ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

by

Scott W. Frisbie

Many establishments and venues have difficulty maintaining attendance of teenagers and young adults. This dilemma has also been experienced in many churches today. Although the world and church differ in what they do to entice people to attend, the problem of maintaining attendance still exists. Worship services today appear to lack attendees from the ages of 18 to 29.

The purpose of this project was to investigate how Christian organizations successfully attract and retain young adults (ages 18-29) and thereby discern best practices in this area as well as to learn how leaders can measure the success of their Christian organizations in reaching and retaining young adults. This project studied the methods and systems used by executive church leaders to attract and maintain young adults' attendance in church. The goal was to discover contributing factors of churches that successfully ministered to young adults by maintaining consistent attendance. Using a quantitative tool in survey form, the research looked at how church organizations attracted young adults to their establishments, how they maintained young adults' attendance, and how executive church leaders measured their organizations' successes in reaching and retaining young adults.

The theological framework of this study dealt with spiritual formation, good versus evil, and leadership through relationships and was accomplished by discussing transformational discipleship, people standing up and winning against evil, and followers

of God acting missional and intentionally leading others into a relationship with Christ. The data collected revealed commonalities and best practices among executive church leaders that were implemented in their churches to attract and maintain young adults attending their establishments. If executive church leaders are to help and retain young adults, they need to educate generations in Christian apologetics and train them to serve in missional settings. Today's world is postmodern, post-literate, and post-Christian. People are still searching for something unexplainable, and the only way the search can be completed and satisfied is through an incarnate God.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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presented by

Scott W. Frisbie

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Dean of the Beeson Center		Date

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

Many establishments and venues have difficulty maintaining attendance of

teenagers and young adults. This dilemma has also been seen in many churches today.

The problem of maintaining attendance still exists despite a difference between what the

world and the church do to entice people to attend. In observing worship services today,

they appear to lack attendees from the ages of 18 to 29. This major gap not only

concerns me as a church leader, but it also alarms many other leaders trying to build any

kind of venue. I admit, at times, this observation angers me as an individual and upsets

me as a preacher. The main reason it affects me so intensely is because it is personal.

During my teenage years through young adulthood, I did not want to attend a church. As

a matter of fact, I did not want to have any involvement with the church. I am not

blaming others, but I do want honestly to ask questions to determine how churches

might reverse this trend. I realize people are all ultimately responsible for our own

actions and decisions, yet religiosity turned me off to church and nothing it had to offer

at that time enticed me to return. For me, from the ages of 18 to 29, church was only a

body of rules, regulations, and seemingly endless lists of dos and don'ts. Some people

genuinely loved others, but when I occasionally visited, I felt judged by the majority. I

did not feel as though I fit in, and some people made it abundantly clear that I did not. I

sensed an uneasiness for several reasons, mainly because I had been raised in the church

since birth. As soon as the doctor released my mother from the hospital, I immediately

became part of the church nursery scene. My parents, my two brothers, and I never

missed a church service, at least according to my memories. We attended services every week on Sunday mornings and Sunday nights, and again for Wednesday night prayer meetings. In retrospect, even in spite of all the mistakes and misgivings of religion, I am thankful now, but I was not as a young adult. I had become so bitter and rebellious that I stopped attending church completely. Every time I made an attempt to visit any church, I was not welcomed by most. Inevitably, I not only turned my back on the church, I turned my back on God and the call to preach he had previously placed on my life as a young child.

At this stage in my life, I yearn to make a difference for others who are of this particular age bracket and think the same way I did so many years ago. As I began researching this dilemma, I found it to be an epidemic problem. The more I inquired, the more pastors I discovered who agreed that a difficulty existed in retaining young adults in regular church services. One senior pastor, Rev. Doug Dykstra of Adventure Christian Church in Tavares, Florida, said, "They [young adults] leave the church and do not return until they have children who are old enough to get into trouble." In essence he is suggesting that once parents reach a point that they do not know what to do about their children's behaviors, they turn to the church. If the parents were churched as a young child, and then need help raising their own children, they reach out to the church to intervene. They recall how the church gave support and assistance to their parents as they matured. They remember how God, in the lives of their parents, somehow made life better. Obviously, this lifestyle requires some type of religion/church connection in their past because one cannot return to a place one has never been. At the root of Rev. Dykstra's statement may be an underlying truth that I will explore. His statement also

brings a question and subsequent problem to the forefront: how to reach the 18 to 29-year-olds when they were not raised within a church environment in the first place. I was interested in the way in which the church was reaching out to the unchurched, and how they were balancing reaching out to those raised in a church atmosphere for a lifetime.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to investigate how Christian organizations successfully attract and retain young adults (ages 18-29) and thereby discern best practices in this area as well as to learn how leaders can measure the success of their Christian organizations in reaching and retaining young adults.

Research Questions

A description of this project was to study the methods and systems used by executive church leaders to attract and maintain young adults' attendance in church. I developed a survey to probe further the potential mechanics of successful systems. The survey was a quantitative tool using the Likert-style model directed at successful executive church leaders of medium-sized churches in the state of Florida. My goal was to discover contributing factors of churches that successfully ministered to young adults by maintaining consistent attendance. The survey was designed to shed some light on how executive leaders are accomplishing this task. I hoped to draw from these responses and formulate conclusions that will benefit other church leaders, so they can achieve the same results.

Research Question #1

How do successful organizations attract young adults to their establishments?

Research Question #2

How do successful organizations maintain the young adults' attendance?

Research Question #3

How do executive leaders measure their organizations' success in reaching and retaining young adults?

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Definition of Terms

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Young adults refer to a group of people that range from ages 18 to 29. *Christian organizations* in this study are medium-sized churches with an average weekly attendance of 100-250, located in the state of Florida. *Best practices* describe viable systems that create and support sustainable programs and ministries churches use to attract and maintain young adults in attendance. *Success* is the desired result of reaching and retaining young adults in consistent church attendance.

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Ministry Project

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This ministry project was a survey designed to investigate church attendance among young adults and looked at those who were faithful in attending church throughout young adulthood. The research tool was sent to executive church leaders and involved questions/statements concerning basic demographics, young adulthood religious factors that contributed to being attracted to church, and other factors that kept them attending. The project took place in medium-sized Florida churches or other spaces where individuals could complete the appropriate responses to the Internet-based survey.

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Context

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This study was conducted in the state of Florida, primarily the central region. Recognizing the numerous tourist attractions in this geographical location, I wondered

what successful churches do, if anything, to compete in reaching and retaining young adults. Demographically, the state of Florida represents a perfect mix of young adults from many races and ethnic backgrounds.

Factors in this study were difficult to consider. However, one issue that was anticipated involved the willingness of individuals to complete and return a survey. People always appear to be in a hurry, and they may not take the time to complete a survey. Another concerning factor was whether or not the survey respondents would answer truthfully. In addition, if I received any incomplete surveys, participants might be concerned with how that information would be used. It appears that The Likert-style model was beneficial in obtaining accurate and dependable data.

My passion for young adult ministry was a major factor that played a role in this project. Since I lacked a good apologetic teaching, many relational years with Christ and many years fulfilling a call to preach were lost. This surrounding condition is key to understanding my interest in this project.

Nothing should outweigh the results. If anyone's expectations prevented a straightforward observation, an important component of the problem would have been overlooked. Any personal convictions of those involved in reviewing the results were placed aside. The study required unprejudiced, balanced, and neutral observations. Even after considering these factors, I was unafraid of learning new and improved methods to promote the cause of Christ.

Methodology

This study began while conversing with minister friends of mine. As we discussed the issues of attracting and maintaining young adults in their congregations,

questions arose in my mind. I formulated written questions to further my interests and approached five local ministers to discuss my informal questions. The answers I received during our conversations helped me develop a quantitative survey for executive church leaders. The discussions were necessary for the writer to gain a better focus on the main points needed to be considered in determining how certain Christian organizations were attracting and retaining young adults. The goal was to gather as much data as possible while specifically focusing on those organizations already successful in the retention of young adults.

The quantitative, descriptive study utilized a survey research method that statistically identified trends and patterns among executive church leaders who have successfully implemented systems to attract and retain young adults. The study's purpose was to identify a basic pattern among executive church leaders regarding their practices in attracting and retaining young adults. This study involved the reasons why young adults are attracted to and continue attending particular churches in Florida. It also focused on methods that organizations used to measure their successes in reaching and retaining young adults.

Participants

The participants for this project were selected through an Internet search engine for medium-sized churches located in the state of Florida with 100-250 regular weekend attendees. I used Internet-published church directories to access the executive church leaders' e-mail addresses that fell within the project parameters. The participants were contacted via their e-mail addresses and sent a cover letter and consent from. All executive church leaders were selected without regard to race, ethnicity, or gender.

Instrumentation

This study used quantitative elements developed from conversations with other ministers, to investigate the systems used by executive leaders in Christian organizations. The survey called "Do You See Me Now?" contains questions/statements of clear concepts with simple obvious thoughts and ideas behind them. This study provided the structure for presenting the results I investigated. A Likert-type tool was determined to be appropriate for this study, as all of the questions were analyzed individually. D. L. Clason and T. J. Dormody (1994) describe the difference between Likert study and Likert-type study related to how the questions/statements would be analyzed (pp. 31-35), so for this study, one survey instrument was constructed and administered via the SurveyMonkey® (2016) advanced survey delivery service.

Data Collection

Data collection began in February 2016 and was completed in April 2016. The Likert-type survey was e-mailed to executive leaders of various denominational and/or independent medium-sized churches in the state of Florida (see Appendix A). A cover letter/consent form was electronically mailed beforehand to obtain informed consent from each executive church leader (see Appendix D). I received e-mail responses from recipients of the initial mailing, indicating their willingness to complete the survey. A second component of the e-mail sent to the willing participants provided a link to the survey via SurveyMonkey®. By clicking on the link, the participants once again indicated their continued consent via permission to contribute to the research project.

Data Analysis

The analysis procedure for this survey instrument was based on the Likert-style survey model. The survey centered on multiple religious factors from the respondents. For me, the benefit was discovering what determining factors affected these executive church leaders and the systems they implemented to attract and maintain young adults in their churches. The survey research methodology was used to determine if a basic pattern was achievable among the experts of executive church leaders. The survey research study was descriptive in nature and the data analysis used an established method of finding common factors.

Generalizability

My delimitations were the targeted leaders who successfully attracted and sustained the attendance of young adults. This study focused on executive church leaders who were actively employed and were operating successful young adult programs in Florida. A major limitation centered on the honesty of the respondents who completed the surveys. The impact of the study illuminated successful programs and systems that other churches could duplicate and replicate in order to attract and maintain young adults in their churches.

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Theological Foundation

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Since Jesus commanded his followers to go and spread the good news of his Father's salvation to the world, Christians should make every effort to reach people of all ages:

> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20, NLT)

This passage may represent Christian verbiage, but followers of God should be committed to helping people enter into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. Christians should have the same objective as Jesus; to disciple and mentor individuals in order to form authentic relationships and create a community of functional believers. A steadfast intent is needed to shepherd people through the journey from salvation, discipleship, worship, service, and sanctification to a place Christ called paradise— Christians know this place as Heaven. Followers of Christ do not have to carry out this task alone. Until that final day followers of Christ have the promise that they are not alone—Emanuel, God is with them. This duty, simply conveyed in a vision statement, would read as follows: establishing and improving relationships with Christ, others, and ourselves.

This principle is for all humanity, no matter what the age. The difficulty is in helping the young and older adults see the need. To enable them to visualize the need, we first have to understand what they are thinking and how they processed hurtful events of the past. We also need to understand the roles evil and sin played with any age group. My concentration was on the cure that results in salvation, and those organizations that demonstrated successful models of attracting and maintaining young adults. In order to appreciate the cure, one has to have a basic understanding of the cause and effect of the disease.

My theological framework deals with the effects of sin and evil, which have twisted the world's understanding of truth since the beginning of time. The misunderstanding of truth continues to harm connections between people. Relationships

are based on give-and-take, and often selfishness, freedom, and independence prevent

solid connections between individuals. This story has remained the same since the

foundation of the world. Evil entered the world through one woman and one man

because of their disobedience to God. Defiance is evident in Genesis 3:1-7, 14-19, and

22-24. Although the blame does not totally lay with Adam and Eve due to the temptation

from the devil, the fact still remains that humans made a choice, and their disobedient

will is what allowed evil into this world.

God gave his human creations permissions of what they could do, and

expectations of what they could not do. Humanity accepted the permissions God gave

them and violated the exceptions. He gave them choices, and they sinned. Humans

disregarded the permissive instruction to eat anything in the Garden except the fruit

from the Tree of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:15-17), and that action became disobedience.

According to the Scriptures, those who disobeyed would "surely die" (Gen. 2:17,

NKJV). What Christians realize now is that death was twofold. That death would be

both spiritually (morally) and eventually physical (immediately). Humanity violated the

expectations and sinned. This action, in turn, cursed the ground (earth) and introduced

death to all of humanity.

> It is in light of an understanding of God as the one who knows "good"
> (*tôb*) from evil (*ra'*), and who is intent on providing man with the good,
> that man's rebellious attempt to gain the knowledge of "good and evil"
> for himself can be seen clearly for the folly that it was. The author seems
> bent on portraying the "fall of man," not merely as a sin, but also as the
> work of fools. When we read the portrayal of God in chapter 1 as the
> Provider of all that is good and beneficial (*wayyar' 'elōhîm kî-tôb*, "And
> God saw that it was good"), we cannot help but see in this an anticipation
> of the author's depiction of the hollowness of that first rebellious though:
> "The woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good [*tôb*] … and desirable
> for gaining wisdom" (3:6).… In drawing a parallel between the woman's
> "seeing" and God's "seeing," the author has given a graphic picture of

the limits of human wisdom and has highlighted the tragic irony of the
Fall. (J. H. Sailhamer, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 26-27)

Humanity dishonored the expectations of God and sinned. That sin cursed the earth and
brought death to all humanity. God saw creation as (*tôb*) good. After Adam and Eve fell,
God saw the opposite of good, exemplified in the evil that humans can do. Christians
also realize the presence of evil in the account of the Flood as God witnessed (*rā'āh*)
humanity's wickedness (Gen. 6:5). "The verbal parallels suggest that the two narratives
are to be read as a contrast of the state of man before and after the Fall" (Sailhamer, 26).
After the Fall, all the participants had to face God and submit to his consequences. The
serpent's curse (Gen. 3:14-15) puts into plain words why serpents creep on the land and
why hostility continues among serpents and humanity. This creature plummeted from
one of the most cunning to one of the lowliest—literally. Eating dust gives a reminder of
total defeat and an ultimate defeat of all rebellious seeds. This struggle continues today
between good and evil and will continue until Christ's return even though we have the
promise of hope for the sinful couple in the garden, as well as for their seed. Evil was
not destined to be the champion of the day because God had in mind victory for all of
humanity.

The woman's consequences (Gen. 3:16) were the polar opposite of what she
tried to attain. Now Eve would know the sorrow and pain of birthing children, which
was very different from the new life she wanted to acquire. The husband and wife were
blessed by having children (Gen. 1:28) and a great partnership in their relationship (Gen.
2:18-25), but those things also became a curse. She also would be bound to her husband
because she was seeking autonomy. Amazingly, after the Fall, the serpent would be
defeated and blessings would be restored through her seed.

The man's consequences dealt more with the Earth than specifically with him. God ultimately cursed Adam by cursing the ground from which Adam gathered his food. This approach was not how God intended life to be, but the deterioration of the land was a direct result of Adam's rebellion. The land before and the land after the Fall were in contrast to one other as clearly noted. Before the Fall, humanity was taken from the ground, and after the Fall, humanity had to return to the dust of the earth from which they came. "The author's point in showing such a reversal is to stress that the verdict was death, of which the man was warned before the Fall (2:17), had now come upon him" (J. H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* 109). The death both Adam and Eve experienced immediately was a spiritual death and a separation from God. Of course, once their lives were over, they experienced a physical death.

All the punishments placed upon the guilty parties—the serpent, Eve, and Adam—were ordinary and reasonable consequences of the characters' performances. Justice was served as the divine sentence specifically reflected the sin committed. The serpent, Eve, and Adam all sinned and were punished, yet God was not <u>just</u> attempting to teach them a lesson, God was also initiating a means of redemption to reclaim his creation. In God's sentence of suffering, misery, and frustration, he sent the gift of love woven throughout to bring God's prodigals back home.

The war initiated by the evil one is a perversion of what human eyes are supposed to see. When the evil one is allowed to corrupt people's eyes, they will always drift towards doing wrong. Once the human's eyes where opened, they saw nakedness, and, in turn, lust entered our world. Very likely, God shed the first blood to cover the sin of Adam and Eve's nakedness. If God did, in fact, kill the first animal, the correlation is

the first sacrifice where blood was shed to forgive and cover sin, gave humanity a look into the future where the Seed would die for all sins once and for all. To initiate that future, God had to expel Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Claus Westermann says, "Despite man's disobedience and punishment, the blessing given with the act of creation remains intact.… [M]an who is now far from God is always man blessed by God" (104). They may not have known understood at the time, but being expelled from the garden was a good thing, showing God's grace and mercy. If he did not kick them out of the garden and they ate of the Tree of Life, they would have been permanently fixed in their rebellion and ensnared in their immortality. God's love would not allow this tragedy to happen, so he drove them out of the garden (Gen. 3:24).

Adam and Eve's choices changed the course of history for all human beings that would follow. Evil (sin) entered into the world through one person, and now everyone is infected: "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Rom. 3:23, NLT). Free will pushed humanity to a place it could not have anticipated and left them longing for a place they were created to be in. The fall also left humanity longing for a Creator to love and help them deal with the evil in the world:

> The history of conscience, then, I hold to be conclusive—the profound, universal, unalterable conviction of the moral consciousness in man, that his sin springs out of an "I" which is not God; that his sin is his own, his creature, for which he is as responsible as God is for the order of the world. Sin then is, and is not God's creature. The being capable of sinning is God's creature. For making him capable of sinning God is responsible, and there His responsibility, as concerns Adam's transgression ends. For making me as I am, capable of sin, for bringing me into a sinful world in a body of sinful flesh, God is responsible; not for my sin, that grows up of myself in me. There are but two solutions possible. Either man must lie where his sin must sink him, in a deeper depth of shame and anguish than even a fiend can fathom, or man must rise through Redemption to a higher, Diviner manhood, and eating of the tree of life in Christ, live before the face of God for ever. (Exell 304)

Once the will of a person gives into temptation, they decided for themselves what was to be good or evil (sin). Unfortunately, the choice they made was in direct disobedience to God's command not to eat of the Tree of Good and Evil. Along with disobedience came punishment because the perfect world God had created for humanity was infected with sin, something he did not create.

If someone does not believe in the creation story, then he or she will have difficulty accepting that evil entered the world in a place called the Garden of Eden. Equally, even such a person would probably still accept the fact that evil exists in the world. At this point I would like to attract the young adults' attentions and help them recognize that sin is real and that it separates them from God. I believe understanding where sin entered the world and why they may even sense it in themselves is paramount for this age group. It also allows the churched to remember the fact that they need to be in a right relationship with God. If Christians can form relationships with this age group and allow the Holy Spirit to open conversations, we may be able to use the truth of God's Word to change their lives. Followers of Christ can show how God's grace abounds, and although God means what he says and demands obedience, when one sins forgiveness can be found in a living, breathing, loving God who will do all he can to attract his creation back. God put into motion a plan of salvation so that all could make a different choice—one for forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. This good choice would inevitably lead anyone to attend church, but of course, the church would have to be ready to receive and accept them. In other words, the church has to have sustainable programs that relate to this specific age group. If a church cannot feed people spiritually and commutatively, they will search out another church that can satisfy their needs.

Worse yet, people will abandon the church all together and will run the risk of losing their souls and they will inevitably perishing. If the church refuses to reach out to all age groups, people will quit attending or may slide back into old and familiar sinful lifestyles.

Overview

The remaining chapters address the issue of whether or not the church is still viable and how it exists in our modern culture as a change agent. Chapter 2 delves into the main problem churches face when reaching out to young adults, ages 18-29. This chapter traces biblical, historical, systemic, and practical essentials that inform the rationale for why churches miss out on ministering to this demographic. Chapter 3 elaborates on the design of the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings that resulted from the surveys, and Chapter 5 offers a summary and conclusion of the research instrument's findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

Numerous institutions and places struggle sustaining attendance of young adults

ages 18 to 29. This predicament also is noticeable in countless modern-day churches. A

difference exists between what the world and the church does to entice people to attend,

yet the problem of maintaining attendance still occurs. Examinations of worship services

today indicate that a lack of attendance among young adults is apparent. This lack of

turnout among young adults in churches, is a major issue for executive church leaders

attempting to attract and assemble them to any kind of location. The purpose of this

project was to investigate how Christian organizations successfully attract and retain

young adults (ages 18-29) and thereby discern best practices in this area as well as to

learn how leaders can measure the success of their Christian organizations in reaching

and retaining young adults.

Theological Framework

An examination of literature on the topic of attracting people to church worship

services indicates that the authors prefer an incarnational approach rather than an

attractional approach. Although this study is clearly an attractional model for enticing

people into a building to worship, one must look at the underlying problem that keeps

people from attending in the first place. The outlying issue is spiritual.

Spiritual Formation

In the beginning God created good. Eventually, the devil perverted the good and

turned it into evil or bad. The struggle between these two spiritual entities caused a war

within each individual. It became a faith walk, a journey passing from one state to the next, and an advanced trip from innocence to awareness. This part of life began with a bite into that forbidden fruit that opened the eyes to things seen and unseen. It continued with the processes of life that either build a person up or tears him or her down, while at the same time distorting truth. At times this walk is a breathtaking run. At other times it is a crawl, and sometimes it is even a backward fall. Nonetheless, among the good and evil, growth can and will take place; and if one allows God, he will guide that individual and have control of their life, and they will continually move toward the person God intends him or her to be. Life becomes about discipleship, the spiritual formation process that everyone can experience. Each person can be a good disciple and each individual must choose whose disciple they want to be, a disciple of Christ or the devil—good or evil. Many factors that influence a follower of Christ as he or she embarks on a Christian voyage: people, education, personal study, books, and experiences all play a part.

The objective to make God's Word come alive may be missing from church classrooms. Christian organizations cannot expect young adults to defend their faith if they have not been taught that the Bible is more than just a collection of stories. People should be taught why they believe what they believe. Belief has to be more than just because the Bible says so. A relationship with Jesus Christ must be experienced, and a person must not just know the Bible's teachings but they must experience them in a way that no person on earth can take those teachings away. This method happens through relationships that extend even outside of the church. It takes place through discipleship and love.

The Old Testament *Shema* teaches that people should love God with all their heart, soul, and strength. They are also to love other people more than they love themselves. It becomes a missional mandate and a command with promise. If one obeys, God will bless them as well as disciple that individual as he or she grow and remains faithful in that relationship. If a person allows God's desires and love to permeate his or her life, He will, in turn, allow that person to help produce other disciples who love. Alan and Debra Hirsch expound on a person's love: in *Untamed*, "The Shema calls us into a life of active love of and service to God and others. Love is the actual means of knowing God" (90). If followers are to love God, they must reach out to others in love and, by doing so help disciple them. Scot McKnight in *The Jesus Creed* says, "[T]he mission of a disciple, is to reach out to others with the mission of Jesus" (229). Jesus said to go and make disciples and he instructed the disciples to do the same. Looking again at Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave three commands. Go and make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey everything He commanded them to do. If people follow the *Shema*, to love God and others with all they have, and follow Christ's command to go and make disciples, they come to the synopsis of discipling. Dallas Willard writes, "This command does not tell us what we must do so much, as what we must cultivate in the care of our souls" (123). Willard gives a good look at spiritual formation and the need for everyone to take it seriously. To remain faithful one must be obedient to Christ, meditate on God's Word, memorize it, and communicate to God through prayer. These are good disciplines to practice in life to withstand the evil one when he tempts. Another action of a good disciple is the going. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay in *The Gathered and Scattered Church* give a great look into Christ's command to spread the good news. Too

many times followers come together but then forget to go out into the highways and

byways to let others know of Christ's love. A reason people have a problem following

through is the *us* factor and that individual desires get in the way. They become selfish

or think the preacher has the responsibility of reaching the lost or believe that people

will find Jesus in church when they come so they do not need to do work outside of the

church. The problem with that type of thinking is that the majority of the time it does not

work. Followers of Christ must die to their own selves for the kingdom's sake. Halter

and Smay hold this position:

> The principle is indisputable: the great things of God cost us our life. The
> more missional you want to be, the more incarnational you're willing to
> be, the more you release your people out into the world, the more you
> desire to equip and empower young leaders, the more effective and
> faithful you want your church to be,… the more you'll have to die to
> yourself. (80)

Dying to oneself is difficult, yet submission to God's will is imperative to be a disciple

of Jesus Christ. A follower must be intentional in teaching converts good solid biblical

theology. Teaching must be more than just story; it must become real, tangible, and

something other people can mentally touch.

   According to Dr. Daryl L. Smith, in a lecture given at Asbury Theological

Seminary in Orlando, Florida, making disciples rarely happens in big group settings.

Discipleship occurs better in more intimate settings where fewer people are gathered.

Smaller groups make conversations less stressful and less threatening for individuals to

open up to their thoughts and feelings ("Wesleyan View"). These small group settings

offer a great avenue for discipleship and personal growth. Followers cannot maintain the

Christian lifestyle only inside the walls of the church; it must go out. Spiritual formation

does not only happen on a Sunday or a Wednesday. Discipleship occurs throughout the

week and takes place when people come together in the places they congregate.

Discipleship occurs when people find apprentices who will come alongside of them,

people in whose lives one can get involved no matter how messy, people one can

disciple. Discipleship is about relationships. In his book, David Kinnaman addresses the

issue of relationships and discipleships through apprenticeships:

> We need to rethink what it means to "make disciples" in a context of massive, compounded cultural change (access, alienation, and skepticism of authority). I believe we need to change from an industrialized, mass-production, public-education approach, and embrace the messy adventure of relationship. We need a new set of ideas and practices based on apprenticeship. (126)

If one looks at Jesus for an example, he invested his time and energy into twelve

individuals that went on to change the world. One can imagine what would happen if

every Christian everywhere would invest in only one. The multiplication of God's

kingdom would grow exponentially.

Discipleship is not just for older adults but for young adults and even children.

Once a person believes, they can be taught and they can follow God. Although,

understanding learning styles of individuals is important in order to paint a picture so

vivid one can hold onto it throughout their lifetime. Children are just as important as

adults to God's kingdom, and they should be allowed to learn through participation, not

just observation. Allowing children to participate will instill a sense of belonging in

them and they will know that worship is not just for the adults. In their book, Scottie

May, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell remind church leaders

how important the presence of children is throughout congregational worship. Churches

that involve younger people "believe that children must intentionally be included as

responsible participants and contributors in worship. This is especially true for traditions

in which the whole congregation holds itself responsible before God for the faith nurture of the child" (228). Donald Joy sees this lack of use of children and younger people as "disabling our young and preventing them from seizing their productive adult vocations" (63). Though speaking primarily about women, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis' statement can be true of the target group of teenagers through young adult age. She states, "The imposition of a radical disjunct between one's vocation,… interests and abilities as a unique person (i.e., 'being') runs counter to both biblical teaching and the most rudimentary principles of social justice" (73-74). The Bible is very clear in its description of women, men, and children being used by God. When a twenty-first-century church is actually trying to fulfill Jesus' mission and command to love God and others with their whole heart, body, mind, and soul, it will look like a body of believers going out and discipling people and, at the same time, bringing the lost to Christ. In the church we train up the young involving them, allowing them to part of the worship so they can also experience God. A sample of a worship service designed for all ages can be found in Appendix B. The worship example allows for teaching moments and tangibly puts sight, sound, touch, and taste in an experience form for all who participate, in an attempt to reach different learning styles.

According to Leonard I. Sweet, Christians have entered into an era where old church programs can no longer be effective. A need has arisen where church teachers need to bring the church around *new*, Holy Spirit driven, plans instead of older human-made plans. A renovation is desperately needed within the church, which has to be totally dependent upon God's presence and power. The only way it can occur in ministry is through prayer and godly discernment. The church cannot purchase renovation in a

bookstore or a catalog, nor is it found on the Internet. For obvious reasons, this development makes ministry and teaching more challenging and difficult. Ministry and teaching require more time to be done appropriately, responsibly, and effectively. What worked in the recent past does not produce the same results as it did fifty or so years ago. No multilevel, color-coded playbooks, experts, or step-by-step manuals will show the way. The time has come to return to the philosophies drawn from God's Word, mixed in with palpable tradition. God can answer this prayer and desire, which would create training and ministry establishing the essentials of disciple making in a given location. This direction will help the church fulfill the two great commandments from Christ in the *Shema*: loving Yahweh and loving one's neighbor. This duel love is the context in which disciples are made. If the church invests in an individual corporately, and mature Christians invest in individuals privately or in small groups, disciples cannot help but be made. An investment of commitment will bring an increase in solid theological followers of Jesus Christ. Those young disciples will have a better chance of surviving with their faith intact as they enter the academic and vocational world.

The church should be aware that in today's world, no majority culture exists in the church and the culture is multireligious. In society humanity has Christians who attend church, and a whole new generation of those who claim to be Christians but are churchless. At the other extreme the world has people who claim to have no religious affiliation period. Add into the mix a family structure that is splintered, singled parented, and broken. This new world needs a new kind of church to be culturally relevant. The church may need to see the value in small groups and meeting elsewhere. The missional church is interested in worshipping God and keeping him the central focus. Worship is

about him not people. As God reveals himself to his followers, they are transformed into his very image (*imago Dei*). Christians respond to him through obedience while people set out to fulfill God's mission: love him, love others, seek the lost, disciple the found, and do everything he asks us to accomplish. According to Dr. Steve Harper, a paradigm shift needs to occur: "From membership to discipleship, from shop-keeping to soul-tending, from club to community, from 'come to' to 'go to,' from invisibility to influence, from short-term to long-haul, from events to investments, and from helping to transforming." This theory has validity in the world today, especially in America's consumerist, hectic lifestyle. If a church wants to be a transformational establishment in the here and now, it needs to be willing to admit its shortcomings and look for solutions to overcome the obstacles. The church was not created just to survive but to die as Christ died. To elaborate, the church should move from defense to dissemination. As Christ said, "If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it" (Luke 9:24). If the church adheres to a personality of a survivalist, it will die. If the church gives itself away for the sake of Christ, it will see a transformation and a movement. Being missional changes lives. Taking on the call and command of God will put life into a church that is willing. Christian's vocation is just that: "GO!" Parker J. Palmer defines vocation as a place where self and service join together and in his book he quotes Frederick Buechner's definition of vocation as: "[T]he place where your deep heart meets the world's great need" (16).

Only God can put deeply into people's hearts the kindheartedness to do his work. When that moment comes, and if individuals are obedient at that moment, the Lord can intervene and bring life to a church. The Greek work *kairos* describes timing well.

Merriam-Webster defines kairos as "a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action: an opportune and decisive moment" in time ("Kairos"). This moment is a place where God and humanity meet when life comes to the work of the church. John Wesley had a similar vision when establishing Methodism, and he built everything he did on the foundation of holiness. Holy living was not just personal holiness; it was also a social holiness. Wesley's purpose to minister and disciple was based on the covenant in God's Word. Wesley looked for openings into people's lives and used reason in hopes of capturing them with the gospel's love. He could not accomplish the teaching of holiness in the High Church of England, so Wesley took the gospel of holiness outside to the people, in their neighborhoods. He did all he could to mobilize the willing disciplined converts to make the same investments for the glory of God and to prepare them for heaven (Wood 83-93, 137-46). Wesley's work forged the way for having church outside of the church. The small groups (*ecclesiola en ecclesia*—Latin for little churches within the church) paved the way for tremendous growth in the kingdom of God and helped disciple the worst of sinners (Henderson 139-47). Spiritual formation can happen and the body can once again be a missional church movement.

Richard J. Foster founded a ministry help group called Renovare, which has come into its own by giving spiritual significance and leading as it relates to spiritual formation. People cannot turn spiritual formation into a package so the help is not a program. Renovare is a system developed to guide people into experiencing a deeper life with God (*Renovare*). Renovare desires to help people develop their relationship with God as the relationship is meant to be. They train individuals to be determined in

following Christ on the inside. Just as humans take care of their bodies on the outside, they must also take care of the spiritual part of their bodies. People open their hearts to a deeper connection with God on this journey and, in doing so, reclaim their relationships with God. This system was an intentional and intense work aimed at individuals and small groups to learn from Jesus while being discipled through spiritual disciplines (Foster, Spiritual Formation Agenda). The important piece here is that these specific resources, the book and web-site, strive to promote Christian spiritual formation and they also display how an intentional unrelenting attitude to do whatever it takes to become a disciple of Christ, that becoming a disciple is plausible and can be experienced.

Willard clearly describes a problem that has occurred in most churches today. A self-centeredness has developed in the body of Christ where attendees are only concerned with those around them in their church and focused on the need to keep up their buildings and programs, forgetting Christ has called believers to something more. Willard believes this attitude has taken place due to a failure on the church's part to build obedient disciples. He describes that a need is evident for a sustained ministry of formational training to develop apprentices and apostles of Christ for Christ.

In his article, Brad Brisco starts with spiritual formation as his number one purpose when making a shift from a traditional ministry to a missional ministry. He insists that the church is to be a *sent* group of individuals who no longer are self-absorbed and self-centered. If Christ has not transformed someone, he or she cannot serve him effectively: "If the church is to 'go and be,' rather than 'come and see,' then we must make certain that we are a Spirit-formed community that has the spiritual

capacity to impact the lives of others." He continues to inform the church that humanity can no longer let the body run around like a bunch of immature spiritual youngsters, but instead connect the community to spiritual and biblical obedience. The time has arrived to grow up into mature Christian leaders and become mission minded: "If we believe the mission is truly God's mission, then we must learn to discern where He is working; and further discern, in light of our gifts and resources, how He desires a church to be a participant in what He is doing in a local context." This statement sheds extra light on what the *Shema* teaches. Loving God and others forces humanity to take his love outside of the church walls so the vision of a transformed relationship continues to appear.

Foster gives a good example of how the vision takes shape. In his article called, he begins with the Scripture from Galatians 4:19: "Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives." Paul had suffered on the Galatians behalf before they had even experienced a relationship with Christ. Paul tried to explain how hurt he was because the Galatians' returned to law keeping instead of letting Christ become a reality in their lives. Paul had doubts about the Galatians, but perhaps if they had been discipled properly or had they been more concerned about pleasing God instead of themselves and others, Paul would <u>not</u> have written that part of the letter. Foster understands the importance of spiritual growth and the importance of missional formation that works.

Too many Christians burn out due to a church work ethic instead of a relational and moral character pattern. They sometimes become more miserable than they were before knowing Christ. Again Christians see the need for genuine Christlikeness in order to subdue the old tendencies of sin. Unfortunately, the modern world shows the

dysfunction of religions and its leaders, which leave followers with the doubt that one can really be holy. This lack of holy spiritual leaders makes it very difficult to find a comprehensible example of spiritual growth. Foster reminds people that they have to change themselves first. They cannot go out into the world to change it until they have dealt with their own spiritual failure. The good news is that many who have gone on before have been holy and continue to be holy: "Yet echoing through the centuries is a great company of witnesses telling us of a life vastly richer and deeper and fuller. … They have discovered that real, solid, substantive transformation into the likeness of Christ is possible" (Foster 29). A vision that needs to be cast that incorporates the ability to reach what Christ says is attainable. People need help to see that good moral character is attainable and necessary in order to experience the peace and joy Christ has for us.

N. T. Wright offers three things that can transform character. He says, "First, you have to aim at the right goal. Second, you have to figure out the steps you need to take to get to that goal. Third, those steps have to become habitual, a matter of second nature" (29). First, transformation of the mind; second, accomplish by producing a disciple (reading the Bible, praying, worship, Christian music, journaling, accountability—our main desires); and third, do these things daily in order to transform your character. If individuals want to break the power of sin in their life they must renew their thinking and only then can they begin to think clearly and understand what God wants. Wright explains that the mind being renewed is the track people need to take if the whole human is to be renewed. He goes on to say that the more devout a person is the more he or she will obey God and follow his leading:

> [T]the more clearly and accurately and carefully you will think,
> particularly about what the completed goal of your Christian journey will

be and hence what steps you should be taking, what habits you should be
acquiring, as part of the journey toward that goal, right now. (158)

Thinking clearly is important and without absolutes in one's life, their thinking will not

be accurate. Once the thoughts are clear and the path is made known, the goal should be

to follow those steps *now* to have a complete and content journey with a renewed mind

in Christ.

Alan Hirsch has a different take on the renewing of our minds. He definitely

agrees that discipling has become a lost art in the majority of American churches. Hirsch

believes that for a person to break free from sin, discipleship must be present. He says,

"The dilemma we face today in regard to this issue is that while we have historical

language of discipleship, our actual practice of discipleship is far from consistent, and as

a result this mismatch tends to obscure the centrality of the problem" (103). People seem

to have forgotten the importance of being transformed and their thinking processes have

been sidetracked. To turn their thinking around, Hirsch is under the opinion that people

need to see discipleship as fulfilling their destiny so they can renew actions first and

then their minds will follow. He uses the example of Christ walking around with his

disciples. After he called them, they left their lives behind and followed him for three

years. They had no previous training or discipling that had taken place. They had only

on-the-job training as they followed Jesus. If Jesus is the example, then humanity can

see a connection between doing and becoming. Jesus' followers became disciples by

doing the work of the kingdom, serving those in need, helping the poor, healing the sick,

feeding the hungry, and casting out demons:

It is active and direct disciple making in the context of mission.… If we
accept that Jesus forms the primary pattern of disciple making for the
church, then we must say that discipleship is our core task. But if disciple

> making lies at the heart of our commission, then we must organize it
> around mission, because mission is the catalyzing principle of
> discipleship. In Jesus they are inexorably linked. (Hirsch 120)

This directive is a great reminder for traditionalists or revolutionists, all those who are

about making disciples. Hundreds of great ideas can be heard, but in the end, all that is

wanted are new ideas. New thinking does not change behaviors. People change

behaviors, and this approach is how Christ did it. Jesus taught the disciples to act, and

their actions led to new ways of thinking—a renewing of their minds. Hirsch gives some

good insight as he writes on the topic of knowledge and transformation:

> It is genuinely hard to change one's behaviors by merely getting new
> ideas, as behaviors are deeply entrenched in us via our ingrained habits,
> upbringing, cultural norms, erroneous thinking, etc. Even though gaining
> knowledge is essential to transformation, we soon discover that it's going
> to take a whole lot more than new thinking to transform us. (123)

Good thinking is needed to help transform people, and people have to refrain from the

sin using the power of God's Holy Spirit to act differently, which leads to better

thinking.

In his book, David Bosch writes "[D]iscipleship is determined by the relation to

Christ himself not by mere conformity to impersonal commands. The context of this is

not in the classroom (where 'teaching' normally takes place), or even in the church, but

in the world" (67). Everything to this point leads to a conclusion, and if people want to

be in control of temptations and sin, they must use God's power. If people want true

missional transformation to take place, then they must be willing to discipline their

actions in order to renew the mind to be Christlike. God has called people to be holy so

he can fully live within the hearts of his people. God has created many different people

of many different colors and cultures. Gary A. Parrett says that when he was speaking

about the Korean cultural practices, "I have longed to imitate the Korean Christians in their zeal to pray and evangelize, but I continue to be no match for them" (141). The different cultures around the world are a testament to God's creation. His diversity in the personalities of peoples does not mean that he does not call all of humanity to holy living. God's Holy Spirit is alive and is willing to live in each and every person to help them live holy lives.

In his book, Brian McLaren speaks of the Holy Spirit's involvement throughout the ages and how the Spirit worked within the Christian organizations but also that his Spirit worked outside of the churches. McLaren points out that if any division of the church stopped learning, God would go outside and labor with anyone of those who would be willing to be trained:

> I find it delightful, because it tells the traditionalists that their tradition doesn't protect them from losing their way, and it tells the revolutionaries that their zeal and courage doesn't provide guarantees either. It calls everyone to humility and teachability.… (137)

He further elaborates that those who are willing to be taught are the ones who grow; they are the people who will practice what they have learned because they are aware of the need to change. Those who apply what they have learned, live what they have learned, carry out what they have learned, and follow what they have learned are those that have matured in their relationship with Christ.

God has created humans to be disciples of Christ, Christlike, and to be in a relationship with him. This relationship is purposeful. Milfred Minatrea describes this purpose and states that humans were created in the image of God, *imago Dei* (Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18): "Subsequently, as those redeemed from sin, God desires His image to be imprinted upon His followers. They are to live as He lives,

love what He loves, and pursue that which is on His heart" (8). Believers and followers

of the Creator have become his ambassadors to the world and are to reflect his image.

Christians are God's mouthpiece and have been "sent to serve His mission, *missio Dei*,

in the same way that Christ was sent to accomplish the Father's purpose" (8). Jesus

Christ was clear on why he came to the earth, and he was committed to accomplishing

that task. He pointed out this fact to all of his followers and commanded them to endure

as they put into practice God's mission. The mission has not changed since Jesus came

and is still the continual mission for the church:

> A final end toward which the church is sent as image bearer for God
> remains. Ultimately, His church exists for the glory of God, g*loria dei….*
> God desires His church to relish in His glory, share His glory among the
> nations, and reflect His glory in word and deed. The church is a Body
> made in His image, sent on His mission to be to His glory! (9)

This co-mission given to all Christians everywhere requires accomplishment through

people. People were created not only to have a relationship with God but also with

others. By returning to loving neighbors as oneself, people realize that to love their

neighbors first, means that their own priorities must be put last. This awareness creates

an "others first" mentality as Todd D. Hunter explains, "They [others] become our story:

context, meaning, purpose, and fundamental orientation. God and others are first, not

me" (121). This concept fits perfectly into the Great Commission. First Jesus gives the

order, authorized by God, to go out and train others from around the world who are

brought to Christ, teaching (discipling) them through kingdom efforts by healing and

saving the world, baptizing them as friends of Jesus, instructing them to live out all that

Christ had taught them, all the while never forgetting that he would be with them that

day and every day until the end of time (78-83). Individuals are responsible for others.

The book *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, by Henri J. M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison provides a reminder that God is with humanity and he is compassionate toward everyone. Humans are also to be obedient to God and show compassion to others. Compassion takes action, patience, and much prayer. An intimate God desires that his human creations be filled with his Holy Spirit, speak to him often, and love others as he has loved:

> In the intimacy of prayer, God is revealed to us as the God who loves all members of the human family just as personally and uniquely as God loves us. Therefore, a growing intimacy with God deepens our sense of responsibility for others. (106-07)

Amazingly, if I am in good relations with my God I will have good relationships with others that are in my life. If I am not on speaking terms with God, I will have major issues with others and neither relationships will grow. The emergent missional church is dealing with nondiscipled people who are floundering because they do not take time out for God.

Somehow, whether traditional or revolutionary, the church is missing the mark on discipleship, communication to God, and a personal relationship with God. If Christians are to be obedient to God's call concerning the Great Commission, followers of Christ can get back to the basics of reading God's Word and talking to him. Phyllis Tickle speaks of people under the age of fifty and gives a frightening thought of them not reading Scripture:

> In dealing with Americans under fifty, is dealing in large measure with scriptural innocents whose very ignorance is pushing them in one of two directions. Either more eagerly for structured engagement with it, or else a total lack of prior exposure is propelling Scripture itself farther and farther into the attics of life where all antiques are stored for a respectful period to time before being thrown completely away. (116)

The Christian family plays a major role in the failure of teaching and discipling their

offspring. Parents can encourage others, by example, to read, pray, learn, and serve.

Gary and Kim Shockley give a great glimpse of what needs to happen in order

for the past to come to the present and how the present needs to embrace the past's good

parts:

> My prayer for your congregational leadership is that it will be blessed by
> practices that lean back into the congregation's heritage, embody
> innovative ways to kick the congregation's story forward for a new
> generation, all the while desiring to be blown away, as the Israelites were,
> by a God whose incredible glory fill the house. Lord let it be! (113)

In the Old Testament, people looked so forward to going to God's house to worship a

celebratory atmosphere was created upon their arrival. Those who could not get the

Temple were disappointed and longed to be there (Ps. 42:4; 122:1). The Shockleys

reveal, "In preaching, preachers *lean* [original emphasis] fully back into the Scriptures

and traditions of their particular faith tribe and then *kick* [original emphasis] the stories

of the faith forward through preaching that engages the mind, opens the heart, and fuels

the imagination" (109). This form of communication has become the staple of helping

other people hear from God's Word and make the changes necessary to living an

obedient life for Christ. Once the people hear the truth from the Bible, they must choose

to comply.

Willard sums up what this entire project is about as he covers the fundamental

teachings on sin and discipleship. He suggests that people have to do something. People

are called into kingdom living and must do what is known, and if people want to be

transformed, they need to be transparent. Christ's Spirit will come alongside and

empower people to help develop personal character (13-17). Christ needs to be the

Master of every area in people's lives, and he gives spiritual disciplines that will help

along the way, such as reading and meditating on his Word, worshiping him, loving

others as yourself, and serving. (20-21). This kind of living not only brings blessings to

the individual but also brings blessing to others:

> You may be very sure that if your sincere intent is to glorify God and
> bless others in your efforts, and you are not motivated by unloving
> attitudes, you will see the hand of God move with you as you expectantly
> do your work. (22)

Willard gives eight points to spiritual formation in Christ: (1) an individual must be

obedient—to God; (2) it is a matter of the "spirit"—unbodily power; (3) live in God's

reality not humanity's own reality; (4) this formation is supernatural and comes from

above; (5) it is a process—shaping through discipleship; (6) the process not only deals

with spirit and heart, but with the whole person and every aspect, not focusing in on

actions alone; (7) there need to be a transformation of the self in thinking, emotions,

community relations, body, heart, and the soul; and, (8) grace and works both are needed

as one continues working on this relationship. One should not plan on continuing in sin.

Although, the gospel deals with more than just sin, the gospel is about a new life in

Christ through faith and this process takes time, sometimes a lot of it. An individual's

character is not transformed over night or in an instant (44-66). If individuals wish to be

transformed to have a Christlike life, they must be willing to obey Jesus and live a life

that is entwined with him day after day after day. This commitment is in order to learn

submission through the course of internal renovation.

This Christlike character is formed with more than just actions. It involves

thinking as well. If humans are going to conform to Christ's character, they will need

both strong actions and well-educated belief: "Sinful practices become their habits, then

their choice, and finally their character" (Willard 83). Willard goes on to say, "The wrong thing to do seems quite 'natural,' while the right thing to do becomes forced and unnatural at best—especially if done because it is right" (83). Unfortunately, human minds and bodies do not robotically swing to the desires of Christ. Willard states, "Intense devotion to God by the individual or group brings substantial outward success" (95). Great things happen when people depend on God, and when their hard work is made with faith in him and for his sake, transformation will take place. Willard calls it practicing the presence of God: "The first and most basic thing we can and must do is to keep God before our minds" (125). King David understood this concept very well (Ps. 16:8-9). A person can never be a spiritually strong Christian without practicing and training.

Keeping the mind on Christ and for Christ is a daily task. It will lead down a road of discipleship that can only draw individuals, and others, closer to God. In doing so an individual will be wholly devoted, loving as one should, and fully serving God spreading the good news of the gospel until death. Followers of Christ can cultivate a hunger for God and his holiness. "The hunger for holiness, and for power to stand in holiness, to the blessing of multitudes of people, also knows no social or economic boundaries" (Willard 218). This spark can create a fire within ministries, so they too will be untamed wildfire and forerunners for Christ and forever be loving, discipling, and serving.

Good versus Evil

Evil entered the world through one woman and one man because of their disobedience to God. This result is evident in Genesis Chapter 3, especially in verses 1-

7, 14-19, and 22-24. God gave his human creations the permission to eat anything they wanted in the Garden except from the Tree of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:15-17). If they disobeyed, they would surely die. This death would be both physically eventually and spiritually/morally immediately. Consequences follow sinful acts. The serpent experienced the first consequence. Associating the serpent with the devil is difficult in the Old Testament, but the New Testament gives a prime example of him as a serpent or dragon in Revelation 12:9: "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." This verse indicates his first deception of the human race.

Eventually, the Redeemer Jesus, the seed of Mary, gained victory over the devil once and for all. In Christ's death on the cross, his heel would be bruised by the devil, but in Christ's resurrection, he would destroy the power of the devil forever. Victor P. Hamilton says, "The serpent will crush the heel of the woman's seed (a temporary and healable injury), but the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent (a fatal injury)" (49). Each human being has a crushed head that leads to death and a bruised heel that can be restored to health. This struggle continues today between good and evil and will continue until Christ's return. A promise of hope is given for the sinful couple in the garden as well as for their seed. Evil was not destined to be the champion of the day because God had in mind a Victor for all of humanity.

Sin still exists, and several definitions of sin must be considered. In a relativistic, changing, and not permanently fixed world, the definition for sin that applies to one

person may not be the same as a meaning of sin for another person. A clear-cut definition of sin depends on a person's own belief system.

Scripture directs the readers to work out their own salvation (forgiveness of sin) and warns to do so with fear and trembling: "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling…" (Phil. 2:12). Wesley's Sermon 85 about this topic of working out salvation reflects on the relation of God's grace with humanity. He says, "For, First, God works; therefore you can work. Secondly, God works, therefore you must work" ("On Working Out Our Own Salvation"). Though people are not forgiven by what they do, Christians are to live out the deliverance God has given them by existing in a progressive relationship with God. Sin is the event that disconnects people from God, anything that would separate them from God, or any known transgression against God.

Dr. Robert G. Tuttle, Jr. notes that people need to ask for sin to be taken *from* them. *They* cannot *give* their sin to God. If that were possible they would not need God. In his book *Sanctity without Starch,* Tuttle gives good insight regarding sin and allowing God to take the sin away: "Then as you repent and believe, allow God to move to that low pressure and take that sin from you. Our willingness for God to take sin from us, not our ability to give it to God, is the key" (126). Allowing God to take sins away can remove some pressure from humans. This taking reminds humans that sin cannot be given away, but God has the power and ability to take the sins if permitted.

Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, explain that all authority does not reside in a human being but in God:

> First of all person-centered … assumes that we are the ultimate force and the sole masters of our own destiny; in other words, all authority is within. This is a paradigmatic *humanistic* approach … in the fullest sense of the word; humanity is the center. (262)

The humanistic approach to life is what the world thrives in. It contradicts God's way of life. Christ must be the center of people's lives and all else must radiate from him. Those people who refuse to allow Christ to be the center of their lives and maintain a self-centeredness, will in the end allow sin to spiritually killed them.

Nevertheless, hope remains, and as William H. Willimon says, preachers and teachers of God's Word can let the world in the best hope of all, Jesus:

> The good news for us pastors who are teachers is that we live in a time of moral chaos, social breakdown, and inhumane institutions, that is, a marvelous time to teach the world that God has another way. When people give up hope for the present order, when people have achieved all that the world has to offer and it is still not enough, what a marvelous moment to offer them Christ. (221)

The church can offer spiritual direction to fallen people. Individuals should grasp the fact that they play a major role in controlling their decisions. The free will each human possesses is powerful. One does not have to allow outcomes, either good or bad, to change whether they are going to become a Christian or not.

Calvin S. Hall, Gardner Lindzey, and John B. Campbell state, "[H]umans possess the ability to exercise control over events in their lives. We do not control outcomes in any autonomous or mechanical way. Instead, the distinctive human abilities to form goal representations and to anticipate likely outcomes…" (612). Anyone following Christ for a while will admit temptations will come. However, as free moral agents, humans have the ability to exercise control as to whether or not they will submit to temptation or resist it and not let it overcome them.

Christ has shown that humans can endure and possess the power to overcome and Tuttle explains in his book *Shortening the Leap*:

> Note the logic here. Those who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as God's provision for the forgiveness of sins are born of the Spirit and empowered to love God and obey God's commands. Furthermore, God's commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. (52)

Those who are followers of Jesus Christ do not look at obedience to Christ as something that is impossible or troublesome. Christians obey because they want to and they want to because they love Christ. The good part is that followers of Christ do not have to do this alone, they have the help of God's Holy Spirit. People should be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, for he brings the hope that everyone can resist, conquer, and prevail against evil as Paul wrote to the Romans in chapter 5:1-5:

> Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

As a Christian, the conveyance that Christians have access to the Holy Spirit and that he is capable of giving individuals the ability to change their lives and mind-sets is important. If sin is that which separates humanity from God, then the Holy Spirit is that which draws humanity to God.

One can believe or choose not to believe. In the Garden of Eden, God said all things were permissible except eating from one particular tree. He gave the ability to say no. He did not create evil; he created humans who had a choice. God anticipates choice

but he does not make choices for his children. God did not tempt Adam, Eve, or has not

tempted anyone else since; the devil brings evil and temptation. Satan tempted Adam

and Eve to be like gods or like God himself and at this point the law was awakened in

humanity. Once again Paul gives followers good advice as they fight the evil one in

Romans 7:21-25:

> I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is
> right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart.
> But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This
> power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a
> miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated
> by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So
> you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but
> because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

Sin is a choice. It is a decision of each individual to obey God or disobey God. Each

individual must make the choice to follow through the instructions with obedience or

disregard God's instruction and choose disobedience.

As Stephen Seamands writes, God's demands are challenging, but they are also

liberating:

> *Of* Jesus Christ, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit—this, then, is the
> ministry in the image of God to which we have been called. How inviting
> and demanding, how liberating and challenging it is! Ministry beckons us
> to enter into the triune of life and to be conformed to it. (original
> emphasis; 30)

The Holy Spirit was not sent to compensate for the absence of Jesus, but to gain access

to God. He was sent to guarantee the Trinity's presence. The only way to experience the

Holy Spirit is to rid oneself of the things that cause separation from the Holy Spirit,

which is sin.

Once the Holy Spirit is in the individual, that person whom God has created, that

free moral agent, will begin seeing himself or herself as God sees them. They are free to

be the unique person God has created them to be. John Eagan quotes his spiritual

director, Bob, who said, "God's love for you and His choice of you constituted your

worth. Accept that, and let it become the most important thing in your life" (150). He

will use them, as they are, if they allow him.

First Corinthians 15:58 states, "Therefore … be steadfast, immovable, always

abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

All believers must take part in this kingdom-building project. Canon Mark A. Pearson

comments, "You do not have to do it all, but do your part in it. God will orchestrate

what you do with what others do and then 'give the increase.' (The Apostle Paul

commented how he planted, Apollos watered and God gave the increase—1 Corinthians

3:6)." Service is a very important aspect in the walk with the Lord. When people serve

they connect to others, and when they serve with others, they have a special connection

to God that helps them accomplish much and bear much fruit. In Erwin Raphael

McManus' book he says, "Serving others with others is the surest path to having your

own needs met. Serving through you own grafting is the surest path to finding

fulfillment and to fulfilling your divine purpose" (172). Working together with other

people brings satisfaction and can bring about salvations in others. Serving God has

many benefits and the main advantage is having a personal relationship with the Creator.

This service will also bring in other sustainable and lasting relationships.

God loves humanity. People were made in the image of God, *imago Dei*, setting

them apart from all other creatures with not only a mind but also a spirit. William

Hasker writes "The phrase 'the image of God' is used in a number of places in Scripture

to indicate the unique likeness and relationship of God which sets humanity apart from

the rest of the creation" (122). God loves humans, and wants to have a relationship with them, and desires to come alongside through his Holy Spirit to commune with individuals.

David Ravenhill explains that humans were created to enjoy a relationship with God:

> Unless we as Christians grasp this revelation we will not experience the changed perspective that alone can revise our view about ourselves as believers and the lives we are to live. This alone can cure our lukewarmness: We are created to enjoy fellowship with God Himself. (144)

Humans were created not only to work but to have a living relationship with God. The Christian world needs more of God and less of themselves. Tommy Tenney says, "The more death that God smells, the closer He can come" (60). The closer God comes, the more the Holy Spirit has complete control and one can resist sin's temptations. Raniero Cantalamessa wonderfully conveys, "The Holy Spirit assures our spirit that we are children of God and that God loves us, and in this way the Spirit gives us the strength not to give in in the face of our many troubles and crosses" (215). The early church fathers' most important task was to fashion the groundwork of the cross to people's hearts. Early church fathers harbored a reckless abandonment for God with a single thing on their minds: an intimate relationship with Christ. Discipleship was emphasized in order to build strong Christians, to promote identification as a friend of God, and to live in his presence. Paul Keith Davis writes, "Retreat or slowdown are not options. As we accelerate toward the Lord ignoring all obstacles, He will in His abundant grace see us through and position us on His highway of holiness" (151). Evangelism becomes the fundamental goal. George G. Hunter, III points out, "Whatever else evangelism is, so it

is widely held, it is proclamation. To evangelize is to proclaim the glad tidings.

Evangelism is the transmission of a message with accuracy, decision, and recall" (103).

Christians should love other people, lead them to Christ, and be filled with God's Holy

Spirit. Followers of Christ are all part of the body of the church. Christians should show

other people that even though they managed without God before they met him, after

they form a relationship with God they will realize they can no longer get along without

him now.

This notion fits very well in the overarching narrative of the Bible. In the

beginning Creation was good and humanity turned God's intended good into bad,

leading to the Fall. Israel would have understood and accepted this outcome as they

waited for a Messiah to bring order back from chaos. Of course, the Messiah who came

was not the one whom they were expecting, but he did begin the process of redemption

and bringing order back as the second Adam. The creation story was a precursor of

things to come. The Seed came from the line of Adam, King David, and Mary to save

the world and begin to bring it back into line with God's original plan. After Christ

ascended into Heaven, the church was established to continue the work God started. He

still is in the business of reconciliation and bringing his creation back into line with his

desires and truths. Someday he will create again, a new earth and new heaven that will

be paradise reestablished once and for all.

The Bible, the Old and New Testaments, shed light on the constant battle

between good and evil. All throughout God's Word, one can read the stories of

someone's will going against God's will. Those people's choices ultimately brought

punishment, remorse, repentance, and forgiveness. Great advice was given in Ephesians

6:10-18 to put on the *whole* armor of God in order to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might so humanity can stand against the scheming of the devil. Humanity's dependence on God's promises can protect them against the fieriest attacks of the devil.

The entire Bible affirms God's desire for obedience and ultimate punishment for those who do not. It also consistently affirms God's grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. Christ, the Seed, did deliver a crushing blow to the evil one, bringing an ultimate victory to those who believe and receive. Paul speaks of this doctrine in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 in what is commonly called original sin. Both Testaments affirm the doctrine (Gen. 6:5; 1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:19; Eph. 2:3) as God took the bad news of original sin and turned it to the good news of Jesus Christ (Hamilton 42). Referring back to Genesis, the beginning chapters explain the beautiful side of human nature and its way of life. It shows the close relationship between all of creation: the earth, animals, each other, and particularly God. Genesis 3, in comparison, shows the brokenness of this existence. After the collapse occurred, other aspects of the relationships were also broken. The intimacy that was shared among the earth, animals, each other, and God was lost. This fall of humanity changed the human condition forever and became the cornerstone of the church's reflection for correcting the problem. This problem and presence of evil in the world is not God's fault but humanity's because of their liberties, freedoms, and independence.

John Wesley said in Sermon 57 that the outcome of humanity's liberty was due to people's wills and affections:

> [A] will exerting itself in various affections.… Had he not been a free as
> well as an intelligent being, his understanding would have been of no

service. For he would have been as incapable of holiness, or any kind of virtue, as a tree or a block of marble. ("On the Fall")

By gaining this kind of freedom and the power it wields, humans have choices to make: a choice between good or evil. In the garden Adam and Eve chose evil over good and sin entered the world. Once evil showed its ugliness, a flood of problems came in with it. It brought with it pain, suffering, crying, and death. According to Revelation 21:4-5, God will wipe all these things out once and for all. When God dwells with his children, he will remove every sorrow and pain just as he promised as described in the following two prayers—*The Wesleyan Prayer* and Thomas Merton's prayer from *Thoughts in Solitude*.

> I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with who thou wilt. Put me doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low by thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou are mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have make on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen. (The United Methodist Hymnal 607)

> My Lord, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. (Merton)

The ancient problem of sin and disobedience to God has been with humanity since the time of Adam and Eve. If people refuse to turn from their wicked ways of living and continue to satisfy their own desires, God cannot lead them to his greater good and no relationship can be established.

Leading through Relationships

Events happen in life for a specific reason. In the moment one may not realize that a chance or planned meeting can change one's life along with other people's lives forever. If people allow themselves to reach out, they can impact a portion of humanity and bring about good productive change. This outreach, in turn, can begin a movement that creates a positive transformation in an organization and its people. Of course, willingness is a must with both sides of the process. One cannot teach an unwilling, unenthusiastic, indisposed participant. The opposite is also quite true. When a person enlists as a change agent and is agreeable to manage an organization through adversity, he or she can bring about changes that increase profits. Financial profit, yes, but just as important, if not more important, is the profit achieved with establishing outstanding relationships. Profit begins through contacts, connections, networking, and interactions. No matter how educated or experienced people are, they still need others to accomplish much of anything. Subordinates do not provide assistance to a desired end without strong ties.

The Arbinger Institute gives a great example of unlearning what is known about managing people, which takes more than just knowing the facts that improve relationships and productivity: "Merely knowing the material doesn't get you out of the box. Living it does" (174). Just like a family, a church or company is a union of people. The same things that divide family members divides coworkers (174). If people want to be change agents, they learn to live through any adversity and help things transpire correctly. People may need to put more energy into building relationships at the bottom, middle, and top of the organization if they want to be successful.

Barry Oshry provides adjustments that can be made in the levels of management. The top delegates all the responsibility to themselves, away from others, making them the sole person responsible for the fate of the organization. Instead people should create a system that makes them responsible for their own fate. The middle can get lost in a situation instead of using their talents, gifts, and crisis solving to service the organization as a whole. The bottom holds everyone else responsible for problems instead of being a person who shares in the responsibility for the fate of the system. A "Dominant or Other" emerges who protects the culture from problems of other cultures instead of using the turmoil as a way of producing a new culture healthier than either of the existing ones (233). Oshry states, "Have a vision of an outcome that is better than what currently exists—better service, greater classroom involvement, higher quality product" (119). The team's total outcome is placed above one's own desires or plans. It makes someone a bigger part of a bigger picture, creating better ties, stronger relationships and success.

Eleanor D. Payson gives advice for success and relationships. She reminds readers to set and insert ground rules to handle any conflict that may escalate. If an organization, or couple, desire long-term success, they need to know how to handle problems. By setting ground rules, people create security and self-worth, ensuring fair play. Fair play also externalizes difficulties "as a problem you are working on together rather than personalizing every issue due to the deadlock of your different positions" (126). As people work together for a common goal, it helps to keep them real and authentic.

According to James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine, II, people must actively engage "as a community of likeminded people, so that our offerings—and by extension your business—gain in stature as authentically constructed" (18). The church needs to keep focus of why it exists, which is mainly to proclaim the truth of God. For the church to attract the lost, it needs to be authentic. The church has lost favor with many as an outdated, unreliable, out-of-touch business. Gilmore and Pine write that in order to be authentic a business needs to be natural not artificial, original not a copy, exceptional, reach out with feeling, referential, pulling from memories and history, and influential, calling others to a better way of life (49, 220). A church must be authentically relevant to accomplish this goal.

Robert E. Quinn offers a way to be authentic and produce a more productive community. He calls it "the fundamental state of leadership" that brings about transformation (8, 22). Quinn gives examples of how deep personal change can bring about change in others. Developing as a leader takes more than concepts, strategies, and behaviors, it takes individual changes first (195). His eight practices center around integrity, something the church and its leaders desperately need. Both personal and collective integrity are the source of life for the church (91). No one will listen or be transformed if the church is not changed and no one will follow if they are not led.

Henri J. M. Nouwen states that people must pray, confess, forgive, and reflect in order to know where they are being led (85). Before one can be effective for God, one must be in a right relationship with God. Doing so allows for the shaping of leaders and systems to handle the personal struggles and conflicts with a faith in God's real presence

(87). God's help is needed to understand the culture and be agile enough to handle the changes that are a natural part of life and organizations.

Bill Joiner and Stephen Josephs say that the pace of change is increasing. They state that because of the pace of change, "complexity and interdependence will continue to grow" (5). Leaders must grow through change if they wish to stay effective. To accomplish growth, leaders must learn to be agile and must be alert and respond quickly. To sustain success one needs to use all their competencies, allowing agility to enhance other success factors (195). If change is inevitable, one needs to develop skills to change the world for the better: "We can't just sit back and hope that others will develop the wisdom and skill to do it for us" (226). Leaders must become better leaders to change things for the better.

In his book, *Theory U*, C. Otto Scharmer tries to help individuals see the blind spots that prevent them from seeing their inner place where purpose is located (6-7). As one moves through the *U*, one can bond to one's true self if these blind spots are accessed (19, 29, 441). To prevent being blind, patterns of the past must be suspended, viewed with fresh eyes, and thoughts redirected from the normal responses, to release those old "connecting with their higher-order intentions" (36-37), and also, "[p]resencing: connecting to the deepest source from which the field of future begins to arise" (39) at the bottom of the *U*. To bring about change, a person must engage the mind, heart and will. The mind needs to be open to access one's intelligence, the heart needs to be open to access one's emotional intelligence, and the will needs to be open to access one's authentic purpose (41).

Progressing up the right side of the *U*, one sees the vision of the new future wanting to emerge, followed by exploring the future by doing, and, finally, one performs and embodies the new in practices (Scharmer 246). Once people learn from the future as it develops, their deepest foundation of creativeness can be found. This creativity can bring new realities where once only doubt may have been practiced. A willingness to fail is necessary because the impossible is being attempted at times. Nonetheless, possibility can bring a feeling that individuals are doing something important, and it may develop into a game changer, making a difference in the world. However, people who will not let go of old ideas and practices cannot produce a different result. Change only comes when people connect with who they really are, and then they can create a future that represents what matters most to them: "In order to access your best creative potential, you have to go on a journey—a journey in which you follow your bliss, your feeling, your felt sense of the emerging future" (407). Individuals need not be fearful of failure when trying different things to attract change. The future of can be exciting when people look at it as a long journey and not just a quick trip.

Many times the Jesus factor is forgotten. He did not tell people to come and sit inside a building; but instead, his followers are called to go into the world and be missional. The directive in Matthew 28:19-20 to go and make disciples is not a suggestion; it is a command. People do not have to reach out alone; Christ will be with them. David L. McKenna states "If the Great Commission is taken literally, a great burden falls off the back of Christian leaders. We are accountable for the means of ministry, but not the ends of ministry. God Himself accepts responsibility for the results" (24). Once humans deviate from that rule of life, they run into difficulties

fulfilling the mission. Today's churches are not the only ones that struggle with this

passage; even the disciples struggled with the practice. They were slow to take hold of

and put into operation the words of Jesus in accepting a Gentile mission. Looking at the

disciples as an example, one can see they experienced a method of growth through

obedience as they deciphered in what form, and with what method, the mission should

have been carried out. Servant-leaders operate from the perspective of taking care of

their sheep. Leaders are not to forget the ones the Lord has entrusted into their care, but

they must also remember Christ encouraged his followers to leave the ninety-nine

saved/safe individuals and to go and retrieve the one that was lost (Luke 15:1-7). The

story of the lost sheep reproduces the desperation and defenselessness of sinners and is a

constant reminder that God loves the lost.

Transformational missional leaders need to turn their methods inside out in order

for the lost world to be reached as Dr. Daryl L. Smith articulated on a syllabus for a

Doctorate of Ministry course:

> Jesus is the model upon whom we build. Along the way, missional
> leadership, at the very least, involves understanding the changing shape
> of cultures, equipping people for ministry, maintaining a whole-life
> stewardship, and growing healthy communities. The bottom line is,
> learning to connect the three stories—God's story, other's stories, and my
> story. ("Issue" 1)

Jesus' desire for the lost and his command to reach them has not changed. Christ

understood his culture and his audience and used that knowledge to his advantage. A

few examples of this teaching method are Mark 4, where Jesus spoke of farming, using

parables of the sower and seeds; Mark 7, to the demon filled and diseased, he spoke of

healing; John 4 and 6, to the thirsty and hungry, he spoke of water and food that would

last forever; and, John 10, to the herdsman, he spoke of being a good shepherd. Jesus

knew to whom he was speaking and how to address them. He always turned his

conversations into a situation that led his listeners to a truth about himself and a way to

salvation. his method was always relational, personal, and purposeful.

On the surface a heartfelt desire appears to be all that one needs to engage the

lost. Although important, desire only will not get one where one needs to go. Other

works need to take place in order to attract the lost. The theory of being attractional has

credence, yet it alone cannot accomplish the preferred destination. In their book *The

Tangible Kingdom,* Halter and Smay say, "Although the attractional approach will

continue to be influential with people who have some context for church, we must

accept that the growing post-everything culture must be wooed through a more

incarnational process" (95). The attractional approach creates a place for people to

attend. The incarnational approach attempts to create a people with a sense of belonging

as they live out their faith in community and Halter and Smay demonstrate this rationale

(see Table 2.1):

Table 2.1. Comparison of Attractional and Incarnational Approaches

Attractional Approach	Incarnational Approach
Unbeliever is invited to church	Sojourner is invited to belong
Unbeliever confesses belief	Sojourner confesses interest
Unbeliever repeats a prayer	Sojourner experiences the good news
Believer joins church	Sojourner participates in community
Cognitive discipleship	Experiential apprenticeship
Focus: Counting confessions	Focus: Transformation
Believing enable belonging	Belonging enables believing

Source: Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom* 95.

The methods used to lure individuals into a facility only strengthen the fact that people are doing what they can to bring people inside. Buildings look like churches and have high definition cameras and projectors, computers for up-to-date videos and music presentations, a lighting system, and a live band. As Shane Hipps states, "The point is that our theology and practice are deeply informed and shaped by our media and technology. We [have] become what we behold" (84). These theological practices are not all bad, but they only reach those already there. The goal should be to change lives by addressing needs, one individual at a time, as a successful company would. Raj Sisodia, Jag Sheth, and Davie B. Wolfe summarize, "These companies believe in dealing with all people, whether employees, customer, or any other stakeholders, as individuals, not as numbers.… Through the lens of their worldviews, they see and address the needs of the 'whole person'" (218). Successful companies look at individuals as a whole, not as separate parts—the whole picture not just the pieces.

People need to be determined to be obedient to the calling of Christ to go. The prayer should be to show others how this type of ministry can work and, in the end, bring increase to all churches. Hirsch and Hirsch remind readers, "It is about bringing people closer to Jesus and teaching them his ways. It is about loving people and exposing them to the grace and wonder of God's heart…" (147-48). People become determined to continue on despite any obstacles. The desired result is bringing others into a right relationship with him and not necessarily populating the church buildings. McManus describes in his book *Unleashed*, "Our goal must not be to populate the Christian religion but to bring people into a genuine relationship with God. We must make a clear distinction between the religion of Christianity and the revolution that

Jesus began…" (91). Despite any obstacles followers of Christ should continue to do their best to introduce others to Jesus, not to populate the church but to increase those in relationship with God.

People should allow the Lord to use them as change agents even behind the scenes. Rob Bell shares, "I see people who want to be fully alive. I see people who want the life Jesus promises and who are willing to let go of ego and prestige and titles to get it" (120). Personal service is required to grow the kingdom of God. Like-minded Christians seek to serve and save the lost through servant-leadership and servant-evangelism, even though early on they were told it could not be done. Robert K. Greenleaf notes that ideas can emerge and thrive:

> (1) If you have a widely accepted mission for the institution that embodies a great dream of what it might become. (2) If you carefully identify all of the obstacles that stand in the way of realizing that dream and see to it that a competent person sets to work to remove or find a way around each obstacle. And (3) if you sustain a sense of urgency about the whole process of regenerating the institution. (224)

Dreamers, leaders, and team members are making ideas happen, pushing through the obstacles and changing a group of individuals in the process. If people pray, ask, seek, and knock as Matthew 7:7-12 states, then all will receive good gifts from the Father—especially fulfilling his Great Commission. Something has to be done to engage the unbelievers, and what better way than to meet them on their own territory, in their own land, as Christ did. Reinventing something that already exists is not necessary. If programs are successful elsewhere, people may test them to see if the same approaches will work in other places. People should not be afraid to fail and discontinue unsuccessful processes. In his book, Palmer reveals, "All we need to do is stop pounding on the door that just closed, turn around—which puts the door behind us—and welcome

the largeness of life that now lies open to our souls" (54). Some doors close for a reason

and if Christians believe that God is guiding their lives then they can trust him, leave the

door closed, and move on.

When ministries are successful, others will be able to see what a thriving church

looks like as they live missionaly. Tony Dungy explains, "Leading through your words

and actions—whether someone's watching or not—tells the world who you are, and

more important, who you believe God created you to be" (126). If one can encourage

teenagers and young adults to focus on leading, being missional, and working in the

ministry, then the ministry will continue to live. In their book, Janet O. Hagberg and

Robert A. Guelich give this reminder: "The calling comes from God at this stage, not

from another person (guru, spiritual leader, friend, and teacher) who interprets God's

call for us" (138). The spotlight should not remain on the leader but instead on Christ

and his mission. If focus remains on the desired outcome, a ministry will survive and

people will grow in grace and in their relationship with Christ, others, and themselves.

Kenneth L. Carder and Laceye C. Warner write, "The God who transformed

crucifixion into resurrection in Jesus Christ is present through the Holy Spirit to bring

healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and transformation in the world of the new century"

(88). If people are taught and allowed to serve, their culture and world will be

transformed.

The Creator God has much to say about relationships. From the beginning,

humanity was created to be in a personal relationship with one another and God. Out of

everything God formed, he chose to make humans in his own image know in Latin

imago Dei. In Hebrew the word for image is *tselem* and is found plainly in Genesis 1:26-

27. The Greek word for image is *eikōn*. These languages indicate that humans were created to be interconnected to God but not equal. According to Kenneth Richard Samples, a person's function is more important than what a person is, giving them an authorized nature that represents God (172-85).

God sent leaders such as Noah (and the flood), Moses (and the law), David (with his songs and psalms), Jeremiah (and his tears), and Isaiah (and his loving invitations). Even with leaders as great as these, God looked down and saw his people who were called by his name, created in his image, continuing to sin and continuing to turn their backs on him. God must have wondered how his people would inherit what he had for them and if they would enjoy life with one another. Thankfully, God sent another leader to rebuild humanity's broken relationship—his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus walked about the earth doing good works. He not only healed bodies, he also healed minds and spirits (Toler and Hermiz 71-75). A careful reading of the Scriptures allows humanity to see God's plan all along. Joel B. Green says, "Luke urges a reading of the Scriptures in relation to the fibula, or story behind the story, of how God get things done—through the suffering and vindication of the righteous, decisively exemplified in Jesus of Nazareth" (62). Through Jesus the personal relationship God wanted was made possible again, once and for all.

The base of the word relationship is *relate*. Jesus could relate to people and Jesus had a way of connecting with people that was relevant. Authors Ken Ham and Britt Beemer state, "The root of the word 'relevance' comes from the word 'relate.' In order for something to be relevant, it has to connect (or relate) to something that is real and important" (73). No other individual has connected with his listeners better than Christ.

He helped others see that his Father was relevant, the Scriptures were relevant, and that people need to be in relationship with one another in order to get through life.

Jesus was a great communicator because he knew how to listen, which allowed him to create personal bonds with others while strengthening relationships. He maintained a keen social intelligence, realizing humans were created to connect with one another, just as they are with God. Jesus was very balanced and aware of his social environment, knowing how to manage others as he managed himself. He understood his emotions and those of others and used these abilities to direct his own actions and others' conduct to produce constructive results in situations that arose. He was a true leader who used passionate persuasion and charisma to help others grow closer to each other and his Father. Jesus made people face the facts in order to fix the problems (e.g., Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:1-7:29; the Great Commandment, Mark 12:28-34; Mary and Martha, Luke 10:38-42; Peter commissioned, John 21:15-23).

Jesus transformed lives by creating relationships in a safe environment while all the time listening to the people. He understood that in order to hear what people were saying, he had to be silent. As an active listener, Jesus helped the speakers clarify their stories. Jesus enlarged and enriched his own story through effective listening. Erwin McManus explains in *An Unstoppable Force*, "The Christian experience becomes a journey of discovery and experience with God, and with each added story, the momentum of this life-transforming movement exponentially increases" (119). Most of the time others would listen when Jesus spoke because he had already given them the same respect and attention. Jesus had the ability to separate himself from the situations and systems, *differentiation of self*, yet share with others during the dance. Christ was

truly transformational as he helped followers see beyond themselves and their interests

to look for the good in everyone. Jesus could inspire people while at the same time meet

their physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. He was a master of motivating people

to change. Christ could embrace a persons' denial, not fight it and, by doing so, he

would level their resistance while at the same time lowering their defenses, allowing

individuals to see the need for change in their lives. Jesus knew that the brain needed

stimulation and that growth occurs when one sees the need. He was interested in all

people and could handle one-on-one encounters as well as groups of people. Jesus had a

way of paying attention to an individual's diversity in the framework of a group and

realizing he could not reach everyone with his teaching. His teaching method depended

on who were listening as they may not be able to connect because of something they

were going through in their lives at that time. Their minds could be elsewhere, but Christ

was never deterred by their distractions. He wanted their lives to be altered. J. P.

Moreland explains, "Because thoughts and beliefs are contained in the mind, intellectual

development and the renewal of the mind transform our lives" (77). Jesus did all he

could to reach as many as he could, letting the Holy Spirit work on the mind. Christ

knew that what he was offering brought about freedom. Harry Blamires points out, "We

know as Christians, that our calling is to live as free, choosing, active men and women,

making the best use possible of a world which is God's creation too" (159). Humans are

free to choose and, if allowed, Christ's Spirit is active in that choosing. People do not

have to be bound to any false self, as Seamands comments: "I was set free from my

bondage to the false self, set free not to have to follow in my father's footsteps, set free

to be the unique person God has created me to be" (132). People can overcome the concept of false self and become exactly who God made them to be.

Ministers of the gospel do their best as they speak, be themselves, and trust the Holy Spirit to help. Ministers scan their intended audiences and keep a connection with those they can. The aim is not to manipulate people with emotion but to teach them with a challenging emphasis. Motivation is important; however, content is more important. With content one can manage the way the brain functions in order to stay in control. It helps to tap into the pea-sized amygdale, which is the switch that controls the beginning of a response. A person sometimes need to slow down thoughts and communication to allow the act of listening to trigger the switch to respond appropriately. After all, life is more than just about one's own way; it is Jesus' way or no way. Donald Miller reveals, "The most difficult lie I have ever contended with is this: Life is a story about me" (182). It is, and always has been, the story of God's love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

Christ showed leaders a way of handling old problems, as he demonstrated with the ancient way of doing things through the Pharisees' and Sadducees' systems. Jesus saw the difficulties of overcoming those problems and proceeded to give sensible solutions to do so. He forced people to see things differently and challenged them to use their brains which brought about impetuous change (e.g., Lazarus' death and resurrection in John 11). Peter and Paul were also very good at helping people connect with their teachings (Acts 4). An effective tool for building relationships and showing care for someone is the *speaker listener technique* where one assumes an issue that needs to be discussed and understands that the issue may bring about heightened emotions. The technique is a type of role-play in which the speaker has the floor and the

listener does not interrupt and keeps track of the words being spoken. When the speaker

stops, the listener repeats what was said without interjections or problem solving. After

the listener repeats the conversation, he or she asks if it has been reiterated correctly, and

if not, the speaker says it again until the listener has it correct. The method is not to

solve problems but to make sure all involved are in agreement with the details of the

conversation to bring about understanding. Sometimes the speaker just wants to be heard

while spending time with an individual who listens to the issue. The speaker may want

validation of his or her feelings, not just agreement, or just to be heard. Such attention

shows the speaker that he or she is important to the listener and that his or her words are

important—the speaker matters and the listener cares. Relationships produce an

intimacy factor that cannot be denied, which may be why women leaders can

accomplish transformation more easily than men as a result of their gender uniqueness.

The bottom line was stated by Dr. Javier Sierra: "Transformational leadership is based

on the premise that inspirational and empowering leaders can achieve performance from

their followers beyond expectations." Whether people are men or women, if they

understand their emotional intelligence, they can direct others better because they know

themselves better. They can adjust and manage their own emotions as they deal with

people and life in general. The hypothesis is that a good transformational leader

establishes relationships with others and brings about change through stretching one's

reason. Evoking emotions is not manipulating brain games but bringing about some

anxiety (disrupting homeostasis) in order to generate positive change. According to

Merriam-Webster, homeostasis is "a relatively stable state of equilibrium of tendency

toward such a state between the different but interdependent elements or groups of

elements or an organism, population or group" ("Homeostasis"). A healthy tension

between one's mind and another's mind, adding in anxiety in order to bring about

change, is acceptable as long as truth is involved. Processing emotions is difficult and

one needs to know first what is going on within oneself first in order to fix problems.

Knowledge alone will not accomplish this, but continually facing the facts will help any

situation. Again this technique is not manipulation because that is for self-interests;

instead, it is about management, which focuses on both people's interests.

Understanding one's own emotional make-up and that of others helps keep relationships

healthy. It can also be a tool when responding to others. It assists people to respond

properly to others because they have a good understanding of their own emotions. It

allows a dance to take place as emotions are managed while scanning the other person's

emotions, in turn helping to negotiate the issue between both parties. People do their

best to manage both sides properly for the sake of the relationship. Effective

management of emotions brings success in leading them to truth and strengthens the

connection as they are shown how to have a working relationship with God and how to

serve God. Jim Putman writes, "A leader must be someone who knows his sheep and

understands their needs. He leads them, teaches them, and models for them how to serve

God and others" (102). This premise is about a team of individuals making a difference

in their own lives and that of others. In order to do so, one must identify one's own

feelings and the feelings of others as well and then know what to do with those

processed emotions. Understanding one's emotional intelligence is to comprehend one's

emotions but just as important is controlling them. Becoming aware of emotion and

knowing how one feels and why one feels that way is good. An individual also needs to

understand the wisdom behind those emotions and take from his or her past the knowledge learned in order to lead him or her to a better, purer life with increased ethics and morals. One does one's best not only to manage others, but also to manage one's own emotions.

The Holy Spirit participates in the process if allowed by entering in freely through prayer. Prayer is the best way to self-medicate and communication with the Holy Spirt helps leaders police themselves as they do all they can to control their emotions and those of others. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. This act of self-discipline is where many fail and fall. Discipline, will power, restraint, and strength of mind can be major weaknesses in humanity. People pray and expect Jesus to do the work for them. They need to realize that God does not take their suggestions or requests to answer prayer as the sum total. What is read in Scripture declares that God wants people to get involved to make something happen. Since humans are part of the community, they should live out what they say. Individuals need to get involved. Their involvement needs to be more than an attractional process; involvement should be incarnational. Halter and Smay in their book *The Tangible Kingdom* write, "The incarnational approach tries to first create a people to which someone can belong so that they can feel or see aspects of the gospel lived out" (95). Sometimes caring for others is difficult when one becomes too comfortable alone and has not reached out to others to form relationships.

As reflected in the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand people (Mark 6:34-36), he can be trusted with lives. Humanity can trust him with *all* they have, and if they do then all those around them will be fed and will be changed. Through God's Holy

Spirit all will be fed no matter what the circumstances or no matter what others think.

Sometimes one may be judged as being crazy as one reacts to situations because what

one does may appear out of the norm or as not what is expected. In essence, many

thought Jesus was a false prophet, especially when he said to love everyone including

one's enemies. That turned on people's brainpower and they disagreed. Impulses come

from the lower part of the brain known as the limbic system. Emotional reactions come

quickly and are from the limbic system. The cortex may tell that emotional reaction to

wait, as it comes through with evaluation to help control. Controlling emotions starts at

the limbic system telling the brain what to do (impulsively) and then moving to reason

in the cortex. One's cortex may not understand to love one's enemies, but the limbic

system says people are to love everyone, so then it makes more sense. What is learned

from Christ shows that people do not have to fit into the norm to garner change. As

relational ministers of the gospel, Christians can be in touch with their emotions about a

message to deliver and then try to think about the audience and how they will respond.

Some of the same components that affect one individual can affect other individuals.

Leaders can use missional transformation to bring about consistent, solid, unmovable

change. Humans are both rational and emotional.

Meaning in life is found only after connecting with God's story. History is all

connected to his story, and God has allowed humanity to become part of it. The core is

that God's exchange for humanity's sins came through the work of his Son, Jesus, and

he was gracious enough to let humanity's story intertwine with his. People in Scripture

paid a price as many still do. The end result is an authentic, changed, and committed life

that may lead to changes in others as Alan Hirsch and Debra Hirsch state in their book:

> It is not just about the transfer of vital information, a data download, but rather the transfer of the very life of Christ through the medium and message of our own discipleship. It is about bringing people closer to Jesus and teaching them his ways. It is about loving people and exposing them to the grace and wonder of God's heart, helping them see and experience the values of the kingdom and calling forth those values that may lie dormant in their own hearts and lives. (Hirsch and Hirsch 147-48)

People may never be remembered for the work they do, but the work done will have everlasting benefits or consequences.

Hagberg and Guelich give a good warning. They proclaim, "God finds in us a willing vessel from which love can be offered. We must be aware of ego-centeredness and self-confidence and not be diverted by them. We need to learn to befriend them, laugh at them, and bring them to God" (107). Humanity's call will be fulfilled for as long as God is left in control. It comes full circle and is all about establishing relationships and doing all that is possible to transform lives.

Research Design

This research study was a project designed to investigate church attendance among young adults, ages 18-29, focusing on those who have remained faithful in attending church throughout young adulthood. The research involved questions/statements concerning basic demographics, young adulthood religious factors that contributed to being attracted to a church, and factors that kept them attending. It identified some viable systems that churches utilize, such as those examples listed by William D. Hendricks (276-87). This project also measured successful attraction and retention of young adults' attendance. The project took place in different environments, such as churches, homes, or other spaces where the participants could complete the responses to the survey.

Summary

In order to appreciate the cure, one needs to understand the causes and effects of the disease. The literature review themes dealt with churches' ability to become change agents through transformational systems, bringing about a missional lifestyle and allowing participants to grow throughout a discipleship regiment. The problem began after Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned. Since then humanity has dealt with evil and the temptations that come from its evil source. Good versus evil is played out every day in the world. God's goodness has made a way of escape for each person to experience forgiveness. The literature selected clearly conveys that God will prevail over evil every time and his grace is available if a person chooses to use it. The problem is that many people refuse God's desires and choose their own will when temptations arise. By following their own will and committing sin through disobedience, they lose their relationship with God and usually depart from the church.

Relationships are about loving God with your whole heart, mind, body, and soul, and also loving others as you love yourself (Luke 10:27). The literature reviewed discussed transformational discipleship, victories against evil, and intentional missional outreach to lead others who have been found through relationships to the cross. A wide variety of printed and electronic resources were utilized in building the foundation and creating the framework of this project.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

The persistent problem of maintaining a consistent attendance among young adults still exists despite the efforts put forth to entice them into the church. Many young adults continue to view the church as a myriad of restrictive, religious rules often times enforced by seemingly uncaring, judgmental leaders and members. I subscribed to this same sentiment as a young man and frequently felt as though I did not fit in with the mainstream worship services. Now, I long to make a difference in the lives of young people and assist in creating a welcoming atmosphere that will not only draw in young adults, but will also maintain their attendance in church. As I began researching this dilemma, the inability to retain young adults in regular church attendance appeared to be a widespread problem.

I am hopeful and anticipate uncovering activities churches can do to keep people in attendance. I have a hunch that some could potentially be difficult if congregations hold on to particular nonbiblical sacred traditions or certain church worldviews. For example, churches may not be willing to eliminate Sunday school classes, dissolve other programs, or revamp the worship service to allow teenagers and children to participate in order to help retain young adults. Some may think these examples are a bit extreme, and they may be, but the church should be willing to make changes to lead people to Christ and then hold onto them throughout their entire lives. The purpose of this project was to investigate how Christian organizations successfully attract and retain young adults (ages 18-29) and thereby discern best practices in this area as well as to learn how

leaders can measure the success of their Christian organizations in reaching and retaining young adults.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were designed to identify successful systems which attracted and maintained the attendance of young adults.

Research Question #1

How do successful organizations attract young adults to their establishments? The purpose of this question was to discover the reasons people are attracted to a church, to find out what makes people choose to attend. The instrument used to collect this data is a survey with straightforward statements in a Likert-type model. The survey questions/statements connected to Research Question #1 are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 25, 30, 31, and 32.

Research Question #2

How do successful organizations maintain the young adults' attendance? The purpose for this question was to discover how organizations (i.e., churches) keep young adults consistently attending. The instrument used to collect this data is a survey with straightforward statements in a Likert-type model. The survey questions/statements connected to Research Question #2 are 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31.

Research Question #3

How do executive leaders measure their organizations' success in reaching and retaining young adults? The purpose for this question is to discover how organizations (i.e., churches) measure their success in attracting and maintaining young adults. The

instrument used to collect this data is a survey with straightforward statements in a

Likert-type model. The survey questions/statements connected to Research Question #3

are 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39.

Population and Participants

The criteria for selecting these groups centered primarily on the nature of the

study. The interest was in finding those who are executive church leaders in established,

medium-sized churches in the state of Florida with an average weekend attendance of

100-250. These Christian organizational leaders had a knowledge of successful systems

that attracted and retained young adults in their congregations. Participants for this

project were selected through an Internet-based search of applicable churches. I used

Internet-published church directories to access the executive church leaders' electronic

mail addresses if they fell within the project parameters. The participants were contacted

via their electronic mail addresses and sent a cover letter/consent form. All executive

church leaders were selected without regard to race, ethnicity, or gender.

Design of the Study

This ministry project was a survey designed as a learning exercise to investigate

church attendance among young adults and focused on those who were faithful in

attending church throughout young adulthood. The research tool was sent to executive

church leaders and involved questions/statements concerning basic demographics,

young adulthood religious factors that contributed to being attracted to church, and other

factors that kept them attending. The project took place in medium-sized Florida

churches or other spaces where individuals could complete the appropriate responses to

the Internet-based survey.

This study began while conversing with minister friends of mine. As we discussed the issues of attracting and maintaining young adults in their congregations, questions arose in my mind. I formulated written questions to further my interests and approached five local ministers to discuss my informal questions. The answers I received during our conversations helped me develop a quantitative survey for executive church leaders. The discussions were necessary for me to gain a better focus on the main points needed to be considered in determining how certain Christian organizations were attracting and retaining young adults. The goal was to gather as much data as possible while specifically focusing on those organizations already successful in the retention of young adults.

The quantitative descriptive study utilized a survey research method that statistically identified trends and patterns among executive church leaders who have successfully implemented systems to attract and retain young adults. The study's purpose was to identify commonalities among executive church leaders regarding their procedures to attract and retain young adults. This study involved the reasons why young adults are attracted to and continue attending particular churches in Florida. It also focused on methods that organizations use to measure their successes in reaching and retaining young adults.

Instrumentation

This study used quantitative elements developed from conversations with other ministers to investigate the systems used by executive leaders in Christian organizations. The survey, called "Do You See Me Now?", contains questions/statements of clear concepts with simple obvious thoughts and ideas behind them. This study provided the

structure for presenting the results of this investigation. A Likert-type tool was

determined to be appropriate for this study, as all of the questions were analyzed

individually. Clason and Dormody describe the difference between Likert study and

Likert-type study related to how the questions/statements should be analyzed, so for this

study, one survey instrument was constructed and administered via the SurveyMonkey®

advanced survey delivery service.

Pilot Peer Group

In preparation for this research, discussions were conducted with five Christian

organizational leaders I know, who operate successful programs to attract and maintain

church attendance among young adults. The members of this peer group included two

senior pastors, two executive pastors, and one executive church program director:

1. Rev. Doug Dykstra—Senior Pastor, Adventure Christian Church, Tavares,

Florida.

2. Rev. John Abner—Senior Pastor, Victory Christian Center, Umatilla,

Florida.

3. Pastor Jonathan Pearson—Associate Pastor of Adults and Missions,

LifePointe Church, Eustis, Florida.

4. Pastor Doug Edwards—Associate Pastor, Trinity Evangelical Free Church,

Eustis, Florida.

5. Mrs. Cheryl Dykstra—Program Director, Adventure Christian Church,

Tavares, Florida.

I personally discussed with these five executive leaders relevant topics

concerning their ministry background, years of church service, the number of voluntary

and paid staff, and average annual church attendance. In addition, they were asked how they attracted and maintained young adults in attendance and what they believed continued to make their systems successful (see Appendix C). Feedback received from this group provided a basis for the development of the research tool and served as a learning process to refine the language of the survey instrument, "Do You See Me Now?"

Reliability and Validity

The goal of this quantitative research was to uncover successful systems to maintain young adults in church. The delimitations were the targeted leaders who attracted and sustained young adults ages 18-29. This study focused on executive church leaders who were currently employed and operating successful young adult programs in medium-sized churches in Florida. A major limitation centered on the respondent's honesty in completing the survey.

I narrowed the study down by focusing on two questions of how churches attract and keep young adults attending their organizations and one question related to how organizations measured their successes. The delimitations were controlled by including only relevant questions/statements that pertained to the three research questions. This tactic enabled me to focus only on those answers that would not cloud the topic. A timeframe was established for the surveys to be completed in order for proper processing and tabulation. Only churches in the state of Florida area were included in this study. This method allowed for commonalities and basic patterns from the results received. Persons surveyed were pastors, associates, and other executive leaders within Christian organizations. These leaders held supervisory positions and were able to

provide the data for this study. Individuals chosen to participate were the executive

leaders of organizations that match the selection criteria established for this study. The

criteria for selecting these groups centered primarily on the nature of the research

questions. The interest was in finding executive church leaders in established medium-

sized churches in Florida.

I designed the survey in such a way as to answer the questions regarding

maintaining church attendance among young adults. An outside, independently

contracted company authenticated the results, lending credibility to the information

received. The completion of the market research from the peer group was completed, it

allowed for an understandable survey to be created with the desire to gather data to

answer the research questions. The methodology was reliable because the survey was

distributed to executive church leaders and processed by an independent agency. This

approach provided dependable and trustworthy results in the outcome. The survey was

valid because it was effective and acceptable to others who wished to attract and

maintain young adults in their churches. In turn, the results were usable for others who

also wished to accomplish the same goal in their ministries with young adults. The

endorsement of those who took the survey validate its applicable worth. This

nonthreatening survey instrument produced an outcome that helped me utilize the results

and, at the same time, reminded those who took the survey of what they were not doing

to attract and keep young adults in their services. I was interested in seeing the

consistency of the surveys and the procedures they highlighted.

Themes were identified through the data analysis process and were extracted to

understand what key ideas and themes were consistent among the participants.

Parameters that were used made the most impact on the study by assuring no researcher

bias. Upon completion of these surveys, I used the survey research data analysis via

SurveyMonkey® to score surveys using the same criteria and then combined all of the

statements into a final document.

Data Collection

Data collection began in February 2016 and was completed in April 2016. The

instrument used to collect this data was a survey with straightforward statements in a

Likert-type model. The survey was e-mailed to executive leaders of various

denominational and/or independent, medium-sized churches with a regular weekend

attendance between 100-250 in the state of Florida (see Appendix A). A cover

letter/consent form was electronically mailed beforehand to the executive church leaders

selected via an Internet search to solicit further participation in the research project, and

to obtain informed consent from each executive church leader. When I received an

electronic response from any recipient of the initial e-mail, it indicated his or her

willingness to complete the survey. A second component of the e-mail sent to the

willing participants provided a link to the survey via SurveyMonkey®. By clicking on

the link, the participants once again indicated their continued consent via permission to

contribute to the research project. The purpose of this project was to investigate how

medium-sized churches, in the state of Florida, successfully attracted and retained young

adults and thereby discerned best practices in this area, as well as how executive church

leaders measured the successes of their church organizations in reaching and retaining

young adults.

On 15 February 2016, the cover letter/consent form was electronically mailed to the identified executive church leaders. I allowed three weeks in order to receive as many positive responses back as possible. After the survey data was received from SurveyMonkey®, I forwarded it to the RU Institute™ via electronic mail to be analyzed and interpreted. RU Institute™ returned results within ten days of receipt of data. This marketing organization agreed to return the raw data and provide their interpretive reports via a means of a written chain of custody so the location of the data was always known.

The survey asked participants to respond to a series of questions/statements about their experience in attracting and maintaining young adults in church attendance. Participants were asked to provide information on their experiences with (1) young adult events, (2) music, (3) church environment, (4) social media, (5) small groups, (6) outreach, (7) community events, (8) educational systems, (9) discipleship programs, (10) mentoring, (11) types of worship services, (12) accurate vision and mission statements, (13) church partnerships, and (14) and methods of measuring success. The survey also collected demographic data that allowed me to understand the different aspects of the participants' positions, educational backgrounds, and years of experience. The results of this survey were analyzed to determine the statements that achieved basic patterns among the executive church leaders.

Data Analysis

The analysis procedure for this survey instrument was based on the Likert-style survey model. The survey centered on multiple religious factors from the respondents. The benefit for me was to discover what determining factors affected those executive

church leaders and the systems they implemented to attract and maintain young adults in their churches. The methodology was used to determine if a basic pattern was achievable among the group of executive church leaders. As the survey research study was descriptive in nature, the data analysis used an established method to find the commonalities and best practices.

Table 3.1. Data Analysis Process

Research Question (RQ)	Survey Questions/Statements Connected to Research Questions	Data Analysis Method
RQ 1—How do successful organizations attract young adults to their establishments?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 25, 30, 31, 32	SurveyMonkey®: Identification of saturation points, commonalities and basic patterns.
RQ 2—How do successful organizations maintain the young adults' attendance?	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	SurveyMonkey®: Identification of saturation points, commonalities and basic patterns.
RQ 3—How do organizations measure if they are reaching and maintaining young adults?	33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39	SurveyMonkey®: Identification of saturation points, commonalities and basic patterns.

All data collected from SurveyMonkey® was analyzed and grouped together for an overall understanding of the study and was used to understand trends in the data. The basic patterns were identified during the analysis phase of the study. These common points are the ones used by executive leaders to bolster and maintain attendance among young adults in the state of Florida.

Ethical Procedures

Participants were informed of the nature of the study via a cover letter/consent form delivered through electronic mail. A cover letter was electronically attached to the

survey (see Appendix D). It advised the respondents of their rights of consent. Since this study was survey based, participation was voluntary. Participants were provided the opportunity to complete the survey via e-mail. Those who completed the questions/statements give their consent by virtue of clicking on the survey link and answering the questions.

Confidentiality was preserved through an independent Internet-based survey engine that tabulated the results and the assurance through the consent form. I used an Internet-based research engine to safeguard identifiable records of individuals and protected the confidentiality of the project participants. The internet based research engine, SurveyMonkey®, guaranteed confidentiality with the paid version of their product and utilized secure electronic transmission mechanisms. The marketing and development company, RU Institute™, provided their own confidentiality statement. The research results were disseminated through my dissertation and submitted to the Asbury Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Office prior to graduation in May 2016. SurveyMonkey® provided the results of the survey to me. I submitted the data to RU Institute™ via secure electronic mail. RU Institute™ interpreted the data collected and returned statistical results to me via a password-protected jump drive and a printed copy. Once the data was collected and processed, all the data was secured in a locked safe located in my home office. After the dissertation was completed and I received my doctorate of ministry, the data was destroyed by crosscut paper shredder. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research project period.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

Many establishments and venues have difficulty maintaining attendance of teenagers and young adults. This dilemma has also been seen in many churches today. The problem of maintaining attendance still exists despite a difference between what the world and the church do to entice people to attend. In observing worship services today, they appear to lack attendees from the ages of 18 to 29.

Those church leaders trying to build any kind of setting that attracts young adults, are concerned with this dilemma. The purpose of this project was to investigate how Christian organizations successfully attract and retain young adults (ages 18-29) and thereby discern best practices in this area as well as to learn how leaders can measure the success of their Christian organizations in reaching and retaining young adults.

Participants

I directed the study to executive church leaders because they are the most informed and most experienced and in the best position to introduce programs, events, and other systems into their respective churches. Medium-sized churches, with average attendance of 100-250, were used as a selection criterion because they most closely represented the size of my church. The state of Florida was chosen as it is where I reside and serve as an executive church leader. The survey-based data was an attempt to discover commonalities among such churches and their leaders.

The participants for this project were selected through an Internet search engine for medium-sized churches located in the state of Florida with 100-250 regular weekend attendees. I used Internet-published church directories to access the executive church leaders' electronic mail addresses that fall within the project parameters. Two-hundred and thirty-six participants were contacted via their electronic mail addresses and sent a cover letter/consent form. The executive church leaders were selected without regard to race, ethnicity, or gender. According to SurveyMonkey® of the 236 total invitations, 104 were opened (44.1 percent), one-hundred fifteen were unopened (48.7 percent), ten bounced (4.2 percent), thirty-four clicked through (14.4 percent), and seven opted out. In all 27 total responses were received, of which 24 were complete responses and 3 were partial responses. The percentage of total responses (27) compared to the total opened invitations (104) to participate was 26 percent (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Overview of Survey Invitations

Invitations	n	%
Opened	104	44.0
Unopened	115	48.7
Bounced	10	4.2
Clicked through	34	14.4
Opted out	7	—

In Table 4.1, the number of clicked through responses are already figured into the total number of opened responses. The original invitations were followed up with four reminders via SurveyMonkey® to those who had not yet responded over the course of three weeks. A subsequent thank-you e-mail was sent to those who responded.

Table 4.2 is an overview of the total responses. Twenty-seven were received, of which twenty-four were complete responses and three were partial responses.

Table 4.2. Overview of Survey Responses

Responses	n	%
Complete	24	88.9
Partial	3	11.1
Total	27	100.0

Figure 4.1 gives the three basic geographical areas of the churches that responded. Each response did not mean that they have successful young adult ministries, but they are still fulfilling ministries in their area, such as senior-citizen-focused programs.
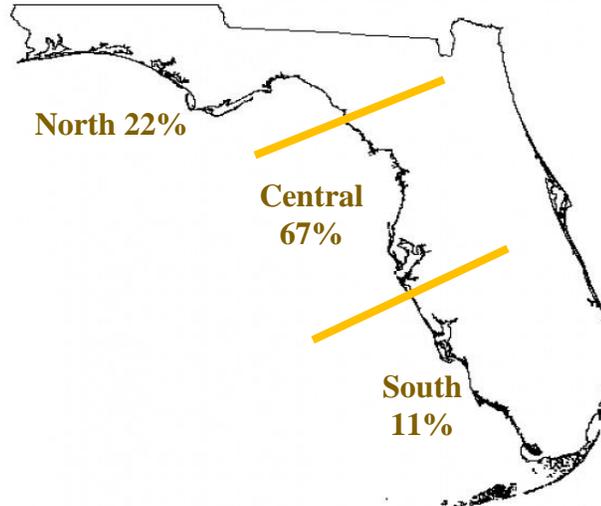
Figure 4.1. Florida Protestant churches with 100-250 regular attendees that responded to the survey, divided into three Florida zones—North, Central, and South.

Figure 4.2 is a representation of the different churches that responded. Each section symbolizes Protestant churches listed by denomination. The greatest response to the survey tool was received from executive church leaders of the Methodist denomination (63 percent), followed by the Presbyterian churches (26 percent), and finally by the executive church leaders of the Nazarene denomination (11 percent).
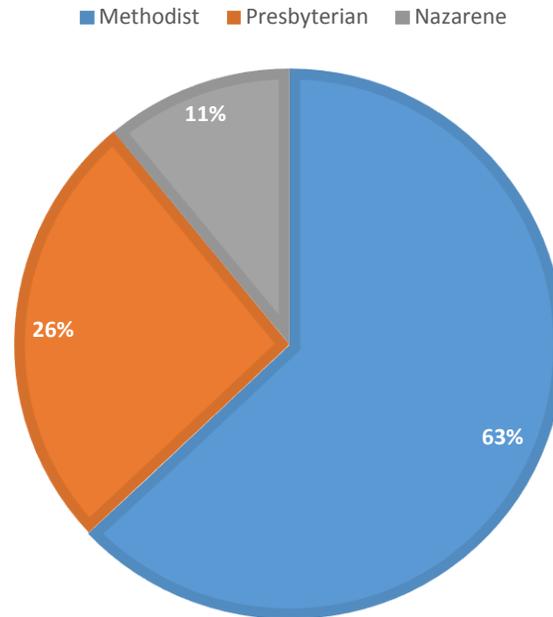
Figure 4.2. Denominational representation.

The criteria for selecting these groups centered primarily on the nature of the study. The interest was in finding those who are executive church leaders in established, medium-sized churches in the state of Florida with an average weekend attendance of 100-250. These Christian organizational leaders had a knowledge of successful systems that attracted and retained young adults in their congregations. Participants for this project were selected through an Internet-based search of applicable churches.

I wrote each statement in the research tool (see Appendix A). They were developed based on the thought of what programs and events would have attracted this writer to attend a particular church as a young adult. During the course of young adulthood, I attended various sized churches of different denominational backgrounds and observed how other young adults responded to the worship services and programs.

The research tool was developed to extract ideas that could be formulated into actual successful attractional methods and programs.

The literature reviews also helped to produce a working survey tool. Much of the theological framework was based on spiritual formation and the problem humanity faces with evil in the world. I believe that for God's creation to overcome that evil, they must form relationships with God first, and then with others as well, to work out their salvation and have a good, righteous life. As followers of God, people are to love him with all their hearts, minds, souls, and strength. God followers are also to love other people more than themselves, living by the *Shema*, actively loving and serving God and others in an attempt to know God (Hirsh 90). Once individuals form relationships with God, generally, they want others to know him too, and will do what they can to introduce others to God. McKnight says, "[T]he mission of a disciple is to reach out to others with the mission of Jesus" (229). Jesus gave his mission in Matthew 28:18-20, to "go and make." If individuals follow Jesus' command they will practice the summary of discipling. If Christians want to cultivate and care for others through discipleship, they must be obedient to Christ's instructions (Willard 123). Willard gives readers a good look into Spiritual Formation and the need for every believer to take it seriously.

Churches cannot help people form a relationship with God and disciple them if the churches are unable to attract them into their buildings and/or presence. This study takes the attractional approach to see what is being done to entice people into church. If the followers of God can persuade others to attend a church, then slowly relationships and discipleship can occur. At that point the attractional model turns into an incarnational model. If the church wants to be more missional they need to be more

incarnational (Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*). If we are to embody Jesus to

the world, we will be quick to put others first, die to ourselves, and work on

relationships to attract others to Christ and to church. Unfortunately, most modern

churches will not let go of old human plans and strategies. According to Leonard I.

Sweet, people have entered into an era where old church programs can no longer be

circumnavigated. A renovation is desperately needed within the church, which has to be

totally dependent upon God's presence and power. What worked in the recent past does

not appear to be producing the same results as it did fifty or so years ago. Although

worship is very important part of following God, so is bringing others into relationship

with him. If the past ways are not yielding followers, then Christians must evaluate why

this is the case. The tool used in this study was formulated as a way of looking at other

alternatives to bring young adults to an establishment, the church, that they may

otherwise feel uncomfortable attending. Sometimes, the answer may be as simple as

creating a setting that is outside the church and meeting in small groups to form and

build on relationships. Willard clearly describes a problem that has occurred in most

churches today. There seems to have developed a self-centeredness in the body of Christ

where attendees are only concerned with those around them in their church and focused

on the need maintain their buildings and programs—forgetting Christ has called

believers to something more.

The findings in this study may further reinforce what Brisco states. The hopes of

building attendance come through discernment. Discerning where God is moving, what

individual's gifts are, how to incorporate those gifts, and using them in light of one's

local setting. The local framework for this study was the state of Florida where many

retired people reside. However, Christians are to go and bring others into a right

relationship with God, no matter what their age. Without an *others first* mentality, no

new people will be added to the kingdom. Oher people should become the church's

focus and their very meaning for existence—always allowing God and others to be first

(Hunter 121). With this course in mind, the research examined what churches have done

to attract others to their establishment. The tool investigated the ways a community uses

events, programing, small groups, worship style, social media, vision statements,

partnership, records, and environment to attract young adults. Creativity and authenticity

were researched through specific statements in the survey tool. Gilmore and Pine say in

order to be authentic a business needs to be natural, not artificial; original, not a copy;

exceptional, do it with feeling; referential, pulling from memories and history; and

influential, calling others to a better way of life (49, 220). *Calling others* takes people

doing their part to attract them to church. The theory of being attractional has credence,

yet it alone cannot accomplish the preferred destination. The incarnational approach

would be more effective than the attractional process to influence people to attend

worship services (Halter and Smay, *Tangible Kingdom* 95). Attractional creates a place

for people to attend, incarnational attempts to create a people with a sense of belonging

as they live out their faith in community. This study and the research tool that was used

looked at ways in which executive church leaders could be relevant when trying to reach

young adults. Ham and Beemer compare the word relevance to relate. If something is

going to be relevant it must relate to an individual in such a way that a connection is

produced to bring about an idea of importance that will lead to change (73). This survey

tool examined ideas for attracting young adults and determined if these ideas were

important enough to incorporate into their churches. Life is full of experiences.

Following Jesus and maintaining any other type of relationships are no different.

Christians should not be afraid of experiences. The survey searched for ways in which

executive church leaders were engaging their churches through different experiences,

events, and programs in order to attract and maintain the young adults attending their

establishments.

Research Question #1

The first question I asked was intended to find out, "How do successful

organizations attract young adults to their establishments?" I focused on churches, so the

purpose of this question was to discover the reasons people are attracted to, and choose

to attend, a particular church. It was to examined what makes people choose to attend

those establishments. The instrument used to collect this data was a survey with

straightforward statements in a Likert-type model. Once the data was analyzed, the

information was palpable that the research was divided into different categories: events,

programing, small groups, worship style, social media, vision, partnership, records, and

environment.

The data suggests that for this first research question, not all churches agree on

how to attract young adults. What became evident in finding out how organizations

attract young adults was that not all churches do the same thing to arrive at the same

goal. The responses had some similarities in that many did agree upon, not strongly

agreed but agreed all the same, to effectively accomplish ministry goals effectively

among young adults. Table 4.3 offers an insight into those agreed-upon areas of

attraction.

Table 4.3. Attracting Young Adults

		Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neither %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
1	We use events such as church-sponsored *concerts* to attract young adults to church.	23.08	23.08	19.23	30.77	3.85
2	We use events such as *church dinners* to attract young adults to church.	11.54	11.54	7.69	61.54	7.69
3	We use events such as *fall festivals* to attract young adults to church.	7.69	3.85	19.23	53.85	15.38
4	We use events such as *Christmas cantatas* to attract young adults to church.	7.69	30.77	23.08	38.46	—
5	We use events such as *Easter dramas* to attract young adults to church.	19.23	26.92	15.38	34.62	3.85
6	We use events such as *sports programs* to attract young adults.	26.92	30.77	23.08	11.54	7.69
7	We put an emphasis on our music program in our attempt to draw and keep young adults attending.	16.00	8.00	4.00	68.00	4.00
8	We emphasize college/career classes in our attempt to draw and keep young adults attending.	15.38	38.46	19.23	23.08	3.85
12	Our small groups are held at *different places in our community* (i.e., restaurants, bowling alley, coffee shops, etc.).	12.50	20.83	20.83	45.83	—
13	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults, our church emphasizes *community outreach* programs (i.e., schools, health centers, etc.).	4.35	8.70	13.04	60.87	13.04
14	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults, our church emphasizes *educational programs* (i.e., Bible, marriage, family, "how to," etc.).	8.33	8.33	20.83	54.17	8.33
18	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults, we schedule church *mission trips*.	4.17	8.33	33.33	50.00	4.17
19	In our attempt to draw young adults to church, we use *bulk mailing* to invite others to our church.	12.50	54.17	20.83	12.50	—
25	We have *a church Web site*.	—	4.35	—	39.13	56.52
30	Our *church environment* includes *comfortable seating*.	—	12.50	4.17	70.83	12.50
31	Our *church environment* includes advanced *lighting equipment*.	4.17	29.17	20.83	29.17	16.67
32	It is extremely important for our church to have a *high community visibility*.	—	8.33	25.00	33.33	33.33

The most prominent percentages observed in my data of averages equal to or greater than 60 percent of agree and strongly agree are, in order, church dinners, fall festivals, music programs, community outreach, educational programs, church Web sites, comfortable seating, and a high community visibility. The respondents prefer comfortably meeting together, having good music and educational curricula, while at the same time doing their best to maintain community outreach and visibility. The highest percentages for the categories of statements that these church executive leaders agreed upon were comfortable seating (83.33 percent), and having a church Web site (95.65 percent).

The most prominent percentages observed in this data of averages equal to or greater than 60 percent of disagree and strongly disagree are in the use of bulk mailing to invite others to church. Other findings in this study that were at least 33 percent (one-third) or greater in these same categories of disagree and strongly disagree to attract young adults were concerts, Christmas cantatas, Easter dramas, sports programs, college and career classes, small groups, and advanced church lighting equipment. The results of 33 percent or greater in the *neither* category included scheduled mission trips to draw and maintain young adults.

Some potential thought-provoking observations were that the church executives found comfortable seating more important than Easter dramas, college/career classes, or mission trips. When tallied, Christmas Cantatas equaled 38.46 percent in both categories of disagree/strongly disagree and agree/strongly agree. Easter dramas displayed a higher percentage in disagree and strongly disagree (46.15 percent) than agree and strongly agree in using these types of events to attract young adults to church.

Research Question #2

The second question that I wanted to investigate was "How do successful organizations maintain the young adults' attendance?" The purpose for this question was to discover how organizations, i.e. churches keep young adults consistently attending. Once again, the instrument used to collect this data was a survey with straightforward statements in a Likert-type model. The data suggests that programming is important to these executive church leaders, as well as traditional and contemporary worship styles. The survey also indicated these leaders implemented vision and mission statements, liked comfortable seating, maintained a church Web site, and used social media such as Facebook (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Retaining Young Adults

		Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neither %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
7	We put an emphasis on our *music program* in our attempt to draw and keep young adults attending.	16.00	8.00	4.00	68.00	4.00
8	We emphasize *college/career classes* in our attempt to draw and keep young adults attending.	15.38	38.46	19.23	23.08	3.85
9	We put an emphasis on our *small groups/home groups* in our attempt to keep young adults attending.	4.17	20.83	12.50	45.83	16.67
10	Our small groups are held on *church property*.	12.50	16.67	4.17	62.50	4.17
11	Our small groups are held at *private homes*.	16.67	12.50	20.83	41.67	8.33
12	Our small groups are held at *different places in our community* (i.e., restaurants, bowling alley, coffee shops, etc.).	12.50	20.83	20.83	45.83	—
13	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults our church emphasizes *community outreach* programs (i.e., schools, health centers, etc.).	4.35	8.70	13.04	60.87	13.04

Table 4.4. Retaining Young Adults, continued

		Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neither %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
14	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults, our church emphasizes *educational programs* (i.e., Bible, marriage, family, "how to," etc.).	8.33	8.33	20.83	54.17	8.33
15	In an attempt to keep young adults in church, we emphasize *discipleship programs* (i.e., growth in Christ, leadership development, etc.).	4.17	8.33	8.33	70.83	8.33
16	In our attempt to keep young adults attending our church, we emphasize a *mentoring* program.	4.17	33.33	29.17	29.17	4.17
17	In our attempt to keep young adults attending our church, we put an emphasis on systems and programs.	4.17	25.00	33.33	25.00	12.50
18	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults, we schedule church mission trips.	4.17	8.33	33.33	50.00	4.17
20	We hold a *traditional style worship* service.	12.50	12.50	12.50	33.33	29.17
21	We hold a *contemporary style worship* service.	8.33	12.50	16.67	41.67	20.83
22	We hold a *blend* of worship styles, including both traditional and contemporary styles simultaneously.	4.17	16.67	25.00	41.67	12.50
23	We use the social media platform *Facebook*.	4.17	4.17	—	54.17	37.50
24	We use the social media platform *Twitter*.	12.50	29.17	16.67	29.17	12.50
25	We have a *church Web site*.	—	4.35	—	39.13	56.52
26	We have a *vision statement* that accurately reflects our church.	4.17	12.50	8.33	45.83	29.17
27	We have a *mission statement* that accurately reflects our church.	—	12.50	12.50	50.00	25.00
28	We *partner* with other *like denominational* churches to keep young adults in our church.	4.17	12.50	25.00	54.17	4.17
29	We *partner* with other churches across *denominational lines* to keep young adults in our church.	4.17	20.83	50.00	20.83	4.17
30	Our *church environment* includes *comfortable seating*.	—	12.50	4.17	70.83	12.50
31	Our *church environment* includes advanced *lighting equipment*.	4.17	29.17	20.83	29.17	16.67

The highest percentage results for Research Question #2 in the categories of agree and strongly agree, were comfortable seating (83.33 percent), use of the social media platform Facebook (91.67 percent), and maintaining a church Web site (95.65 percent). Research results also revealed in the categories of agree and strongly agree that exactly 75 percent of the respondents have vision statements and mission statements representative of their churches. Some of the above data overlapped with the first question, but all the data collected included systems that executive church leaders use to maintain consistent attendance of young adults.

The most prominent percentages observed in this research data of averages equal to, or greater than, 67 percent (two-thirds) of agree and strongly agree are music programs, community outreach programs, discipleship programs, FaceBook, Websites, vision statement, mission statement, and seating. No prominent percentages are observed in this research data of averages equal to or greater than 60 percent of disagree and strongly disagree. Other findings in this study that were at least 33 percent (one-third) or greater in disagree and strongly disagree categories of statements to attract young adults were college/career classes, small groups held in different places in the community, mentoring programs, the social media platform Twitter, and advanced lighting equipment. The results of 33 percent or greater in the neither category were when the emphasis was on systems/programs and mission trips, with the highest percentage being 50 percent who chose neither when responding to partnering with other churches across denominational lines to attract and retain young adults.

Research Question #3

The third question was an attempt to extract the mechanisms used by executive

church leaders to track how successful they are in reaching and retaining young adult

attendees: "How do executive leaders measure their organizations' success in reaching

and retaining young adults?" This question sought to discover how organizations, i.e.

churches measure their successes in attracting and maintaining young adults. The

instrument used to collect this data was a survey with straightforward statements in a

Likert-type model. Table 4.5 represents the percentages of the respondents' answers to

Research Question #3.

Table 4.5. Tracking Young Adults

		Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neither %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
33	We keep record of attendees through *numerical counts* each service.	—	—	—	56.25	43.48
34	We keep record of *baptisms* that occur within our church.	—	—	—	56.52	43.48
35	We keep record of those who accept Jesus as their Savior (*salvations*).	—	8.70	13.04	47.83	30.43
36	We record and maintain a list of *church members*.	—	—	—	60.87	39.13
37	We use visitor cards to identify and document *new attendees*.	8.70	—	—	56.52	34.78
38	We use an *observational method* to track participation in each service.	4.35	4.35	21.74	65.22	4.35
39	We use *internal survey systems* to measure young adults' satisfaction with church programs and/or activities.	4.35	52.17	13.04	26.09	4.35

Research results for this question revealed the following consensus. Executive

leaders agree and strongly agree in maintaining numerical counts of attendees in each

service (99.73 percent), kept records of baptisms (99.73 percent), salvations (78.26 percent), and church members (100 percent). Church leaders also agree and strongly agree with using visitor cards (91.30 percent) to identify any new attendees in their church. The research tool also indicated that executive church leaders are not using survey systems to measure satisfaction with church programs or activities. The only prominent percentage observed (56.52 percent) in this data for disagree and strongly disagree was the use of internal survey systems to measure young adults' satisfaction with church programs and/or activities.

Summary of Major Findings

The original research was processed by SurveyMonkey®. After the research was completed, an independent consulting company, *RU Institute™*, analyzed the data. It revealed categories throughout the survey. Figure 4.3 shows the averages in those categories developed from the total responses received.
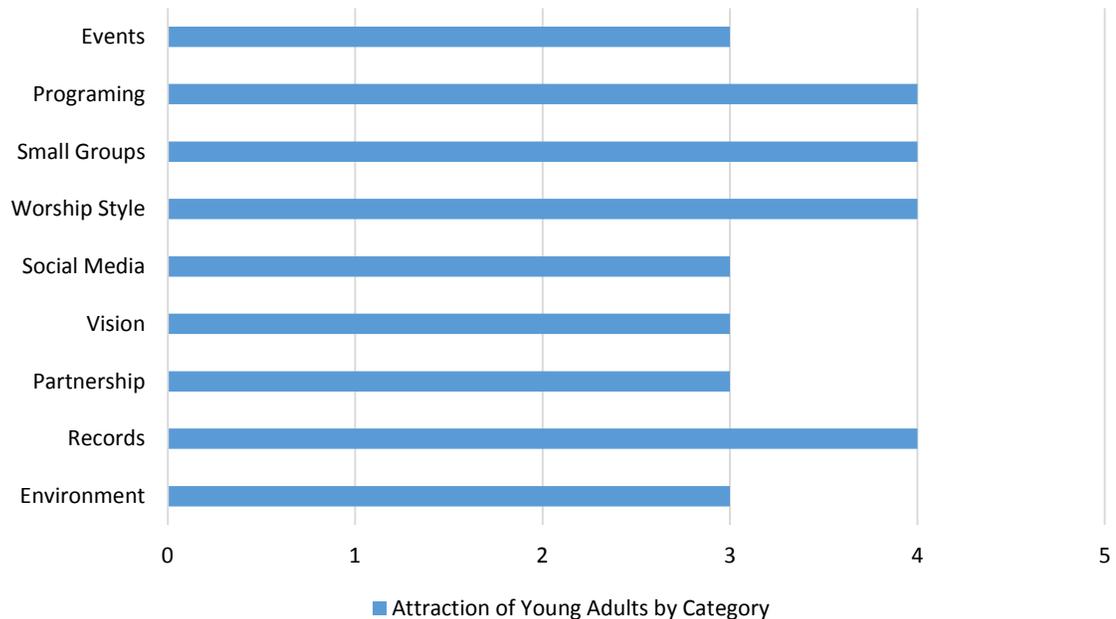
KEY:
1—Strongly Disagree
2—Disagree
3—Neither
4—Agree
5—Strongly Agree

Figure 4.3. Overall data collection by category.

Several responses to the survey tool statements revealed a stronger consensus among the respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing, than the disagreeing and strongly disagreeing categories. The summary of the major findings in the survey tool responses are as follows:

- The social media platform Facebook was utilized more than the social media platform Twitter.

- The churches preferred using a Web site over bulk mailings to reach young adults and visitor cards are distributed to new attendees; however, community outreach programs scored lowest as a method of attracting young adults.

- Executive church leaders kept records through numerical counts for attendance, salvations, and baptisms as measures of success rather than collecting data via internal satisfaction surveys from young adults; Only one survey statement produced 100 percent of agree and strongly agree among respondents—and that category was maintaining records of church members to measure the churches successes.

This research project, through the survey tool, brought best practices to light that executive church leaders are implementing to attract young adults and maintain young adults' attendance, and the systems they have in place to track their successes. The research data indicated common patterns among the respondents, as well as areas that need more attention. Research results suggest that executive leaders have mechanisms in place to track attendance of young adults but not necessarily the programs and events to attract them. The literature and this study reveal that these attractional methods do not always work well and are not the best practices of attracting and maintaining young adults to attend worship services. Even though the data suggests that the attractional method can work, little doubt remains that an incarnational method would be more successful. Major findings from this study could be used to improve upon existing church ministries to attract and maintain young adults and lead them into fulfilling the church's mission.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

The major findings in this study must start with the problem and purpose of this erudition. I will try not to repeat myself, but that will be difficult since the problem and purpose is the same. Establishments or venues, which included churches, have difficulty maintaining attendance of teenagers and young adults. Obviously, the church and the world do things differently, but the church does not provide a mammoth variance to entice people to attend. The age-old problem of maintaining attendance still exists. Worship services today have the same problem. In the young adult population, the problem exists all the more. Most modern churches lack attendees between the ages of 18-29.

This gap of ages concerns church leaders trying to build any kind of place that attracts young adults. The purpose of this project was to investigate how Christian organizations successfully attract and retain young adults (ages 18-29) and thereby discern best practices in this area as well as to learn how leaders can measure the success of their Christian organizations in reaching and retaining young adults.

Social Media

The research data suggests that respondents preferred using the social media platform Facebook instead of the social media platform Twitter. These types of electronic media-driven platforms allow young adults to communicate and share information and ideas. The church could use these networking online communities to advertise and attract young adults to their establishments. Churches could involve young

adults through social media outlets which, in turn, may keep them attending. These platforms would be a way of tracking young adults as well as reaching them in this postmodern technological age.

Social media is a major form of communication. This form of communiqué has been increasing with humanity over (and over) for the last decade. Facebook was created in 1997 and churches on the forefront have been using multi-media platforms longer than that. Computers, projectors, and tools such as PowerPoint© are now part of most churches' everyday lives, so using outlets such as Facebook and Twitter as tools that could be used to build upon the attendance of young adults is reasonable. This current generation of young adults are media literate people who use these types of platforms to communicate. The church should also tap into these outlets to booster its growth:

> Electronic media is indigenous because most people have heard the tongue since the day they were born.… It is a fundamental cognitive system of communication. In fact, resistance to media ministry usually arises out of ignorance of media as a formational system. (Wilson 34)

These systems could be used to build thriving communities. Executive leaders in business have embraced this trend and are using social media to their advantage. One such group is Causely™, and it was created to help organizations generate word-of-mouth referrals on Facebook. Some churches using this outlet are producing large results. One article gives a perfect example of reaching many young adults in a short amount of time. It centers around check-ins that a person can accomplish on his or her phone or tablet. The executive church leader researched best practices for church planting and found that Facebook check-ins would reach a massive number of people. Plus, it provides valuable information about the church:

> Each check-in contains a link to your church's Facebook page, a map of
> your church's location, and displays your church's Facebook rating.
> Since every Facebook check-in is typically seen by about 200 friends,
> they're a powerful way to generate friend-to-friend recommendations.
> ("How Shift Church")

This type of action would, at least, help an executive church leader attract young adults,

help maintain connection with them, and allow some form of record keeping of those

attending. It is simply a way of keeping up with the culture's form of communicating in

an effort to reach them for Christ, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22:

> When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ.
> When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that
> law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to
> Christ those who are under the law. [21] When I am with the Gentiles who
> do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring
> them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of
> Christ. [22] When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for
> I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with
> everyone, doing everything I can to save some.

The leaders of the church had a very good understanding of their surrounding culture. In

Paul's culture, he understood the buzzwords of his day, and he used that language to

reach the lost. Paul was committed to using new models of communication,

understanding the culture, and speaking God's truth to those around him. The

communication of today's postmodern culture is clearly being exercised on social media

platforms, so should it not be the church's responsibility to use and try the language and

systems of our day, to reach young adults of this century—yes it should.

The perceived trepidation that young adults are getting all they spiritually need

from Facebook, and not physically attending church worship services may be true. The

churches may be putting too much emphasis on social media and they are losing the

human contact element. In the model described, these media outlets can be used in such

a way as to attract and maintain the attendance of young adults as well as older adults.

Further research may be beneficial to determine long-term effects of social media on

young adults physically attending a church, but no doubt this kind of communication is a

quick, easy, and effective way to communicate and connect.

Marketing Tools and Other Outreach Systems

The respondents to this survey preferred using a Web site over bulk mailing as a

way of reaching young adults. Apparently, that executive church leaders have moved

away from traditional forms of advertising their churches to the public. The hunch is that

people receive a voluminous amount of junk mail in their mailboxes and throw most of

it away, not even taking the time to read a postcard or any other form of bulk mailing

information. The American culture is so accustomed to junk mail that most items will go

by only one set of eyes before ending up in the trash. Whereas, someone perusing the

Internet and visiting certain Web sites will take time to look at the pictures and read the

corresponding article or advertisement. This form of marketing is being used more and

more by church executives to attract young adults to their establishments. It could also

help maintain the young adults' attendance by keeping them connected while away from

the church. A person could examine the church's Web site and search for upcoming

events, times of services, places of outreach, and any other special needs others may

have, not to mention having the ability to review past events/experiences at the church

through pictures and videos.

Mailers cannot offer the same experiences as a Web site. The lead pastor of a

church in Illinois tried traditional forms of outreach and connecting with those not

attending his church. After distributing two different mailers and spending

approximately $18,000, he realized the mailer were not working as he had hoped. He also created invitation cards to produce working guest lists for others to use to make visits, which was a little more successful. The executive church leader wanted to find a better way to accomplish outreach. They were not very successful at using Facebook at first but engaged Causely™ and its branch called Reach. With Reach the church became more effective at outreach by helping others in need. The premise is that Reach makes a donation to a kingdom-building cause each time one of its members checks in on Facebook while his or her church. This technique created a buzz around the church and slowly but surely people began checking in, allowing the church to support amazing ministries outside its community. A single check-in would provide drinking water for refugees or coats for children who needed them. As of June 2016, about 95,000 churches see their members' check in on Facebook. The conversations that follow in their community have caused excitement and growth ("This Church"). This style of community outreach is almost effortless and measurably productive.

The visitor card then becomes a way to welcome visitors and invite them to become involved in the establishment. When a person is involved, he or she are more likely to return because he or she have a vested interest. Visitor cards are not just for visitors any more. Many cards now give church members and others the opportunity to submit prayer concerns and interests in volunteer opportunities. A process should be in place to follow up with first-time guests and the members' requests for prayer and involvement.

If the church is to reach young adults, it must be willing to become a marketer. Even though many churches see marketing as a psychological threat, it can be a

differentiation between bad practices and good practices. Michael Slaughter offers some good advice: "Marketing is a means for learning to identify felt needs. Marketing is the practice of finding solutions that meet felt needs and effectively communicating those solutions to persons who perceive the needs" (37). The church cannot meet the needs of its people unless it understands the language they speak. Individuals cannot reach what they cannot understand. A young adult cannot be attracted to an establishment if that organization cannot communicate in real-life terms about real-life issues relevant to young adult lives. Effective marketing is effective communication and can accomplish the goal of attracting and maintaining young adults in church. The church becomes more relevant as it uses culturally relevant marketing tools.

The contemporary style of worship that has reached the end of the unchurched Baby Boomers was not effective in reaching the Busters. The children of one generation are completely different from the prior, and they have different heartfelt *needs*. In order to understand the next generations, pastors need to listen, research, and identify the heartfelt needs and life issues that are applicable to that generation. This approach relates to the theological framework in this study. If young adults are going to be reaching for God, Christians are going to have to find them, explain the problem of evil in their world to them, and lead them to Christ as the answer to the problem, and disciple them. Once again the best advice is found in Scripture:

> You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (Matt. 5:13-16)

Those who follow God should be marketing his goodness and light to the world. God's

light is the good news of the gospel, that breaks the darkness. Jesus even encouraged

leaders to learn from effective marketers as a prudent manager would (Luke 12:42; Matt.

10:16). Churches are sent out into the world to spread the good news of salvation and be

wise as they accomplish God's mission. As the church conducts kingdom business,

followers of Jesus can be discerning and use the same principles that the world uses, but

with one major difference—Christians use God's Spirit and maintain righteous integrity

(Slaughter).

These are effective tools to use and should be used without fear. The church can

have productive outreach systems and use marketing strategies to reach young adults.

These tools can also attract them to an establishment just by the sheer goodness being

accomplished by churches, outside of their communities, by sending material goods and

monies to those in need. This generation loves to be involved in activities doing good

deeds for humanity's sake. By checking in, the executive church leaders can also track

those attending and use that information to maintain the young adults' continual

attendance.

Informational Management and Membership Data

Executive church leaders maintain records through numerical counts for

membership, attendance, salvations, and baptisms as ways of measuring successes in

their establishments. The respondents did not utilize internal satisfaction surveys as a

mechanism to measure successful programs of young adults. If people hear of others

being saved and baptized, those events could pique the interests of young adults and

may attract them to the church. The presence of a spiritual atmosphere, where people are

being saved and baptized would contribute to maintaining young adults' attendance and would supply the church's records with positive numbers and gains. This process could lead to new members becoming part of the community, and numerical growth would occur along with spiritual improvements. By tracking these spiritual events, attendance, and memberships, executive church leaders can visibly measure their successes of reaching and retaining young adults.

The findings in this study did not support much of the literature review. Most of the literature I read spoke of being missional and going out into the world, not necessarily bringing people into a church. The literature was not anti-gathering and did not place much importance on how many people came together or for how long. The main focus was on why people gather, combined with how each individual's story helped the entire community grow and survive through life's tough circumstances. as Halter and Smay believe that living together in community, reaching out to others to form relationships, and being missionaries is the goal:

> Church gatherings were never the intended goal; they were the natural result of people finding other who were living their alternative Kingdom story. The goal of our missional life is not to grow churches. The goal of church is to grow missionaries." (*Tangible Kingdom* 169)

The gospel does not say, "Go ye to church," but teaches individuals to find other people, gather with them, discover the deep meaning of common experiences, and share the stories of life as people experience life together:

> Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (Heb. 10:24-25)

This passage may be one of the most misunderstood Scriptures in the Bible. People are not to put everything on hold and get to church. The verses were written to the Hebrews, early Christians who feared for their lives as they saw some of their friends being killed. They were gathering to encourage one another as a result of the major persecution they were experiencing. In the face of their fears, this course was a plea to come together with those others "who were in desperate need of being encouraged by the stories of others whose lives were in peril because of the gospel" (Halter and Smay, *Tangible Kingdom* 168). As these followers of Christ gathered, they heard one another's stories and were encouraged to fight the good fight until the end of their lives. This missional lifestyle moves away from an attractional model and moves into the incarnational approach as they see and experience a sense of belonging and feel the aspects of the good news being lived out. It relates to the theological framework in this study because it deals with the problem of evil in life, brings about spiritual formation through discipleship, while at the same time develops young adult leaders for the future of the kingdom.

This thinking may change the practice of ministry as many have known it. If Christians are looking to attract young adults and maintain their attendance at their gatherings, the church cannot continue to conduct business as it has done in the past. When we think about this topic, what better measure of success is there than to have young adults join together with a Bible-believing community. If the church that Jesus started remains authentic, it can emerge anywhere in any community: "People will always be drawn to people who look, smell, and behave like Jesus, and if you're committed to caring for people who move toward Christ through you, church will

become a labor of love for you as well" (Halter and Smay, *Tangible Kingdom* 178). This

approach of living could lead people to salvation, baptism, and membership of a

different kind, one of being a member of God's kingdom.

<div align="center">**Implications of the Findings**</div>

These three practices—social media, marketing tools and other outreach systems,

and informational management and membership data—may be successful in the minds

of some established churches with attendance of less than 250, but these practices may

not be the best practices in growing church attendance among young adults. Although

the data suggest the attractional model works, it falls short in increasing the attendance

of young adults. The practices may be current, or even good, but they are not the best.

An attractional approach to draw others to church has a major flaw—leaders are hoping

to attract those they do not know. I believe attracting someone that I do not know to an

establishment would be more difficult than attracting someone with whom I have a

relationship. Churches hope people will come to them because of the programs,

preaching, music, or something similar, but those things should not be why people

attend church. If they simply come for one of those reasons, they may not return. If a

person is moved by the Holy Spirit at the heart level and forms a relationship with God,

they will more likely return. A more probable scenario is if a friend leads a person to

Christ, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that new Christian will be more likely to come to

their friend's church. At that point, the person will begin to be discipled. Halter and

Smay say, "We help them learn more about Christ, their decision, the scriptures, and the

general 101 of Christianity (prayer, Bible, church, and so on)" (*Tangible Kingdom*, 94).

As a senior pastor, this study has greatly impacted me. Some of the methods used in the

past must be changed as a result of a different understanding of attracting young adults

to the church I serve. A tension exists between maintaining young adults' attendance in

churches and retaining the senior aged people who attend already. Purposefully making

one group happy seems to make another group unhappy. Some elderly folks become

afraid of the way the church is going. As the pastor I have to encourage people to give

financially in order to pay the church's bills and receive personal paychecks to help

support my own family. When a congregation averages one hundred in weekly

attendance, adding a new service could defeat the purpose of growth due to a

lopsidedness in the numbers for each service being attended. If young adult gatherings

of were outside of the church building, the tithes and offerings may fall off because he

or she would not be in attendance at the church. If the pastor's sole livelihood is

dependent on the church's salary package, they may find themselves stuck with no way

to move forward, especially if dealing with an aging congregation. These tensions would

have to be evaluated and prayed over before any real impact could be made in attracting,

maintaining, and tracking successful young adult attendance. Thom and Joani Schultz

remind leaders, "[J]ust because everyone's doing it doesn't mean it works. For decades,

research has proven that lecture-style preaching is not effective. Yet we cling to it

because 'that's what everybody does'" (225). If the church wants people to remember, it

needs to be willing to allow the congregation to participate:

> Remember up to 90 percent of what they do, so we're compelled to make
> changes that will yield far greater results. We'll never lecture people into
> a loving relationship with Jesus. But we can join them, hand in hand and
> experience Jesus together. (226)

Relationships and incarnational systems bring people to God and church. Churches may

hope people will come because of advertisements and marketing strategies, but

ultimately the most powerful attraction to churches is word of mouth—a friend inviting another friend to church.

Outreach becomes a matter of balance: God's balance. Halter and Smay say they would like to push the church to find this balance, but the church will need to be ready to become uncomfortable. God's balance is "gathering people well AND missionaly scattering them as incarnational communities" (*Gathered and Scattered Church* 73). This thinking shifts the church from attracting people who want to *receive*, to people who are willing to *give*—to go and make. As the church works for God outside the church walls, it will become less "isolated and alienated from the Christian community—caught between the church as it is and what they believe it is called to be" (Kinnaman 77). The church has an opportunity to share its story, and more importantly, each follower of Christ has a great story to share with others about what he has done for them. As McManus states, Christians need to relate their story with other people. It is a great way to connect on a relational level as they call others to a similar life journey: "They begin where those who have traveled their journey recommend they start. The Christian experience becomes a journey of discovery and experience with God, and with each added story, the momentum of this life-transforming movement exponentially increases" (*Unstoppable Force* 119). Relationships with God and others contribute to life growth, both spiritually and emotionally.

Hendricks was puzzled about why the church could not keep people attending after they were attracted to the church. People may begin attending but soon they would disappear. He states that people become dissatisfied with church as doubts arise in their minds:

> They point to a gap between the way things are "suppose"' to be (according to the teaching) and the way things actually are (according to his experience). He slowly wakes up to the fact that his faith isn't "working," at least not the way he expected—or was led to believe. At first, and sometimes for quite a while, the person assumes that the problem must be with him. After all, it can't be with Christianity, can it?… It tells us that there are points for intervention all along the way. By recognizing the signs of trouble, churches that care can actually turn the process around. (269)

If the church will come to this realization, opportunities will arise for learning for all parties involved. Opportunities could lead to truth about the church's teachings or truth about the individual. Either way, they will lead to the truth that life is an expedition, and relationships, whether with Christ or others, can lead to a wonderful reality and journey of developing one another into the likeness of Christ—Christian maturity.

Limitations of the Study

The simple broad view of this study conveys the possibilities of attracting young adults to an organization. What works today will not work in years to come. Executive church leaders can maintain young adults attending their churches if they are willing to put the time and effort into the task. The leaders must be willing to use methods that may seem foreign to them and be willing to take risks that will lead to change. The problem is that the people of the church must be willing as well, if the changes are to be successful. When an organization embraces this realization and is willing to commit, the community will grow. Young adults will come into a relationship with Christ, which is the best form of success, salvation leading to kingdom work—a missional church.

If I were to do this study over, I would look at much larger churches, sometimes referred to as megachurches, who have well established successful programs that are reaching young adults. A study aimed at how these larger churches are attracting,

maintaining, and measuring whether they are successful or not in their young adult focused programs and systems would be helpful for smaller churches and their leaders. I would not be surprised if the larger churches are more relationship and incarnational driven.

Unexpected Observations

The biggest surprise of this study for me was that the respondents were more concerned with comfortable seating rather than using Christmas cantatas, Easter dramas, and college/career classes to attract and maintain young adults in church. Another unexpected outcome was the number of responses received from the churches. The response rate was low, even after several e-mail reminders to the targeted recipients. I was disappointed with the seeming lack of interest in attracting young adults in medium-sized churches and then maintaining the systems in place to continue their attendance. Although, the possibility is present that young adults are attending larger churches that were not within the scope of this study. Another surprise was that only one-third of the survey respondents had any type of emphasis on mentoring programs. Without focused mentoring, discipleship will not produce strong Christian leaders for the future. Perhaps if the respondents took some time to survey their attendees, these and other issues might have been addressed in order to maintain the young adults attending their churches. The challenge is that the majority of those who responded did not agree that an internal satisfaction survey was an important tool in attracting and maintaining young adults.

Recommendations

I would recommend future study on two fronts for attracting young adults, maintaining their attendance, and keeping good records of successful ministry with this

generation. First and foremost, in my mind, is more study along the lines of incarnational instead of attractional methods. However, if a church or community cannot attract young adults in the first place, no incarnational method could take place. The second front that could be explored is how a medium-sized church could provide for a full-time pastor while at the same time allowing different communities to form outside the church building. As the young adults gather and share life and stories together, I would think that receiving tithes and offering in that setting would be a distraction. They may have to be bi-vocational in order to earn enough income to support a household. In this day and age, many successful pastors not only preach to their own congregations each week but also speak in revivals, write books, and work other avenues to generate revenue. In these circumstances the pastors are less of a financial burden on the church for their personal salaries. This bi-vocational lifestyle allows church finances to be used in other areas of ministry to further kingdom work inside and outside the church walls. The younger generation lives outside the church building, and if the church wants to reach them, I suggest a willingness, on the part of the pastors, to adapt a bi-vocational lifestyle above personal comfort or desires.

I recommend that executive church leaders form a team or teams of older adults to develop systems in an attempt to reach younger adults on their own turf and in young adult settings. This type of team could infiltrate the community of young adults for kingdom purposes, and through life examples and stories the older Christians could attract the young adults to Christ first, then to the church in the future. This technique would be a way to share thoughts on the problem of evil and sin in the world, while at the same time letting the young adults know that someone existed who overcame that

evil and provided a way of escape for all humanity. That way is through Jesus, and all people can have a relationship with him, become new persons, be discipled, and personally overcome the evil in this world. After all, the best measure of success is the salvation of the lost, baptizing them and then discipling them. Even the respondents agreed on these tools to measure the successes of their programs.

Postscript

I was puzzled about how medium-sized churches and their executive leaders attracted young adults to their establishments, how they maintained young adults' attendance, and how the executives measured whether they were successful or not. I had some thoughts and ideas heading into the study, such as a good music program, but after the study was completed and the data was compiled, other systems emerged. Executive church leaders were interested in making those who came to their church physically comfortable, but little interest in outreach programs to attract them to the church initially.

I was disappointed that the current practices being used are not the best practices. My personal preferences of what I like about worship services are not the most important things that attract people to church. This study and the best practices highlighted are not as effective as the relational aspect of gathering and worshiping. Even in this world of social media, people want to be in relationship with other people and those people with similar tastes in music and worship styles will congregate in places that suit their individual needs and preferences. The most important responsibility for Christians is to introduce others to an incarnate God who is very willing to form a relationship with them.

This research project has helped the writer's ministry throughout the entire process from studying, examining the data, and writing. As an executive church leader, time must be spent in dealing with the problem of evil and sin, along with leading others through relationship and community experiences, and championing spiritual formation so that education and discipleship can occur. The journey of discipleship is a long road, but it is realistic one. The difficult part for most is the transition from a one-hour worship service on Sunday, to a midweek small group setting, to experiencing spiritual formation. Several factors exist that influence followers of Christ as they embark on their Christian voyage: people/community, education, personal study, books, and experiences. In order for the executive church leaders to be more productive in reaching young adults, good communication is a must and the message needs to be purposeful and constructive to bring about effective and productive performance. Followers of Christ need to understand the culture and systems of all those involved, not just of their generation. If they work together as a team, they will deal with the truth of situations and then watch their organizations evolve through changing circumstances. This process takes courage, accountability, and the desire to learn, listen, and grow. Continual evaluation and feedback will strengthen any team for a futuristic run as they use these elements to sustain themselves. These practices will ensure that the church will survive, as well as the Christians who attend it. Leading through relationships is important as Christians tackle the challenge of attracting young adults to the church. A leader can teach words and meanings, yet, the need is present to translate those into today's language so that today's culture and people will understand it. We can then gradually increase the meanings. If executive church leaders are to help and retain those in college

and young adults in their careers, we need to educate generations in Christian apologetics and train them to serve in a missional setting. Combining this system with a holistic salvation at the root, and being continually discipled through relationships, one would have the ability to believe and live above sin. People live in a postmodern, post-literate, and post-Christian world. This world is still searching for something unexplainable. Humanity is still searching for the answer to the mystery of life, and they are still searching to fill an empty hole in their hearts. The only way the search can be completed and satisfied is through an incarnate God. This God comes to all of humanity in Christ. Jesus should attract young adults, maintain young adults, and help them be successful in their communities and in life. Emanuel, God is with us. If Christians take Jesus with them wherever they go and let others know of his amazing love, attractional power will materialize.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY: DO YOU SEE ME NOW?

The following are questions/statements about your practices as an executive leader

in your church. Please click on the button to indicate your choice.

#	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	We use events such as church sponsored **concerts** to attract young adults to church.					
2	We use events such as **church dinners** to attract young adults to church.					
3	We use events such as **fall festivals** to attract young adults to church.					
4	We use events such as **Christmas cantatas** to attract young adults to church.					
5	We use events such as **Easter dramas** to attract young adults to church.					
6	We use events such as **sports programs** to attract young adults.					
7	We put an emphasis on our **music program** in our attempt to draw and keep young adults attending.					
8	We emphasize **college/career classes** in our attempt to draw and keep young adults attending.					
9	We put an emphasis on our **small groups/home groups** in our attempt to keep young adults attending.					
10	Our small groups are held on **church property.**					
11	Our small groups are held at **private homes.**					
12	Our small groups are held at **different places in our community** (i.e., restaurants, bowling alley, coffee shops, etc.).					

#	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
13	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults our church emphasizes **community outreach** programs (i.e., schools, health centers, etc.).					
14	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults our church emphasizes **educational programs** (i.e., Bible, marriage, family, "how to", etc.).					
15	In an attempt to keep young adults in church we emphasize **discipleship programs** (i.e., growth in Christ, leadership development, etc.).					
16	In our attempt to keep young adults attending our church we emphasize a **mentoring** program.					
17	In our attempt to keep young adults attending our church we put an emphasis on **systems and programs.**					
18	In our attempt to draw/keep young adults we schedule church **mission trips.**					
19	In our attempt to draw young adults to church we use **bulk mailing** to invite others to our church.					
20	We hold a **traditional style worship** service.					
21	We hold a **contemporary style worship** service.					
22	We hold a **blend** of worship styles, including both traditional and contemporary styles simultaneously.					
23	We use the social media platform **Facebook.**					
24	We use the social media platform **Twitter.**					
25	We have a **church Web site.**					
26	We have a **vision statement** that accurately reflects our church.					
27	We have a **mission statement** that accurately reflects our church.					

#	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
28	We **partner** with other **like denominational** churches to keep young adults in our church.					
29	We **partner** with other churches **across denominational lines** to keep young adults in our church.					
30	Our **church environment** includes **comfortable seating.**					
31	Our **church environment** includes advanced **lighting equipment**					
32	It is extremely important for our church to have a **high community visibility.**					
33	We keep record of attendees through **numerical counts** each service.					
34	We keep record of **baptisms** that occur within our church.					
35	We keep record of those who accept Jesus as their Savior (**salvations**).					
36	We record and maintain a list of **church members.**					
37	We use visitors cards to identify and document **new attendees**.					
38	We use an **observational method** to track participation in each service.					
39	We use **internal survey systems** to measure young adults' satisfaction with church programs and/or activities.					

Thank you for your time, participation, and honest responses.
Please complete the survey within 5 (five) days.

APPENDIX B

AN INTENTIONAL EUCHARIST

This service is designed to give the participants a discipleship experience,

attempting to reach all learning styles. It is a combination of fresh ideas, the United

Methodist Hymnal, and The Wesleyan Discipline.

The Gathering:

Responsive Reading:

The Lord be with you

> **And also with you**
>
> *Lift up your hearts.*
>
> **We lift them up to the Lord**
>
> *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God*
>
> **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Song of celebration—*Hosanna, Loud Hosanna* page 278 United Methodist

Hymnal (this speaks of little children singing praises as well as adults rejoicing for

Christ is our Redeemer).

As this song is sung, we would have a group of children, youth, and adults bring

in the elements and hand them to the pastor to place on the communion table.

Opening Prayer with Confession:

(Page 12 UMH) *Merciful God,*

We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have failed to be an obedient church.

We have not done your will,

We have broken your law,

We have rebelled against your love,

We have not loved our neighbors,

And we have not heard the cry of the needy.

> *Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

Taking the Bread and Cup:

The pastor takes the bread and as he recalls Jesus actions he "breaks" the bread for all to see, tearing it apart as Christ body was torn apart (The smell of fresh baked bread would also be in the air adding the sense of smell to the service).

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread, which we break, is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The pastor would then take a container of grape juice pouring it into a cup as he describes how Christ's blood was poured out for all unto salvation (The sound of the juice would also add to the senses to those in the service).

The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

He would consecrate the elements with a prayer of Great Thanksgiving

Creator God, please consecrate the bread and juice, which has been prepared today, that as we partake of them we may receive the spiritual benefits of Christ's broken body and shed blood. Jesus, we thank you for your willingness and desire to sacrifice Yourself in our steed. We praise You and ask for your blessings on these elements. It is in Your Name we ask, Amen.

Invitation: (The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church 2004, 372-73)

Those of you who are walking in fellowship with God, living in love and harmony with your neighbors, have truly and earnestly repented of your sins, doing your best to follow His commandments and holy ways…draw near with faith and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort as you make your humble confession to Almighty God. I need you Lord! We need you Lord! The world needs you Lord!

Our God of grace and mercy has ever loved us and provided for our redemption. His Son Jesus Christ died to save us and His Holy Spirit invites us to draw near as we commemorate the suffering of our Lord. We should remember the cost of our salvation as we commune with each other.

Giving the Bread and Cup:

The body of Christ given for you freely. As you eat the bread remember that Christ died for you and feed on Him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of Christ, shed for you freely. As you drink the juice remember that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

May the bread and juice preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life.

Sending:

Song—*Sent Forth by God's blessing* (United Methodist Hymnal, 664)

Dismissal with Blessing—*Go forth in peace and as we go, remember to share God's love. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen!*

Going Forth—Organ and other instruments play a joyous march followed by greetings, conversation and fellowship.

APPENDIX C

PEER GROUP CONVERSATIONS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

Preliminary Questions

Thinking back, did you ever quite attending church when you were a teenager/young adult?

If so, why did you leave the practice of attending church?

What made you start attending church again?

Main Questions

How long have you been an executive leader at this church?

How many do you have on staff, including yourself, paid or unpaid?

What is the average annual attendance of your weekend worship service?

Considering the group of teenagers/young adults that attend, how did/do you attract them to this church?

Thinking of the same age range, how do you keep them from leaving/or how do you keep them coming back?

What do you believe continues to make your system a success?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Date

Dear _____

I am a Doctor of Ministry participant at Asbury Theological Seminary and I am conducting research on the topic of church attendance among young adults. I would like to survey an executive leader from different congregations in the state of Florida and you have been selected as one invited to assist in the study.

Since church programs and systems can be a sensitive issue for many church leaders, I want to assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. I do not want to jeopardize your relationships in your church, so I will not ask for your name on the survey. The data will be collected using a code and all of the surveys will be tabulated and processed via an Internet based survey engine.

I believe the findings from this survey will allow me to assist other congregations and executive church leaders as they design their own programs, systems, and ministries. My hope is that churches from around the country will be helped because you and others like you have taken the time to participate. Once the research is completed in approximately three months, I will only keep the anonymous data electronically for an indefinite period of time, at least until my dissertation is written and approved.

Please know that you can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions on the survey. I realize that your participation is entirely voluntary and I appreciate your willingness to consider being part of the study. Feel free to call or write me at any time if you need any more information. My number is ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and my e-mail is ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

By clicking the link below you agree to assist with this study and agree to the following statement:

I have read this form, and I voluntarily agree to be in this study. The researcher has answered all my questions. I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related records as described above.

I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will print a copy of this consent information for my records.

Sincerely,

Rev. Scott W. Frisbie

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