleship behavior. NO IDENTIFYING INFORMATION WILL BE COLLECTED.

I anticipate being prepared to conduct the survey in September or October of this year. I would like to request permission to issue invitations to complete the survey voluntarily through the Atlanta South Walk to Emmaus membership database. The survey itself would be on a controlled Web site outside of the Emmaus systems. My request would be for possibly three e-mails, one describing the project in broad terms and providing a link to the Web site, a second e-mail approximately two weeks later reminding everyone

about the survey, and finally another e-mail issuing a general thank-you for the community participation.

I thank you for your consideration of this request. I will gladly provide the Board of Servants of the Atlanta South Emmaus Community a summary of my findings and evaluations.

De Colores,

Joe Harrington

Table of Matthew NGMW-23

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE**

De colores, my name is Joe Harrington. I attended North Georgia Men's Walk to Emmaus 23 in 1991 and have served in the North Georgia, Athens Area, and Atlanta South communities. I am currently serving as Community Spiritual Director of Atlanta South Emmaus and have served as Community Spiritual Director of North Georgia Emmaus. I am senior pastor of the North Fayette United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, Georgia.

I am pursuing the Doctor of Ministry degree at Asbury Theological Seminary. A part of the requirements for that degree is a field project of ministry significance. I have chosen to study the effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus follow-up programs. As fellow members of the greater Emmaus community, I am asking for your assistance in this study. The only requirement is that you complete an online survey instrument honestly and accurately.

In appreciation of your participation, you will be offered the opportunity to enter a drawing for a \$50.00 gift card from amazon.com. Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please click the following link to begin the survey. <<http://research.the-harrington-house.com>>

## APPENDIX C

## WEB PAGES

## Young Joe Harrington III

## Dissertation Research

Thank you in advance for assisting in my dissertation research project.

The title of my research project is *Recovering Discipleship: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Walk to Emmaus Group Reunion Model*. The purpose of this research is to determine the extent, if any, that participation in a group reunion affects the discipleship of the participant. This is inferred by the participation in the spiritual disciplines. The results of this research will benefit local churches and fourth-day communities by providing guidance to increase the discipleship of members. I am requesting your assistance in this project by completing a questionnaire concerning your participation in several Christian practices.

I am assuming that you have attended a Walk to Emmaus weekend or a similar fourth-day weekend such as Cursillo, Tres Dias, or any such weekend program. Participation in a group reunion is not required. In fact for this research to be valid it is desirable to have a significant number of respondents who do not belong to a group reunion. You will be asked a few demographic questions to determine the degree of this participation. No identifying information will be collected by this questionnaire. Your participation is **voluntary** and completely **anonymous**. If you have any questions about this research project before or after participating you may contact me directly by e-mail at this address: [joe.harrington@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:joe.harrington@asburyseminary.edu).

I realize that your faith and spiritual practices are very personal. Again I want to assure you that your participation is both **voluntary** and **anonymous**. All responses to the questionnaire are confidential. No question will ask for your name, e-mail address, phone number, church membership or any other personal information. If you e-mail me directly with questions, I will have whatever personal information that is included in your e-mail, but will have no way to link that to your responses to any questions. By clicking the button "Yes, continue" below you agree to participate voluntarily without any coercion and release Young Joe Harrington III and Asbury Theological Seminary from all liability. You may click the "No thank you" button to leave this site without participating in this project.



## Young Joe Harrington III

## Dissertation Research

Thank you for your consideration of my research. I understand your reluctance to participate.

You may close this page now.

## Young Joe Harrington III

## Dissertation Research

Thank you for your participation in my research project. Your help is greatly appreciated and will contribute to the knowledge of spiritual formation.

You may close this page now.

## APPENDIX D

### CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL PARTICIPATION PROFILE (CSPP)

1. When I pray, I am confident that God will answer my prayer.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
  
2. When I pray, I sense that God is infinite and holy.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
  
3. In my prayers, I reveal to God my innermost needs and thoughts.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
  
4. In my prayers I actively seek to discover the will of God.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
  
5. In my prayers, I thank God for the salvation he has provided for me in Jesus Christ.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
  
6. When experiences in my life lead me to despair or depression, I turn to God in prayer for deliverance.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
  
7. Repentance is a part of my private prayers to God.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
  
8. When I confess and repent of my sins, I experience the assurance of being forgiven by God.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
  
9. I experience genuine sorrow for my sins.
  - ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently





21. When I read or hear reports of terrible crimes that have been committed against people, I grieve over the evil in the world.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
22. When I hear about famines, floods, earthquakes and other disasters, I want to help the victims in some way.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
23. When I see or learn about the immoral ways so many people live, I long for God's will to be done.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
24. Even though evil seems to be so powerful and so pervasive, I feel confident that God will ultimately provide justice.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
25. Even when a situation seems unbearably difficult or painful, I have confidence that through his providence, God can bring something good out of it.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
26. I use biblically based principles to govern ethical decisions.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
27. I read or study the Bible to learn the will of God.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
28. When I read or study the Bible, I attempt to learn the enduring principles being taught by the specific passage I am considering.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
29. I study the Bible to understand the doctrines of my church.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
30. As part of my study of the Bible, I consider how the church has dealt with issues throughout its history.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently

31. When I read or study the Bible, I change my beliefs and/or behavior to accommodate new information or understanding.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently
32. I read devotional articles and/or books.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently
33. I read or study the Bible:
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Ten hours or less a year    ☐ About 1 to 2 hours a month
  - ☐ About 1 hour a week    ☐ About 15 to 30 minutes a day    ☐ More than 30 minutes a day
34. I work with other Christian believers for the purpose of introducing unchurched people to Jesus Christ.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently
35. Based on my abilities and spiritual gifts, I assist in some way in the teaching ministry of my church.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently
36. I invite unchurched people to attend church or small-group meetings with me.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently
37. I pray for people and/or organizations that are working for the salvation of the unsaved.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently
38. When someone in my church is sick or experiencing some other problem and needs me, I help them.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently
39. I meet with a small group of Christian friends for prayer, Bible study, or ministry.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently
40. I serve as a peacemaker among my friends and/or among members in my church.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely    ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Very Frequently

41. Within my local church, I associate personally even with those with whom I have no common social or intellectual interests.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
42. I see evidence that my participation in my church helps to encourage or build up the whole congregation.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
43. I serve in a church ministry or community agency to help people in need.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
44. When a friend, believer, or neighbor suffers pain, hardship, or loss, I join them with my presence and suffer with them.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
45. I depend on God to help me accomplish the work he calls me to do.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
46. I use my home (apartment, dorm room) to provide hospitality to strangers or to those in need.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
47. My actions in nature are guided by what is best for the environment.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
48. I give financially to support the work of the church.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
49. I do without things that I want in order to give sacrificially to the work of God.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently
50. I choose what to eat and drink and how to live my life based on the concept that caring for my health is being a good steward of God's blessing of life.
- ☐ Never                      ☐ Very Rarely      ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Occasionally      ☐ Frequently      ☐ Very Frequently

## APPENDIX E

### DEMOGRAPHIC INSTRUMENT

#### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

- D1. Have you participated in a Walk to Emmaus weekend program or the equivalent program of another fourth-day organization?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- D1.1. When did you participate in your weekend?
- ☐ Less than a year ago.
  - ☐ A year or more but less than five years ago
  - ☐ Five years or more but less than ten years ago.
  - ☐ Ten or more years but less than fifteen years ago.
  - ☐ Fifteen or more years ago.
- D2. How frequently do you attend Emmaus community gatherings?
- ☐ Never
  - ☐ Rarely, maybe once a year.
  - ☐ Occasionally, two to four times a year.
  - ☐ Often, five to seven times a year.
  - ☐ Regularly, eight or more times a year.
- D3. How often do you serve on a team or support team?
- ☐ Never.
  - ☐ Occasionally.
  - ☐ Regularly.
- D4. Do you serve your Emmaus community in other ways?  
*This would include service on the governing board, community service committees, local church coordinator, or other service that is not directly related to a weekend retreat.*
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- D5. Do you actively participate in an Emmaus group reunion or other accountability group based on the *Cursillo*/Emmaus model?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- D5.1 How long have you participated in the group reunion?
- ☐ Less than three months.
  - ☐ More than three months but less than five years.
  - ☐ Five years or longer.

- D5.2 How often do you participate in the group reunion?
- ☐ Rarely, less than three times a year.
  - ☐ Occasionally, more than rarely but less than monthly.
  - ☐ Monthly.
  - ☐ Biweekly.
  - ☐ Weekly.
- D6. Do you belong to an accountability group that is not modeled on the Emmaus group reunion?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- D6.1 How often do you participate in this accountability group?
- ☐ Rarely, less than three times a year.
  - ☐ Occasionally, more than rarely but less than monthly.
  - ☐ Monthly.
  - ☐ Biweekly.
  - ☐ Weekly.
- D7. Do you belong to a spiritual formation group that is not an accountability group?  
*This could be a Bible study group, a book study, prayer team or similar group.*
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- D7.2 How often do you participate in this group?
- ☐ Rarely, less than three times a year.
  - ☐ Occasionally, more than rarely but less than monthly.
  - ☐ Monthly.
  - ☐ Biweekly.
  - ☐ Weekly.

Note: Sub-questions will not appear if the preceding primary question is answered "No."

## **APPENDIX F**

### **PERMISSION TO USE THE CSPP**

From: Joe Harrington [mailto:joe.harrington@asburyseminary.edu]  
Sent: Wed 1/12/2011 8:49 PM  
To: Jane Thayer  
Subject: CSPP

Dear Dr Thayer,

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary. I am interested in using the CSPP to conduct a portion of the research for my dissertation project.

Please send me information on obtaining permission to do so. I would be interested in modifying the method of delivery to an online survey instrument, using your questions intact.

Thank you for your response in this matter.

Joe Harrington

Subject: RE: CSPP  
From: Jane Thayer <thayerja@andrews.edu>  
Date: 1/19/2011 10:51 AM  
To: "Joe Harrington" <joe.harrington@asburyseminary.edu>

All you have to do to get permission to use the CSPP is ask me, which you have done. I am happy to give you permission to use the Christian Spiritual Participation Profile.

It would certainly bring the questionnaire up-to-date to have it in an online form. Best wishes in this endeavor. I would appreciate it if you would notify me of the web address when you get the form on line.

--Jane Thayer

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