

ABSTRACT
THE ROOTED EXPERIENCE:
AS A DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR ALPHA COURSE GRADUATES

by

Kimberley D Holman

Since the beginning of the movement of Jesus, discipleship has been an integral part of the life of the Church. In recent decades and because of the decline of Christendom, gaps in discipleship have become more evident and more effective discipleship is needed. The Alpha course, redeveloped by Nicky Gumbel and Holy Trinity Brompton Church in 1990, is a course for those who are not Christians but who have questions about faith, life, and their purpose. Millions all over the world have taken this course and have come to know Jesus through this model. After the course, it is the local church's responsibility to disciple new believers. Each church has its own context to consider, but the problem to solve—how to disciple new believers—rests with the local church.

This research considers a 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community called Rooted as a discipleship option for Alpha course graduates who are followers of Jesus and are ready to be discipled. During a 10-week Rooted experience, participants were introduced to 7 spiritual practices and biblical theology which are learned and experienced both individually and within a small group, guided by two co-facilitators. Using pre and post surveys as well as one-on-one interviews, data from six participants was collected and analyzed measuring levels of transformation in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living. Findings emerged from the literature review through

biblical, theological, and historical foundations that were significant throughout the Rooted discipleship experience.

The three major findings suggest that stepping out of areas of comfort within a safe, diverse relational environment/community has a huge potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living; the introduction to, learning, experiencing and practicing of, specific spiritual practices individually and within community has the potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living. All elements of the Rooted experience—the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community—matter and are valuable in implementation with the potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living subject to each participant's current personal experiences and journey.

THE ROOTED EXPERIENCE:
AS A DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY FOR ALPHA COURSE GRADUATES

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Kimberley D Holman

May 2023

© 2023

Kimberley D Holman

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
CHAPTER 1 NATURE OF THE PROJECT	1
Overview of the Chapter	1
Personal Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Project	6
Research Questions	7
Research Question #1	7
Research Question #2	7
Research Question #3	7
Rationale for the Project	7
Definition of Key Terms	10
Delimitations	11
Review of Relevant Literature	11
Research Methodology	13
Type of Research	13
Participants.....	14
Instrumentation	14
Data Collection	15

Data Analysis	16
Generalizability	16
Project Overview	17
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT	18
Overview of the Chapter	18
Biblical Foundations	19
Old Testament	20
New Testament	29
Theological and Historical Foundations	40
The Holy Trinity as Ministry and Discipleship Model	41
Ecclesiology as Understanding the Church's identity and Role	45
Worship as Response and Formation in Discipleship	49
Incarnational Mission as Active Discipleship	54
Community as Integral to Discipleship Formation	57
Humility Virtue as Foundational in Discipleship	60
Wise Counsel and Accountability as Formational in Discipleship	62
Research Design Literature	66
Summary of Literature	67
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT	70
Overview of the Chapter	70
Nature and Purpose of the Project	70
Research Questions	71
Research Question #1	71
Research Question #2	72
Research Question #3	72
Ministry Contexts	73

Participants.....	74
Criteria for Selection.....	74
Description of Participants.....	75
Ethical Considerations	76
Instrumentation	77
Expert Review.....	78
Reliability & Validity of Project Design	79
Data Collection	81
Data Analysis	83
CHAPTER 4 EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT	84
Overview of the Chapter	84
Participants.....	84
Research Question #1: Description of Evidence	87
Research Question #2: Description of Evidence	92
Research Question #3: Description of Evidence	98
Summary of Major Findings.....	116
CHAPTER 5 LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT	118
Overview of the Chapter	118
Major Findings.....	119
1-Stepping out of areas of comfort within a safe, diverse relational environment/community has a huge potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living	119
2-The introduction to, learning, experiencing and practicing of, specific spiritual practices individually and within community has the potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living	122

3-All elements of the Rooted Experience – the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community – matter and are valuable in implementation with the potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living subject to each participant’s current personal experience and journey	124
Ministry Implications of the Findings.....	126
Limitations of the Study.....	128
Unexpected Observations	130
Recommendations.....	133
Postscript.....	134
APPENDIXES	
A. RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Pre-Survey	138
B. RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Post-Survey.....	141
C. RQ#3 Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Interview Questions.....	143
D. Informed Consent Letter	144
E. Confidentiality Forms.....	147
F. Expert Review Letter	149
WORKS CITED	157

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 4.1. RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Survey (RQ1a).....	88
Table 4.2. RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Survey (RQ1b)	89
Table 4.3. RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Survey (RQ1c).....	91
Table 4.4. RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Post Survey (RQ2a).....	93
Table 4.5. RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Post Survey (RQ2b)	95
Table 4.6. RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Post Survey (RQ2c).....	97
Table 4.7. RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Pre-Survey.....	99
Table 4.8. RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Pre-Post Survey Results	101
Table 4.9. RQ#3 Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Interview Questions	103

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 4.1. Demographics of the Rooted Group Participants	85
Figure 4.2. Demographics of the Rooted Group Participants (Pre-Survey)	86
Figure 4.3. Demographics of the Rooted Group Participants (Post-Survey).....	87

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful beyond words to the lover of my soul, Jesus, and all the ways he continues to draw me close. Jesus has taught and continues to teach me that who I am matters more to him than what I do. He has truly formed and transformed me through the Doctor of Ministry courses, my cohort, and this project, deepening my trust in him and his love for me and all of us, in ways that make me hungry for more of him daily. He has also increased in me a desire to disciple others well so they know his love for them and the abundant life and freedom he truly offers.

Others who have cherished me in this journey include my husband and best friend, Tom Holman. Thank you for all the ways you encouraged me and picked up the extra slack even when you were caring for so many others in your life. You are the most selfless person I know, and I could not have done this without you. Thank you to my children and cheering section, Danny Holman and Matthew Holman. Your many “You got this Mom!” means more to me than you’ll ever know. I love and treasure all three of you!

To my parents, Horton and Sandy Struve, for the example of Christ-like love and perseverance which has remarkably influenced my life. Thank you for your dedication to our whole family in the many ways you demonstrate your love for us. Many thanks to my incredible sisters, Kari Wise, Kelley Struve and Kristi Winters. Your humor and vulnerability help me remember what is important and what is not. God could not have given me a better family of origin. I love y’all!

To all my extended family and dear friends who have been praying for me and encouraging me from the beginning of this whole adventure, you have my deepest

thanks. You'll never know how much your texts, phone calls, and words of encouragement have meant to me. I especially want to thank Davenda Viers. I truly think your name is really Barnabas.

To my supervisor and friend, Rev. Brett Cheek, thank you for watering the seed God planted in my heart about this possibility and encouraging me to apply, and then continuing to support me through many hours of discussion about the topics I was learning and listening to me in times when I shed tears of frustration. Thank you to Rev. Ron Watts and the entire staff and leadership of La Croix Church, who have encouraged me along this journey. I love serving with each of you!

To my co-laborer “in all things Rooted” and friend, Collin Smith, you have the heart of a true disciple of Jesus. Thank you for agreeing to be a facilitator for this project and going through the rigors of the IRB training to become qualified. I would not have wanted to facilitate this project with anyone else. A huge shout out to our Fall 2022 ROOTED group! What began as a research project quickly became a family. Thank you for opening your hearts and lives to the group and to the Triune God who loves us more than we know. Additionally, I want to thank Mariner’s Church and especially my Rooted coach, Jairus Williams, for your training, insight, and availability for my many questions.

To my research team, Rev. Brett Cheek, Brandi Knight, Dr. Sarah Tlappek, and my mom, Sandy Struve. Thank you for the extra hours of time you gave to reading through and analyzing the data, offering advice, inviting me to your class on qualitative data, and helping me transcribe the one-on-one interviews. Each one of you added to this project in very personal ways that made it better than if I had completed this alone. Your contribution is invaluable to me.

To my dear friends, Jim, Jessica, Drew, and Kate LaGrone, I will always remember with joy my time at the “LaGrone AirBnB” as I attended my residency weeks—even the one that was all online. Becoming enfolded into your family was one of the highlights of my doctoral work!

Finally, I want to thank the first *Spiritual Direction for Ministry Leaders* cohort. I initially was intimidated by all of you in our first forum posts because of your brilliance. Quickly I discovered that you are also warm, hilarious, loving and some of the most dedicated disciples and disciple makers I have ever met! Big thanks to my Cardinal legacy group and a special thanks to Ashlee Crawford, Greg McElyea, and Greg Haseloff. You three were an added bonus I was not expecting but God knew I needed. Thank you to Dr. Ellen Marmon, Dr. Milton Lowe, and the entire Doctor of Ministry staff! You loved and guided each of us well. To Dr. Steve Martyn, thank you for sharing your passion and burden with us about the importance of discipleship. I am forever changed because of you. To Dr. Mike Voigts I am grateful to you for the depth of your love for Jesus, your humor, and for making us read all those “monk books.” I am so thankful you were my mentor and coach! Thank you for all the hours you dedicated to guiding me and for the kind and meaningful ways you challenged me.

CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter one provides the framework for investigating spiritual direction in community for people who are graduates of an Alpha course, who are new to the Christian faith, or feel they are lacking in understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Furthermore, chapter one will address why this even needs to be investigated as vital to the discipleship and spiritual development of new believers. The researcher explores the existing gap between the steps taken after a person says “yes,” to following Christ, through an Alpha course, and the discipleship processes available after that initial proclamation within the current setting of La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Included in this chapter is the overview of the research project, the design of that project, the research questions and themes, as well as the rationale for the project based on the experience of the researcher in this context. The participants, themes of the literature review, and contextual factors are included as well. Anticipated results from the project and the significance of the impact of these results are also discussed.

Personal Introduction

Before I began working at La Croix Church full-time, I was asked to join the Spiritual Formation team as a lay person. Our church was beginning a new team approach presented by the Spiritual Leadership Institute using covenants, Ministry Action Plans (MAPs), and a format known as Loving, Learning, Leading. We were moving from a staff driven form of leading to a shared form of leadership including staff and laity.

During one of our eight hour training sessions we viewed a video by J.D. Walt and Seedbed which gave the results of the 2011 George Barna research of a six year

study involving over 15,000 people who were asked questions about their spiritual life and development. The results were staggering and had a profound impact on the direction my life would take from that point forward. In short, God broke my heart not only for the lost but also for his people who claim to know Christ but do not know the deep love of God and have stopped growing in their faith and are only living as “forgiven and active in the church” and have not moved beyond that to the area of what John Wesley identified as sanctification. Barna’s research showed that only eleven percent of people who claim to follow Jesus experience the following five areas of spiritual growth towards sanctification: six percent experience holy discontent, three percent experience being broken by God, one percent experience surrender and submission, a half of a percent experience profound love for God, and a half of a percent experience a profound love for others. In my heart I knew this was unacceptable. I knew God had more for his people. John Wesley also knew this as recorded in a letter he wrote to Robert Carr Brackenbury on September 15, 1790. In it he wrote, “This doctrine [full sanctification] is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly He appeared to have raised us up” (Wesley 238).

Another study that impacted me and the trajectory of this 10-week project was the Reveal study that our church participated in 2011–12. What we discovered is that our church was roughly the equivalent of an adolescent. We had very few mature believers and even fewer new believers. We had reached a level of stagnation where people were experiencing freedom in Christ without taking the responsibility for their own spiritual growth. In the years since that study we have encouraged a change in this type of spirituality by equipping people to take responsibility. This has been accomplished

through more challenging sermon series applicable for all disciples, starting bands for deeper accountability, spiritual conversations and friendships, and classes with more of a focus on teaching the “How to” approach (e.g., Inductive Bible Study) to learn and grow on their own instead of only relying on someone else doing the teaching. Another area of ministry impacted involves our small groups. Our leaders of forty small groups are now connected and receiving encouragement on a regular basis in the areas of discipleship, emotional health and relationships, and how to care for their own spiritual growth. This has all been extremely encouraging. We were moving toward mature spiritual wholeness in our church in both the leadership and the laity.

Then we began something that catalyzed another movement. We began offering the Alpha course which began a little over two years ago, and took off in ways we could not have predicted. We have seen people from all walks of life attend, including many who are recovering from addictions, many who come from lifestyles of broken marriages and families, and even men and women who have been adjudicated and have served time. After this influx of new believers we have realized that we do not have the best discipleship process in place for them once they finish the course. Many of our small groups are either at capacity or studying aspects of discipleship that are for those who are further in their journey with Christ. We were woefully unprepared for the impact the Alpha course would have and how the Holy Spirit would awaken and touch so many at the same time.

After the first Alpha the church began a small group led by a couple who tried to use a curriculum that was created specifically for those who have already been through Alpha. They discovered that this material was not effective and began trying different

studies both topical and based on books of the Bible. There was also a very tight community aspect of this group which had been fostered in the Alpha course setting and now continued in this small group. Through trial and error this small group has succeeded and continues to grow together in their walk with Christ. In 2019 one of their members died of cancer. This group lived out their faith in very practical ways by loving this member through the challenging days of chemo, radiation, surgery, and then the limiting days of sickness. They also loved the family so well that after the death of this member her daughter began attending this small group and experienced the love of Christ through this community.

The church has tried other ways to engage people in discipleship through house fellowships, other small groups, classes, serving opportunities but nothing has been as effective as this first small group. The House Fellowship model, learned through the Inspire Movement, was very effective at first because the set-up is very much like Alpha. House Fellowship and Alpha are similar because both involve a meal, time of sharing where God is working, discussion around questions, and prayer. The main component lacking in this model for new believers is an ongoing teaching component of core beliefs to go along with the spiritual questions and discussion.

Between Seedbed's video of the Barna research, the Reveal study, and our newest challenge of discipling new believers, I saw a gap that needed to be considered if we are to have a healthy discipleship process to guide people on their spiritual journey to a mature faith in Christ. Without a solid foundation at the beginning of this journey there will not be much to build upon and the more spiritually mature aspects of the church will

not even make sense to a new believer. In fact, those aspects may seem insurmountable to a new believer because they still need spiritual “milk.”

Because I deeply desire for God’s people grow in their faith and move beyond just being forgiven by Christ and active in the church, I saw the need to develop a discipleship group for new believers who are hungry for a walk with Jesus and need a solid foundation of biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living. The purpose of this transformational project defines this goal more clearly.

Statement of the Problem

In identifying the focus for this project, a discipleship gap within our church quickly rose to the top as a project worth researching. Before 2017, La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, had over sixty small groups operating, led by lay people discipling lay people. Yet, while discipleship was happening, we had very little emphasis on evangelism. So, in an effort to reach those far from Jesus, our pastor introduced the Alpha course to our church in the fall of 2017. Since then, we have offered two Alpha courses each year with sixty to one hundred in attendance each time. This has been wildly exciting and a jolt of new energy to our church as people come to Christ and testify at the incredible work he has done and is doing in their lives. What was quickly realized, however, is that while the church has small groups, and that type of format for discipleship seemed like a logical next step in faith formation, it did not have small groups running for new believers. This was the discipleship gap. The question was asked, “What is the best way to begin discipling new believers, specifically, those who have completed an Alpha course”? This is the focus of this project.

La Croix Church has an average weekly worship attendance, which includes in person and virtual, of 2,200 people. As the number of Alpha courses increased with time, the chances that new believers were worshiping within this context was very likely. Besides worship and serving opportunities, there was little to offer these new, excited believers. As referenced in the beginning of chapter one, there was a discipleship gap.

Existing small groups that were well established did not have the needed structure or content for equipping new believers. Their material was for those who were further along in their faith formation. And some groups were not open to new people at all. The problem was that the best way to begin discipling new believers, specifically, those who had completed an Alpha course, had not yet been developed. Multiple tries have been made to create next steps but nothing had been implemented that included all the components needed to equip and train these new believers in the foundations of the Christian faith within a smaller community of believers.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this research was to measure the changes in spiritual transformation that took place in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living among Alpha course graduates from La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, who attended a 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community.

Research Questions

The research questions were used to guide the 10-week experience in both research for content and in measuring the outcomes of the research project. These questions align to the purpose statement clearly and directly.

Research Question #1

What levels of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living were identified among the participants prior to the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?

Research Question #2

What levels of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living were identified among the participants following the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?

Research Question #3

What aspects of the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community had the greatest impact on the observed changes in spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living?

Rationale for the Project

The first reason this project is relevant is the need for the continuation of the Christian faith lived out with a solid biblical foundational beginning in the lives of people who are followers of Jesus. When there is a stunt in spiritual growth and maturity then there is a danger of the Christian faith becoming diluted, unimportant, or merely cultural Christianity, so a solid beginning that is rooted in Scripture is imperative. People who are new to the Christian faith, such as Alpha course graduates who have made a profession of faith, need a solid next step in their new faith and what it means to be a follower of Jesus, based on biblical theology. With this foundation they become as Paul says in Ephesians, "...no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful

scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ” (*New International Version*, Eph. 4.14–15).

The second reason is that it is important to grow not just individually but in community. Too many times people become Christians but do not understand the importance of life together as the body of Christ. If they follow Scripture at all, they may see it only for themselves, and not recognize that the majority of Scripture was written to a group of people, not just one person. Therefore, God uses the community of believers to represent his life and redemption in the world through people. The Body of Christ must know how to disciple each other to grow to maturity and love of Christ and build one another up in the faith. What has happened in churches like ours, is that there is a ministry, like Alpha, or camps, retreats, worship experiences, guest speakers and the like, where people come to a saving knowledge of Christ and give their lives to him, but they never get connected to a community of faith to shepherd and disciple them in this new faith. When new believers are included and brought into an intentional discipleship way of life in community, this community grows in Christ the way Paul was saying to the Ephesians, “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4.16). By building up the Body of Christ, the Church can love God and love others in a way that the mission of God through Jesus Christ can be carried out in everyday lives.

Emotional health is a key factor in the health of individuals which in turn spreads and creates healthy communities. This seems to be circular in that healthy communities can then help nurture emotionally healthy individuals and their spirituality. This rationale

is included because the rise in divorces, loneliness and depression, addictions, and other forms of difficulties and brokenness stem in part from a lack of understanding from where this unhealthiness stems and from not living in a healthy, biblically, and theologically grounded community of loving accountability. Learning how to open oneself up to let the Holy Spirit work below the surface of our lives is critical. Otherwise people will be learning how to change their behavior “but the roots of who [they] are continue unchanged and unmoved” and that “large portion remains untouched by Jesus Christ” (Scazzero 17). Dealing with a person’s own sin and how someone else’s sin has affected them leads people to Jesus, the one who can heal them. As people become more emotionally healthy, that health spreads to all corners of a person’s life especially in their relationships at home, in the workplace, their communities, and their friendships. This becomes evidence of a dispositional life surrendered and transformed by Christ. Without a healthy beginning of what a healthy community of faith looks like, a new believer would not understand that change is not only possible but is expected in someone who is a follower of Christ. This is not done by people alone but is the work of the Holy Spirit; however, people are to make themselves available and accept his invitation to transform them. New believers need to be taught this concept.

Definition of Key Terms

Alpha Course

“*Alpha* is a tool built for local churches based on hospitality, sharing and open conversation. The same Alpha content is run all over the world, by Christians of all traditions, and provides a common expression of proclamation, service and witness.

Millions of people have experienced Alpha in over 100 countries and over 100 languages around the globe” (Alpha International). Developed and led by Nicky Gumbel and Holy Trinity Brompton Church in London, the Alpha course has been instrumental in introducing people to Jesus. For this paper participants will have already attended an Alpha course before participating in the 10-week experience.

Biblical Theology

Biblical theology is what is revealed to people in Scripture and is then the “systematic, ordered, and reasoned interpretation and application of what the scripture reveals to us” (Martyn 1). In other words, “There is no Christian theology without the Bible. There is no Bible without an inspired community to write, remember, and translate it, to guard it and pass it on, study it, live by it, and invite others to live by it” (Oden 21). This will be discussed through the category of the Church through worship, discipleship, and mission. This is readily seen in someone’s beliefs.

Holy Love

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus says to “‘love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12.30–31). John Wesley similarly wrote that “Christian perfection” or holy love is “loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love” (34). This is *holy love* and is evidenced by a transformed life. This is readily seen in someone’s attitudes.

Dispositional Living

Dispositional living is a life lived as a “set, loving, self-motivated way of life marked by faithfulness in the primary means of grace” (Martyn 3). Simply put, it is a life where the life of Christ is engrained and is second nature to a person in their thoughts, words, and deeds. This is readily seen in someone’s behavior.

Delimitations

The participants included in this study were adults, eighteen years or older, who have completed an Alpha course at La Croix Church, made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and are interested in moving forward in their discipleship. The Alpha course has been offered five times at La Croix, and each time there is a scramble to plug the graduates into a community of believers so that they can continue to grow in their new faith. While Alpha is an excellent course for introducing people to Jesus, the follow up strategy is left up to the Alpha hosts and local churches. Therefore, a more intentional follow up is needed for those who have completed an Alpha course. These Alpha graduates are lay people who have agreed to an in depth 10-week experience and have made the commitment to engage fully in this course and its requirements.

Review of Relevant Literature

For this review of relevant literature, books and other resources concerning the role of the Church and discipling those within the body of Christ have been chosen. Biblical themes explored more thoroughly in this paper are what are found in Acts regarding the early church and living as a faithful community of believers. Also the book of Ephesians was utilized and dug into more deeply. How Paul instructs the believers in both the theological foundation of their identity and calling and his exhortation to the

believers in Ephesus on how they should live out this calling in practical ways are explored. Ways that community and identity are explained and are vital in the Old Testament are also be discussed, such as in Exodus when God instructs the children of Israel through Moses of their identity in him through a covenantal relationship.

The researcher consulted a wide variety works such as John Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion, Volumes 1 and 2* and Alan Hirsch's, *The Forgotten Ways*. Both authors take a close look at the Church and the role and definition of the Church. These writers, and others, provide a foundation and a context for the Church's identity, so that, the project is undergirded with a framework of what the Church and disciples of Jesus within the Church should adhere.

Due to the nature of the research questions there were specific resources consulted on biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living. Texts such as *Classic Christianity* by Thomas C. Oden examine thoroughly the Christian faith, tradition, and core beliefs of Jesus Christ which enhanced the researcher's understanding of biblical theology. *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of our Grace* by Kenneth J. Collins informs a fuller understanding of holy love, as well as several sermons by John Wesley. Dispositional living and ways to shape the habits of believers were researched in books like *Faith for Exiles* by David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age* by Andrew Root, as well as a study in "God movements" of the past such as the Celtic movement and also the Early Church as described in such books as, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* by Alan Krieder.

Curriculum design, adult learning, and an examination of what other churches have pursued, as a follow up to the Alpha course, were also be researched. Equally important is an exploration and research on historical models of Spiritual Formation.

Research Methodology

The type of research used for this project was an intervention method. Graduates of the Alpha course were the participants of this 10-week course; however, these methods and this project can be generalized in another setting for new believers with few changes. There was a Pre-survey and Post-survey completed by each participant, along with interviews conducted two to four weeks after completing the project with those who were available. This quantitative and qualitative research was used to measure biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living. Data collection and analysis were instrumental in determining the effectiveness of the 10-week project.

Type of Research

As referenced earlier, the type of research used for this project was an intervention method. The 10-week experience was the intervention for the Alpha course graduates in order to train and develop a biblical and theological foundation for new believers in the Christian faith. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to measure the outcomes of this experience to evaluate its effectiveness. Those methods were a pre-survey, a post-survey, and one-on-one interviews.

Participants

This group of participants were graduates who have completed the Alpha course at La Croix Church. The Alpha course does an excellent job of introducing people to Jesus and the basics of faith, but once that person makes a profession of faith, it is the

local church's responsibility to shepherd and disciple these new believers. The participants have a limited understanding of Christianity. Some come from church backgrounds but have never been fully discipled. Some come from no church background or a limited understanding of faith in Jesus except what they have learned through the Alpha course. The participants in this study are lay people of ages eighteen and older and are all women with no theological education or training. Men who have completed Alpha were invited to participate, but none chose to participate at this time. The total number of participants who completed the 10-week project was six.

Instrumentation

There were three types of instrumentation used for data collection for this 10-week intervention research project. The first instrumentation used was a researcher designed pre-survey, and the second was a researcher designed post-survey. These two instruments consisted of the same questions in order to measure any change that occurred to the participant of the 10-week project. The questions were based on the three research questions used for this project. The first section of the pre-survey included statements that pertained to the first research question, "What understanding of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living were identified among the participants prior to the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?". The instrumentation used for this was quantitative and qualitative and also included some statements regarding demographics.

The post-survey included the same questions as the pre-survey, but addressed the second research question, "What understanding of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living were identified among the

participants following the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?” So a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions were used in both surveys. The open-ended questions addressed the third research question, “What aspects of the 10-week experience of spiritual direction had the greatest impact on the observed changes in spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living?”

A third instrument used was the semi-structured interviews with participants who were available. The third instrument addressed the third research question, “What aspects of the 10-week experience of spiritual direction had the greatest impact on the observed changes in spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living?” It also provided insight into the beliefs and attitudes of the participant and the journey over the 10 weeks of this project. This instrument was also used to inform all three research questions.

Data Collection

The data for the pre-survey was collected confidentially the week prior to the first week of the 10-week experience. It was delivered to the participants electronically with the option to either print and fill out manually or to fill out electronically. All participants were instructed to complete the pre-survey twenty-four to forty-eight hours before the beginning of the first week’s meeting time.

The post-survey was distributed one week after the last meeting date and collected confidentially one week after distribution. Again, this was delivered electronically with the option to fill out on a printed form or to fill out electronically. The third instrument

was administered between two and four weeks after the last session of the 10-week experience and was also collected confidentially.

Data Analysis

The quantitative sections of the pre- and post-survey analysis were analyzed with descriptive statistics to describe the results. For the qualitative instruments, the researcher analyzed the content analysis identifying themes and gaps in participant responses. For the open ended analysis of the interviews, an analysis of particular themes came up and are mentioned in this section and more thoroughly described in later chapters.

Generalizability

The project is transferable with contextual adaptations for other people who have completed an Alpha course. The applicability is there for future Alpha course graduates within the context of La Croix and churches similar to its demographics. It could possibly be helpful to the Alpha organization as well. It is also possible that it can be used as a beginning 10-week experience for those who are new to the Christian faith, but because of the information and experience that happens in an Alpha course, it is not yet known if this will transfer well to a beginning discipleship course for people who have not completed the Alpha course or not. The hope is that it will. The findings are dependable and credible because the participants engaged with the 10-week experience faithfully and completed the instruments honestly.

The significance of this research is that it is consistent with the findings in other methods of discipleship which are similar in nature and effectiveness. This could have a major impact on the future of discipleship at La Croix and possibly other churches. As a 10-week experience where people are receiving biblical and theological teaching,

practical application of that teaching, and community life in which to grow and live as the body of Christ, growth can occur. This is consistent with the purpose of this project.

Project Overview

This project studies a 10-week experience for Alpha course graduates who have made a declaration of faith in Jesus Christ and are seeking a firmer foundation in their new faith. Chapter Two discusses the most influential writers and practitioners regarding biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living through the lens of the research found on the Church, discipleship and spiritual formation. Chapter Three outlines the various ways I will investigate the research questions. Chapter Four analyzes the findings that emerge from such qualitative and quantitative methods as the pre-survey, post-survey, and interviews. Chapter Five reviews the study's major findings with implications for each discovery now and in the future.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the biblical and historical perspective for guiding and discipling a new believer who has attended an Alpha course and is ready to further their spiritual formation and discipleship and understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The 10-week project led the participants in an experience of the biblical and theological foundations of following Jesus through a faithful and dedicated community of other believers who are seeking to learn and grow in their faith as well. It was a place where the participants engaged not just in academic exercises but in real life orientation to the ways of Jesus and the call of his followers and his church based on the biblical and theological foundations presented in this chapter. Since the Alpha course was not in existence in biblical times, and hence no follow up of said course, this section will look at examples within the biblical texts that explain what a new believer should know, how they should be nurtured, and what the church's role is in their spiritual formation.

In addition, historical examples of discipling new believers throughout history which have bearing on and are worth examining in the context of this research for effective and transformational discipleship in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living are included in this section. Each example is true to scripture and shines a light on what was happening in the context and culture of the day in which these historical followers of Christ lived. This Literature Review reveals that each era had to decide the best way to disciple new believers and that there was a need to not only train and disciple people effectively but to continually encourage and shepherd believers once

they were rooted in the Christian faith within a community of other believers in Christ. Theological themes that support what is necessary to include in discipling new believers are addressed in this section as well. Many scholars believe that the church in Europe and now North America is in a Post-Christendom era which will also be a factor in determining how to approach discipleship and spiritual formation of new believers coming out of the Alpha course. In fact, the Alpha course itself is already geared toward the spiritually curious person of the Post-Christendom world and lends a perspective that is relevant and helpful moving forward (*Alpha International*).

While the church has a responsibility in discipling new believers, it is important to remember that true transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit. No program, curriculum, class, small group, Bible study, conference, prayer group, etc., can transform a person's heart. That is solely the work of the Holy Spirit. As Bernard of Clairvaux reminds Pope Eugene III, "And so, I say, you do your part and God will take care of his satisfactorily without your worry and anxiety. Plant, water, be concerned, and you have done your part. To be sure, God, not you, will give the growth when he wishes" (*Five Books* II.2).

Biblical Foundations

Both the Old and New Testaments have much to share about how people are trained and raised up in following the Triune God. Exodus 10.6 states, "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (*New International Version*, Exod. 19.6). God chose the Israelites as a holy people set apart, his chosen people. It was important to their identity and cultivating their beliefs throughout generations. Customs, traditions, God's commandments given to Moses for the Israelites, the Shema, the Word of God, the

community, and the leaders all played significant roles in keeping God's chosen people rooted in their faith and obedient to him. This was how Jesus was raised as a child. So, it is important to examine how the Bible views this type of instruction for the Israelites in the Old Testament. God's story of loving redemption does not begin or only have relevance within the New Testament. It is woven throughout all of scripture.

When examining what it means to follow Jesus as his disciple, it makes sense to study the Gospels and how Jesus trained and discipled his very first followers and the great commission he gave them after his resurrection. By carefully noticing how Jesus discipled, it gives context to how his followers then discipled others and how the early church discipled new followers. Each generation of disciples must decide how to train new followers of Jesus in a way where each disciple through the nurture of a community of believers is taught the principles and tenants of Biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living.

Following Jesus's death, resurrection, ascension, and giving of the Holy Spirit, the church led by the apostles and followers of Jesus, gives a significant glimpse into how people not only came to faith in Christ but how they learned what it meant to be a follower. The book of Acts and significant research on Ephesians are examined in this section as examples of how new believers were discipled.

Old Testament

The People of God – Identity

Who are the people of God? This is a foundational biblical theological question that must be addressed before identity in Christ in the New Testament and in today's context can be understood. Paul understood this as well, which is why so many times in

his writings he refers to the Old Testament to explain who Jesus is as the Messiah, as well as the Church's identity in Christ and the Church's mission. Understanding the history of Israel and Israel's relationship with and identity as God's chosen people is critical and should not be ignored.

When God created humanity he said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness" (Gen. 1.26). Already God's desire for humans to be distinct from all other creation is evident. After the creation of Adam and Eve and their fall in the Garden of Eden and the continued decline and wickedness of humans, God's story continues, and it is a story of rescue and redemption beginning with the call of Abraham. Joshua McNall writes, "The call of Abraham marks the start of God's grand rescue operation known as 'Israel.'" (60). Furthermore, it begins with Abraham and Sarah, advanced in years, who are wandering in the wilderness. God's seemingly "strange choice of Abraham tells us something important about God's Story: It tells us emphatically that the Creator's way of solving problems is fundamentally different than our own" (McNall 61). In discipleship, God's Story is important to understand. The main movements of God's Story and God's identity describe his plan and love for his people as well as provide examples of how the Israelites shared this story in community generation after generation, attempting to live faithfully and obediently to their God.

N.T. Wright says in a lecture at the 2014 Fuller Forum, "One of the foundation principles of all biblical theology can be stated quite simply, God called Abraham to undo the sin of Adam" ("Who are the People of God?" 01:22–30). He goes on to say, "I like to quote a third century rabbi who put into God's mouth the words, 'I will make Adam first and if he goes wrong, I will send Abraham along to sort it all out.' That's

actually a good reading of Genesis 1 to 12” (01:36–54). The Old Testament is filled with stories, psalms, and examples of God and his people, his covenant with them, their rebellion, God’s longing for them to return to him, their repentance and his forgiveness. The key here is that the Old Testament cannot be separated from the person of Jesus and cannot be separated from God’s story of redemption. Even Paul spoke of Jesus the Messiah not as a one-time divine event that is dropped into the middle of chaos as some theologians claim but as the significant part of the entirety of God’s Story. Again N.T. Wright explains the need to understand this point:

Paul doesn’t see God’s answer to the plight of the world as a totally radical new action without a backstory... The Messiah died for our sins and was raised in accordance with the Scriptures says Paul and it doesn’t mean, ‘oh I can find a few prooftexts here and there if you give me a few minutes to hunt through my scrolls.’ He means that there is after all a *single continuous narrative* stretching back all the way to Abraham and indeed ultimately to Adam in which the appearance of the Messiah and the gift of the Spirit are the long awaited climax and fulfillment. (04:42–06:01)

Throughout the Old Testament, God reminds his people about who he is and who they are in him, his holy and sacrificial love for them, and how they are to live as his people.

The People of God - Formation

Deuteronomy is one of the main books in the Old Testament that clearly reveals who God, Yahweh, is, his deep love for his people, and how he expects his people to live. This was also important to the early church as it is quoted over eighty times in the New Testament and is one of four prominent Old Testament books used frequently by the

early church. The other books are Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah (Thompson 11).

Deuteronomy is especially key because it drives home the point of Israel's character and of their faith and nationhood, because they are challenged to an unshared allegiance with Yahweh who delivered them through his mighty acts (Deut. 4.35). The primary demand, which is also the demand for Christians, is "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6.5; Matt. 22.33; Mark 12.30; Luke 10.27). Deuteronomy has been very influential in shaping God's people. Thompson writes about Deuteronomy, "Its influence on the domestic and personal religion of all ages has not been surpassed by any other book in the Bible" (11). For this reason it is important to underscore some specific factors written in Deuteronomy that are repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments. These are timeless truths and biblical themes that are relevant and have been taught to generations throughout the centuries.

God is clearly described and revered all throughout Deuteronomy. This then informs the theological understanding of the trinity and the doctrine of God. The name of God is found over two hundred times in Deuteronomy. Its theocentric message not only shaped Israel and reinforced Israel's understanding of Yahweh but also continues to shape Christ followers today. Raymond Brown writes that the message of God in Deuteronomy inspires "the commitment of Christian believers...enabling them to have a majestic vision of God and deeper faith in all that he is and does for his people" (21).

There is also the doctrine of revelation throughout Deuteronomy as God reveals his nature, his will, and his own authoritative and unique word. God speaks to his people and clearly defines who he is and what his expectations are for his people. His word and the message of its supremacy sets the stage for God's people to value all of Scripture and

be formed by it. Israel is to hear, teach, and follow the words and the commands, God gives (Deut. 4.1–2). Israel is also to make known God’s word through a variety of ways. It is to be faithfully shared in smaller family units teaching them to their children and their children’s children (4.9–10; 6.6–7, 20–25; 11.19). It also must be preserved in writing and placed in the ark of the covenant (4.13; 10.1–5; 31.9–13). In addition, it is to be set before the people in clear, legible script that anyone can understand (27.1–4, 8). God’s word is also to be spoken within corporate worship when the Israelites bring in their first-fruits offerings (26.3, 5–10). Other ways God’s word is made known is through personal and corporate experience, geographical illustration, lines of memorable songs, and specific encouragement and exhortation (33.1–29). Ever the consummate experiential educator, God offers many ways for his people to learn and remember who he is, his love for his people, and the way they are to live through his revealed word.

Grace is also a timeless truth revealed in Deuteronomy. While the reader may see God’s commands as the center of the laws to be obeyed, Brown reminds his readers that the historical introduction of Deuteronomy puts into perspective the majestic, saving acts of a compassionate God. “It reminds us that he takes the initiative in coming to us in totally undeserved grace and mercy. Our obedience is responsive. The loving and serving begins with him, not with us” (Brown 23). He was preparing his people for what they were going to be bombarded with once they reached the promised land. Throughout this book God’s grace is revealed. He reminds them that he chose them, not the other way around, because of his love for them and the generations after them (Deut. 7.7–9; 8.17–18; 9.4–6). These timeless truths and the way they were shared deeply formed the Israelites.

However, they were prone to forgetfulness from one generation to the next which is why Israel had to put into practice the variety of ways to share and remember God's word to them. When that failed, God reminded his people of his word through the prophets. Much of Deuteronomy's teachings were shared by the prophets as they challenged the people to Yahweh's clear and unequivocal demands, especially what is said in the covenant Yahweh has made with his people, the people of Israel. The prophet Elijah reminds the people in 1 Kings that the Lord is the one true God, that they are to serve only him, and that they have been breaking his commands. He challenges them saying, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18.21). Sadly, the people said nothing. Isaiah also speaks for God, reminding the people of their covenant with him and declaring the reason for his correction of them "for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5.24). Yet he continues to love them and have mercy on them (30.18). Many of God's commands for how to treat one another are violated. So, the prophets must constantly remind Israel of God's law such as when Micah confronts the people of their dishonest scales in conducting trade (Mic. 6.10–11). The prophets teach and remind God's people of God's law on a continual basis, continuing to form the Israelites in their identity and the way God expected them to live.

Kings, such as King Josiah, were also reminded of Yahweh's laws and high ideals. In 2 Kings 22:8–13, when high priest, Hilkiah found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord and gave it to the secretary Shaphan. Shaphan then read it to King Josiah. Upon hearing God's word, Josiah tore his robes and inquired of the Lord. He realized how far his ancestors had drifted from the laws of God and began an incredible

attempt to correct the wrongs of his ancestors beginning with calling together all of the elders of Judah and Jerusalem along with all of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, and the prophets. Then King Josiah read all the words of the Book of the Covenant in their hearing and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord “to follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words in this book” (2 Kings 23.2–3). Then all the people present pledged themselves to the covenant as well.

Israel’s leaders, like Nehemiah and Ezra, were also used by God to remind his people of his word and laws which formed who they were in a desperate and confusing time. Coming out of exile from a land and a nation not their own, the Israelites needed to learn and be reminded of their identity in an intentional way. Nehemiah 8.1–9.38 explains how after the wall had been rebuilt and the Israelites returned from exile and settled in their towns, they all gathered in the square before the Water Gate and asked Ezra, the priest, to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses. This is the same book God had commanded them to write down and place in the ark. As the Book of the Law was read, all the people listened attentively, from daybreak until noon. Ezra spoke from a high platform so all could hear him. He praised God and all God’s people responded lifting their hands and saying, “Amen! Amen!” and they bowed down and worshiped. Then it says the Levites “instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read” (Neh. 8.7–8). This is extremely important to note, because the Israelites had been immersed in the Babylonian culture for so long, they needed to not only hear the word of God but have it explained to them as

well. This is not unlike the situation of today's new believers who are coming out of a culture that is foreign to the word of God, and so they need someone to help make God's word clear through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites told the people to celebrate this day as it is holy to the Lord. They instructed them not to mourn or weep for all the people had been weeping as they listened to the word of the Lord. This was a high and holy day for God's beloved and chosen people as they had returned from exile and were able to finally hear, probably many for the first time, the words of God. Their hearts were softened and in their understanding of God's word, they wept. However, this was a time to celebrate, and they did as instructed. Verse 12 explains why: "Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, *because they now understood the words that had been made known to them*" (8.12; emphasis mine). God's words brought life and the joy of the Lord was their strength (8.10).

Another area of formation of God's people was and is throughout the Psalms. This is especially found in what is known as the historical Psalms (78, 105, 106, 135 and 136). The historical Psalms would have been familiar to the Israelites because each one tells their history. Psalm 78 even says in verses 1–7 how the Psalmist will speak of the Lord's deeds, teaching their children of the law of God so that each generation would know them "then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands" (Ps. 78.7). This Psalm is about a God who acts and speaks. He is also a God who redeems and provides, who judges and loves, and who shepherds his people. These are themes that need to be taught. and the historical Psalms remind the Israelites of this and the specifics of how God did this.

Psalms 105 and 106 also tell of Israel's history but in interesting ways. Psalm 105 tells the story in a positive tone, and Psalm 106 tells it in a negative tone (Wilcock 128). In Psalm 105 the Israelites were called to remember and make known "among the nations what he [the Lord] has done" (Ps. 105.1). They were to remember his strength, the wonders he performed, his covenant, the mighty acts in Egypt, and his salvation in bringing his people out of slavery. Then in Psalm 106 they are to remember the deeds of the Lord. Then the Psalm takes a turn and reminds Israel of her sin and wickedness, especially after they had been rescued. The Psalmist points out the many ways Israel failed Yahweh with their forgetfulness. In the desert with Moses they experienced some of the worst in human sinfulness. They gave into their craving and "put God to the test" (Ps. 106.14). They were envious of Moses and Aaron, made and worshiped false idols, despised the land, did not believe God's promise, grumbled, and were disobedient. They must remember this as well so as not to repeat their sin because later in the Psalm they are reminded of how God responded. He was angry and gave them to their enemies; however, in time, he remembered his great love and showed them mercy.

Psalms 135 and 136 again tell the history of Israel, especially with regards to their rescue from Egypt. Much of these two Psalms are given to praising and thanking God which all followers must remember to do. One essence of Psalm 135 there are values not only for the Israelites but for followers of Christ in every generation. "It looks back to God the Creator (vv. 5–7), forward to God the Judge (vv. 13–14), and at the heart of its faith to God the Redeemer (vv. 8–12)...Not only is his [the psalmist's] God always the same, but his changelessness is a dynamic thing not a static one" (Wilcock 248–49). Israel needed to be reminded of this, and so too do the disciples of today. In Psalm 136

there is a noticeable “burden” or “keeping” with the refrain in each verse: “his mercy (חַסְדּוֹ hesed) endureth forever.” This refrain reminds the hearers not only of what the Lord has done but also of one key aspect of his character, mercy. The rote learning of this seemingly simple phrase is one from which the Israelites as well as modern believers today can receive benefit. Wilcock explains that “God’s servant finds them in time of real need a blazing affirmation that cannot be too often repeated” (252). This teaching, passed down through generations, reminds the Israelites who God is and about their identity as God’s chosen people. The worship of a loving God and his redemption story is intentional and is worth learning from for today’s followers of Jesus.

New Testament

Discipleship in Jesus – The Gospels

After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, declared God’s son by God, and is driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil, he began his ministry by calling his first disciples, a diverse group of men, and inviting them to follow him. The invitation to brothers Peter and Andrew, “Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people,” begins a series of invitations to the ones Jesus desired to have with him to love and to learn from him (Matt. 4.19). Jesus taught his disciples and the crowds of people many times in many places. He also performed miracles whether it was healing lepers, casting out demons, or turning water into wine. The disciples listened to his teaching and observed the many miracles of Jesus. In the early days they learned by observing and being with Jesus. Later after teaching from village to village, Jesus sent out the Twelve to do everything he had been doing:

Calling the twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” (Mark 6.7–11)

The remarkable part about this is that the disciples did exactly what Jesus asked them to do—teaching and preaching, driving out demons and healing the sick. “They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them” (Mark 6.12–13).

Jesus spent much time with his disciples, breaking bread, traveling, and living with them. They saw and experienced first-hand the life, love, and teachings of Jesus. The biblical theology he taught was carried out through his holy love for God and others, and his disposition was evidence of a life consistent with what he taught. His disciples witnessed, experienced, and were taught this life by the risen Savior himself. As Dallas Willard says:

My central claim is that we *can* become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father. (ix)

This is how Jesus's disciples lived. This is how Christians today should live and how the church should teach new disciples to live.

To say that Jesus loved well is an understatement. Jesus is holy love. As the second member of the Trinitarian Godhead, his identity is not in what he does but in who he is. His divine nature is love. He gives his disciples a new understanding of that holy love all throughout their three years together. Jesus's time with them helped them to understand that their identity is in him, not in what they do or accomplish. Their identity comes from Jesus.

Discipleship in the Early Church - Acts

Once Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples did as he commanded when he told them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the gift his father promised, the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.4–5). While they waited, they prayed along with many other followers including Jesus's mother, Mary, and his brothers. They listened to Peter as he reminded them of the prophecies in Scripture of Jesus, and they added Matthias as an apostle to take Judas's place. Peter's reminders should have taken the disciples and all who were listening back to the scriptures with which they were all familiar, the ones that pointed to Jesus the Messiah.

What happened next was more remarkable than the disciples could have predicted. While they were all together in one place, the sound of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house and they saw what appeared to be tongues of fire rest on each of them. Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak (Acts 2.2–4). The timing of this was no accident. The next verse reads, "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing

Jews from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2.9). Amazed some even exclaimed, “we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” (Acts 2.11). Enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter preached a powerful sermon, and three thousand became believers and were baptized that day. This proved to be an extraordinary and spectacular day. Could the disciples have predicted that this is what Jesus meant when he told them earlier “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1.8)?

Following this remarkable day, the next section Luke writes about includes what has been called, “the four marks of the church,” which recounts the way the believers disciplined each other as well as any new followers. Luke writes:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2.42)

They lived the way they lived when Jesus was alive in human flesh, and they continued living this way after they received the Holy Spirit, only now they had the power of Jesus through the Holy Spirit living inside of them for the glory of God. They were devoted to

the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and to prayer. N.T. Wright explains this when he writes:

These four go together. You can't separate them, or leave one out, without damage to the whole thing. Where no attention is given to teaching, and to constant, lifelong Christian learning, people quickly revert to the worldview or mindset of the surrounding culture, and end up with their minds shaped by whichever social pressures are most persuasive, with Jesus somewhere around as a pale influence or memory. Where people ignore the common life of the Christian family, they become isolated, and often find it difficult to sustain a living faith. Where people no longer share regularly in 'the breaking of bread' (the early Christian term for the simple meal that took them back to the Upper Room 'in remembrance of Jesus'), they are failing to raise the flag which says 'Jesus' death and resurrection are the centre of everything'. And whenever people do all these things but neglect prayer, they are quite simply forgetting that Christians are supposed to be heaven-and-earth people. Prayer makes no sense whatever – unless heaven and earth are designed to be joined together, and we can share in that already. (44–45)

Wright explains the necessity of each of these "four marks of the church" and that to leave even one of them out would be to the detriment of the whole Church. The early believers of Jesus continued to live the life he himself modeled for them, and they in turn did the same for every new believer who came into the fellowship of the early Church. This was how they learned to stay true to the tenants of the faith: biblical theology taught by the apostles' teachings, holy love through the fellowship with other believers, and

dispositional living through the breaking of bread and prayer on a regular basis which reminded them who they were and how they were to live.

Discipleship in the Early Church - Ephesians

Paul, while not an apostle at the time of Jesus' physical life on earth but became one later, reveals in his epistles the important teachings of following Jesus. In Ephesians, Paul addresses both the church's identity and unity "in Christ" and how to live as a disciple "of Christ." Scholars believe he is writing to the church in Ephesus, "the faithful in Christ Jesus," although there are earlier manuscripts that do not have to whom Paul is writing (Hays 62). Thus, it is suggested that Ephesians could have been written to a wider audience of believers. While there are some arguments about where Paul was when he wrote his letter to the Ephesians, most scholars believe it occurred during his two year imprisonment in Rome beginning in the year A.D. 60 (Snodgrass 29).

Paul does not address any particular conflict in Ephesians, so there would be no need to send a letter urgently which suggests this is a personal letter focusing on equipping and exhorting his audience for a specific conflict. Likely, Paul is preparing them for anything that might occur in the future by grounding them theologically and ethically. Paul spent a significant amount of time, up to three years (Acts 21.31) with the Ephesian church, preaching, teaching, and living out the gospel and discipling them (Acts 20.20–21, 27–38). These believers were dear to Paul, and his letter to them is meant to remind them of their identity and how to live out their calling. Klyne Snodgrass states:

Ephesians, then, has as its main purpose *identity formation*. It seeks to shape believers by reminding them how wonderful God's work in Christ is, how significant their unity with Christ is, and what living for Christ looks like. It is a

letter of definition and encouragement. This is a letter with a word for today's Church as well. As humans, it is easy to get caught up in the ideas and beliefs of the surrounding culture, no matter what era it is, and as followers of Jesus the Church continues to need to be reminded of her identity in Christ and encouraged to live out of that identity and calling. Paul sought to ground, shape, and challenge his readers so that they might live their faith. (23)

As believers who lived in a Roman culture, "Paul is also aware of the possibility of imminent persecution and the need for the church to be a good witness in society (Eph. 5.21–6.9). He is also aware of the church's struggle with its own background in the occult practices of Asia Minor - magic (Acts 19.19), astrology and attempts to escape the astrological power of Fate (Eph. 1.8–11, 19–23; 3.9–11)" (Keener 539–40). Paul's love for the believers in Ephesus is evident as he continues to teach and disciple them throughout his letter.

The book of Ephesians is divided into two sections. The first section begins in chapter one and dives into the theological framework of a disciple of Christ. Paul reminds, as well as instructs his readers, of their identity and unity "in Christ." In the second half, beginning with chapter four, Paul attempts to inculcate how to live as a disciple "of Christ." Both are important to understand in the discipleship process and need to be deeply embedded in each believer's DNA.

Paul also uses the literary device of preparation (Eph. 1.1–14) and realization (Eph. 1.15–6.24) to prepare his readers for what the rest of the text will explain more thoroughly. Ephesians 1.9–10 prepares the reader for what his main topic will be: "he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he

purposed in Christ ... to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ” (Eph. 1.9–10). He then realizes this statement throughout the rest of the letter, explaining why believers are to live in unity and later, how.

Paul uses the structural relationship of contrast by means of temporal use, past vs. present, to remind his readers of their life before Christ and their current life which is now their new life in Christ. This contrast helps his audience see the differences between the two in both identity and way of life. For example, contrast reveals what their identity was before Christ and what it is now in Christ: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once *were far away* have been *brought near* by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2.13; emphasis mine). Contrasts also highlight how their life must now be lived going forward. For instance, 4.22–24 says that believers are “to *put off your old self*, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to *put on the new self*, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4.22–24; emphasis mine). This constant use of contrast is also implemented with specific instructions of life in community. This is accomplished through examples of behavior and ways to love each other within the community of faith, such as “*put off falsehood* and *speak truthfully* to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (Eph. 4.25; emphasis mine).

In Ephesians, Paul teaches, admonishes, reminds, and disciplines the believers because he knows first-hand what they are up against, having lived in that culture and dealing with enemies of the Way (Acts 19). Before he leaves, he tells the elders of the church:

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! (Acts 20.28–31).

So it should come as no surprise that Paul continues to disciple and build up the believers in Ephesus through his letter, reminding them of how to shepherd and disciple each other. Paul includes instructions in his letter to the Ephesians where he writes in Ephesians 4.12 involving “equipping of the saints.” Shepherds are needed for guiding the flock of believers, and teachers are to clearly teach the word of God.

Once Paul identifies that Christ gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors/shepherds, and teachers, he says that they are “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4.12–13). The Greek says, “for the equipping of the saints to [the] work of ministry,” πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας. It does not say that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers are supposed to do the ministry themselves but that they are to equip, or in other words, prepare, make ready, train what is needed for the saints, to the work of ministry. This is a shared ministry of all believers so that the body of Christ may be built up. One way is by individual gifts for the unity of the body as mentioned in verse seven. “These gifts are so beneficial both to those who exercise their ministry faithfully and to those

who receive it that the church becomes steadily more healthy and mature” (Stott, “The Message” 168). The body of Christ is built up with unity and maturity as a goal. Paul brings the reader back to his earlier statements about unity. Unity is given by the Spirit and in verse seven he explains how this is lived out. “In other words, the church’s goal is not Christ but its own maturity in unity which comes from knowing, trusting and growing up into Christ” (Stott 169). Believers’ different gifts are used in concert for the unity and maturity of the body of Christ in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The more Christians know him and have faith in him, the more they will grow into his likeness which is “the measure of stature of the fullness of Christ,” and “it is precisely the more we know and trust the Son of God that we grow in the kind of unity with one another which he desires” (170). Similar language is found in what Paul wrote in 3:19 in his prayer that his readers would “know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3.19). The fullness of God is the love of Christ; so in this verse (Eph. 4:13), the fullness of Christ is more of the presence of God since his love and fullness dwells in Christ. Growing into this type of maturity prepares the reader for what Paul describes in the next verse.

He writes, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4:14). In this verse Paul explains why it is so important to be equipped and to grow in unity and maturity in the knowledge and fullness of Christ. Before, during, and after Paul’s time, there have been many different kinds of doctrine that are taught by clever and deceitful people as he warned them about when he was with them in Ephesus. So Paul exhorts the believers to ground

themselves in what Jesus taught, in what he now instructs them regarding this truth, and not be swayed by false doctrines. It is a reminder similar to what Jesus gave his disciples about the wise man who built his house on rock versus the foolish man who built his house on sand (Luke 6.46–49). Speaking of the ones who hear the words of Jesus and put them into practice, Jesus says, “They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built” (Luke 6.48). The opposite holds true for the foolish man. In Ephesians, Paul uses a similar metaphor with regards to waves; however, he uses infants rather than houses that are blown about by false teachings. Both examples exhort the believer to put into practice the truth they have been taught, for without it they are not only unable to grow in unity and maturity but as in the case with the house on the sand, they will end up collapsed and destroyed.

Truth is not meant to be isolated. Paul continues, “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ” (Eph. 4.15). He is careful not to push through the truth of the gospel while losing the love found in the gospel. Both must be maintained. So he exhorts his readers to speak the truth (or truthing) in love, ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ, or said another way, speak in such a way that the spirit of love is maintained. By doing so, maturity in Christ is attained. Paul “calls us to hold the two together, which should not be difficult for Spirit-filled believers, since the Holy Spirit is himself ‘the Spirit of truth’, and his first fruit is ‘love’ (Gal. 5:22)” (Stott 172).

Using the physical human body as a metaphor, Paul explains that from Jesus, the entire body of Christ which is the Church is held together. “From him the whole body,

joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4.16). Every part, every person, every joint is brought together into a unit, which gives the imagery of oneness and unity. As one body, then, by using the gifts given to each member, the Church grows and builds itself up in love. Once again, Paul brings together the importance for believers to have unity and oneness while maturing in the truth and love in Christ Jesus.

Paul writes in a way that connects theology with how to live a life according to one’s beliefs and relationship with Jesus Christ. According to Hays, this is common with Paul’s writings, and Ephesians 4.1–16 is no exception. Of Paul’s writings, Hays writes that Paul is not repeating doctrines that are simply formulaic; “rather, he is theologizing as he writes, and the constant aim of his theological reflections is to shape the behavior of his churches. Theology is for Paul never merely a speculative exercise; it is always a tool for constructing community” (Hays 18). With the overarching themes of visible unity and oneness in the Spirit and as a body of Christ, using the diverse gifts given by Christ for the building up of the Church, and both the equipping of the saints and maturing in love and truth, Paul exhorts the Church in Ephesus to live a life worthy of the calling to which they were called.

Theological and Historical Foundations

It is said that “those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.” Yet there is much to be learned from history that is worth repeating, or at least, worth examining in order to learn the movement of the Holy Spirit within a particular place, time, and people. Spiritual practices and theological and biblical truths lived out in the lives of Christ followers in any age inform current followers of important themes that emerge and how

those theological themes are relevant to discipleship today. This section will examine some historical and theological themes and how these themes are important to discipleship in the church. In each theme the thread of biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living is woven throughout.

The Holy Trinity as Ministry and Discipleship Model

The Holy Trinity bears witness to how Christians are to live the mission of Jesus and not one's own mission. In Dr. Steve Seamands's book, *Ministry in the Image of God*, he mentions that ministers rarely think about the Trinity as a doctrine that is more important and relevant to our calling as ministers and to our identity (11). Pastors live and work in day to day ministry, often not thinking about how the Christian doctrine of the Trinity informs and should reflect the pattern of the Trinity (15). The danger of not reflecting this pattern is that the actions and ministry of Christians become another helping profession or service and a form of caregiving that is bland and generic without definition, identification or distinctiveness. Seamands declares, "The ministry into which we have entered is the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world" (15).

Trinitarian theology is necessary not just in ministry but to discipleship as well. Jesus, using trinitarian theology, prays for his disciples in John 17 when he prays that his disciples become one even as he and his Father are one. It is one of the foundations of biblical theology and a deeply formative statement about the nature of the Body of Christ. It undercuts the self-life and engages new believers in living a life as Jesus did. *Of Jesus* undercuts self-will that wants to say "I make the plans." *To the Father* undercuts self-glory that wants to say "I do things for the furtherance of my name." *Through the Holy*

Spirit undercuts self-effort that wants to say “I do God’s work through my own effort, strength and abilities” (Seamands, “The Trinitarian” ppt). In approaching life and ministry, it makes sense to see how living out of a trinitarian view and doctrine of ministry would keep a believer focused and grounded in their identity in the Triune God, and not on their own self-life. This theology is found in scripture in Paul’s letter to the Romans: “For from him [the Son] and through him [the Holy Spirit] and to him [the Father] are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (*English Standard Version*, Rom. 11.36).

Unfortunately, as Dr. Seamands points out later in his book, it will be very difficult to move Western churches toward this trinitarian model. Many Christians have bought into the individualistic way of thinking. It is important to explain to them that when they became believers in Christ, they entered the union and fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and into the fellowship of other believers who are part of the same triune fellowship (Seamands 39). Many Christians would agree with this statement, but the difficulty of living it out practically would be a challenge. So many find themselves easily reverting back to individualism because this message is so strong in our culture. In fact people now live in a new type of Babylon, called ‘digital Babylon’ as coined by Kinnaman and Matlock, where our identity is continually bombarded. “Contrary to the Creator’s intentions, human identity is under a full-scale rebrand in digital Babylon” (Kinnaman and Matlock 48). They explain, “Following Jesus means finding the ultimate answer to these questions in the person and work of Jesus. To be more precise, in the Trinity. If there is a real Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, their life anchors our search for truth – especially the search for truth about ourselves” (57–58).

In the history of the church, the Trinity has been a theological foundation that must be communicated to new believers as well as a continual reminder to all believers. Dr.

George G. Hunter III writes extensively about the evangelization of the Celts. Regarding the Trinity, he writes:

The doctrine of the Trinity became the foundational paradigm for Celtic Christianity. The doctrine informed the people's piety as well as the theologians' theories. Furthermore, the understanding of God as a unity of three persons, bound together in love, informed the Celtic model for life in Christian community; the understanding of God as a family of three persons defined the Christian family. Celtic Christians lived their daily lives, from waking up to cleaning up, from working to retiring, aware of the presence, protection, and guidance for all three persons of the Trinity. (Hunter 77)

There were many ways they taught this truth from using God's Creation such as the small shamrock plant to using the imagination of the Celts by using poetry to convey this truth.

Here is a simple Irish verse as an example:

Three folds of the cloth, yet only one napkin is there,
Three joints in the finger, but still only one finger fair;
Three leaves of the shamrock, yet not more than one shamrock to wear,
Frost, snow-flakes and ice, all in water their origin share,
Three Persons in God; to one God alone we make prayer. (Bradley 85)

The "Being of God" was a central theme in Celtic preaching (Finney 126). Instead of many gods to appease there was a measure of relief in the ordered pattern of the Trinity, three persons in unity and harmony. The many gods they worshiped prior to conversion

to Christianity had so many requirements and myths to remember that it was confusing, frightening, and provided no unifying theme for the Celts. Learning about a Sovereign God with “the communal unity of the Trinity, the Alone who is not alone, the social individual” and a God who welcomed all no matter their station in life filled them with hope and peace (Finney 126). For the Christian Celts, the theology of the Trinity informed their biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional. As such, their teaching, relationships, and lifestyle reflected this theology.

When considering a post-modern world, Lesslie Newbigin writes that the authority of Jesus must be explained because nobody cares or believes in the authority given by people from the West. “In the name of Jesus” invites the counter question, “Who is Jesus?” What a better place to start. All other authority leads people astray (Newbigin 18). The question Jesus asks (“Who do men say that I am?”) is a question each religious and secular person must answer. The answer for the believer is found in the Trinity. As such, Newbigin looks at “the Christian mission in three ways – as proclaiming the kingdom of the Father, as sharing the life of the Son, and as bearing the witness of the Spirit” (29). This is further explained as he looks at “contemporary issues in mission” from this viewpoint (29). In the ministry setting at La Croix Church, this type of presentation and questioning is very relevant in the Alpha course offered. Inviting people to ask their questions and hear who Jesus is has truly changed the way those who are spiritually curious are invited to know Jesus. Having that safe space to truly ask questions about life and faith has helped even believers know how to engage with the people around them in their everyday lives.

Concerning the kingdom of the Father, Newbigin discusses the biblical view of God the Father in which his reign is not just over his people but over all things. He is active in history through his people. This mission is faith in action. “It is the acting out by proclamation and by endurance, through all the events of history, of the faith that the kingdom of God has drawn near” (39). It is the acting out of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples: “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven.” Sharing the life of the Son is love in action. Newbigin explains how Jesus has been viewed over the centuries and then makes his case that the church, in spite of all of her sin and flaws, is “where the mission of Jesus is being accomplished” (54). Bearing the witness of the Spirit he describes the mission as hope in action. He shares, “Mission is not just something that the church does; it is something that is done by the Spirit, who is himself the witness, who changes both the world and the church, who always goes before the church in its missionary journey” (56). Newbigin calls this the “prevenience, previousness of the kingdom” (56). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, The Trinity, must be together for the understanding of mission, otherwise distortion follows (65). This is another example of how the Trinity is viewed in ministry and in discipleship.

Ecclesiology as Understanding the Church’s Identity and Role

Much has been written about ecclesiology. In every generation there is a need to continually ask the question, “what is it that God intends in creating a people in the world who are called together to live in the life of the church?” (Greggs xxix). Tom Greggs further adds:

[ecclesiological] questions are not just questions about what the church does.

They are rather questions that arise from the need fundamentally to consider *what*

the church *is*, and what the church's role is in the *economy of God* and what *God's role* in the church is. Only in light of understanding the place of the church within the economy of God's grace can we begin to understand how we are to be the church in the vastly changed contexts of rampant individualism and post-Christendom in which the church now exists. (xxix-xxx)

Scripture has much to say about God's design for his Church. Scripture is paramount for understanding God's design for his Church. Without faithful adherence to the teachings found in Scripture, the Church will flounder, losing its foundation and footing in a world where the culture of dualism is alive and well. A solid biblical foundation must establish important truths or else the Church will have a tendency to forget who she is and neglect to follow Jesus as Spirit-filled disciples who carry his light, his presence, and his transforming power into a world in need of him. Scripture reveals at least three truths followers of Jesus must know: believers must know who they are (Identity), how they are to live (Discipleship), and their purpose (Mission).

The church's identity involves the understanding of the Trinity as explained earlier and, specifically, who Jesus is. This is explained throughout the Bible beginning with creation. In Genesis 1 "God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...'" (Gen. 1.26). The plural form of 'us' and 'our' is indicative of the Triune God found in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus uses these titles in Matthew when he issues his missional statement and ends with, "and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28.19).

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, they were called into a covenant with God and were given God's Law. Along with these laws the promise was given that if

they walked in obedience, they would live and prosper in the land he was giving them. Additionally, he gave them the *Shema*, expecting them to listen and obey, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6.4–5). This is a bold statement both in this era and in the time of Moses. God claims that he is the only God and all others are dethroned. So while other people live under the authority of many gods, Yahweh calls his people to live under his Lordship. This monotheistic view went against all other cultures surrounding Israel, and practically speaking, it goes against the postmodern culture and the idols that currently exist. Alan Hirsch writes, “Monotheists (authentic *biblical* believers) have only one reference point for life and existence – namely God” (Hirsch 89). “Jesus is Lord” is deeply imbedded in the identity of the church. To lose this is to lose the reason for the existence of the church. The early church knew what it meant to say, “Jesus is Lord.” They understood it could cost them their lives. Caesar was seen as a god, and all were commanded to show allegiance only to him. Early Christians refused to bow to Caesar, much the same as way as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar when they said, “we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Dan. 3.18). Persecuted Christians in today’s world understand the consequences. They truly live Jesus’ claim, “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it” (Matt. 16.25).

“For authentic missional Christianity, Jesus the Messiah plays an absolutely central role. Our identity as a movement, as well as our destiny as a people, is inextricably linked to Jesus – the Second Person of the Trinity” (Hirsch 94). Jesus is the

reason and the foundation for the church's identity. As such, Scripture says much about what the believer's identity in Christ is, so that they will understand and know what God's design is for the church.

While there are many to choose from, the following verses are some of the strongest statements of identity that then lead to the next point of how followers of Christ are to live. Scripture reveals in many places that believers are considered children of God. One example is found in Galatians when Paul declares, "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir" (Gal. 4.6–7). The church in Corinth is told by Paul that they are new creations with a purpose, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them" (2 Cor. 5.17–19). In another passage, Peter reminds believers scattered throughout various provinces, "But you are a *chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession*, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2.9 emphasis mine). Paul also reminds the church in Corinth, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Cor. 12.27). The Church's identity must be solidly founded in Christ, not in what the Church has done or will do but in what Christ has done for the church and continues to do. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that

no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2.8–10).

Worship as Response and Formation in Discipleship

Christians' identity in Christ and his sacrificial love for all through his death and resurrection, demands a response. Worship is that response and is an important element of discipleship as God's people and followers of Christ. This is demonstrated throughout scripture, Christian history, and continues today. Webber states, "worship cannot take place without our response to God himself, wherein our innermost selves reach out to him...our response is to God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit" (110). As mentioned before, Peter states the reason the church is a chosen people, is so "that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2.9). The praises of Jesus are declared by the Body of Christ in worship. Through worship believers are reminded of their commitment to Jesus, calling them to love God and others. "Therefore, my response to God, who is present in worship, is the source of power for living. It sets my world in order. It determines my priorities in life" (Webber 125).

Part of spiritual formation and discipleship takes place in worship, which then affects how the church lives. Worship develops habits which orient believers toward God. Orienting oneself toward God and worshipping Jesus causes people to become more like him. The church in Corinth was reminded of this by Paul when he wrote, "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away...And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3.16, 18). That is a primary

goal as a church—to become like Jesus. “Discipleship, becoming like Jesus our Lord and Founder, lies at the epicenter of the church’s task. It means that Christology must define all that we do and say” (Hirsch 94).

The fourfold structure of worship can aid in the discipleship of the Body of Christ. With structure, according to both Webber and Powers, the patterns and practices themselves not only help people to worship, but they form believers and have been forming followers of Jesus since the time of the early church. Webber adds:

Worship not only presents Christ, it causes Christ to be formed in my life. The structure of worship is itself the structure of life – words and deeds. When I am thoroughly involved in worship I not only hear and see, but I become. I am to become God’s Word and God’s Bread to the world. To be formed by worship is to take on the characteristics of Christ, to be shaped by his presence within. (105)

Structure also supports discipleship because it tells the story of God’s salvation. It goes through the telling and re-living of the story of salvation and in discipleship, and it is essential to know this story.

The *Gathering* is the opening of the fourfold structure of worship in which God invites his people into his presence. He is the one who calls his people to himself. He is the host of this time of worship together. In the Gathering the people of God ready their hearts in preparation to hear God’s Word. The Gathering also represents the beginning of God’s narrative. He is the one who initiates (Powers). “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15.16). In this opening the church is practicing what it means to live a life open before God, ready to hear his Word and ready to follow him. Songs of praise, the prayer of Invocation in which believers acknowledge God’s presence and invitation,

confession of sin and words of forgiveness along with the opening prayer, set people's hearts in an attitude of surrender and dependence on Jesus. In discipleship this part of worship teaches the posture people are to take before the Lord, not just during the worship service but in every area of their lives.

The next part of the fourfold structure of worship is the *Word*. This is God's word to his people as together they listen and hear him speak through Scripture and a sermon inspired by the Holy Spirit. Through the Word, God actively speaks, drawing believers closer to himself. Hearing and obeying what God says through his Word reinforces the believer's faith. "So faith rests upon the Word of God as a foundation" (Calvin 1281). God invites his people into his narrative by making his covenant with them through Christ. "For this reason (Christ's sacrifice) Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9.15). "In worship God renews his covenant with us. In worship our relationship to God is deepened and strengthened when the order itself represents God's speaking to us and God's saving us" through his Son, Jesus Christ. (Webber 132) Listening to, interpreting, and applying scripture is an integral part of worship and of discipleship. "The overall purpose for the reading of the Word is to let God speak" (143). Those who know Christ as their Lord submit to his authority through Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to live and work in their lives. As Paul explains to Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3.16–17).

The *Response and the Table* is how the Church responds to the Word and is next in the fourfold structure. The community of faith makes their commitment to Jesus and

receives his grace typically through the Lord's Supper. Songs and prayers of acceptance of God's faithfulness are also appropriate during this time as the Church responds with thankfulness to the Word. When the breaking of bread and wine are offered in Holy Communion the message of the gospel is expressed and experienced. "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22.19; 1 Cor. 11.24) is what Jesus told his disciples to do, which they did in the early church, and the church has been doing ever since. The sacraments, which are the Lord's Supper and baptism, are a sign of the covenant God made with his people and, "therefore, are exercises which make us more certain of the trustworthiness of God's Word" (Calvin 1281). In the narrative of God's story, believers commit to the covenant and the sacrifice that Jesus has given to us. When believers consume the bread and wine they are "claiming God's work. We are saying, 'You paid the price; you did the work; you achieved salvation; I accept it'" (Webber 97). In discipleship, through the Response and Table, people learn how to respond to their Heavenly Father who confirms their faith through the Word and Sacraments "by the knowledge of whom the whole firmness of our faith stands fast and increases in strength" (Calvin 1286).

The *Sending Forth*, last of the fourfold structure, commissions the gathered to go and live as fully committed, Spirit-filled, followers of Jesus. They are reminded that "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ...And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors" (2 Cor. 5.18–20). People are dismissed with a benediction, prayer, blessing or hymn "signaling an end to worship and the beginning of service in the world" (Webber 54). In

God's story, his narrative, believers are sent forth to be God's people. In worship they have been meeting *with* God, not *about* God so they are now ready to be sent forth (Powers). He sends Christians to "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" (Matt. 28:19–20). This is the church's mission.

This is where structure, according to both Webber and Powers, the patterns and practices themselves not only help people to worship, but they form people. Part of the spiritual formation of worship is developing habits which "begin to seep into our souls and orient us toward God in certain ways and reorient us to the world as we go forth" (Powers 02:12–02:20). Structure also supports discipleship because it tells the narrative story of God's salvation that is repeated each time Christians worship. Through the *Gathering*, God initiates first. He invites people into his presence much like he did with Abraham, David and Jesus did with his disciples. Through the *Word* believers experience God speaking his Word to them like he did with his Law, his covenant, and Jesus. Through the *Response and the Table* the gathered respond by committing themselves to God much like the Israelites with the covenant and sacrifices, and the disciples and other believers with the Lord's Supper, and learning from Jesus pre and post resurrection. Finally through the *Sending Forth* Christians are sent forth to do the work Jesus has called us to do and how God called the Israelites to be a blessing to the nations (Powers 20:02–22:12). Simply put, the structure of worship supports and spiritually forms a follower of Jesus through the pattern of God's narrative in which God invites, God speaks, they respond, and they are sent out in mission. Believers are participants who should be actively engaged in worship, not bystanders or consumers of worship. The

structure helps make this happen. “Worship reminds me of my commitment to Christ. Worship calls me to love not only God with my whole heart, but my brother as myself” (Webber 125).

Incarnational Mission as Active Discipleship

If the church’s identity is solidly founded in Christ, and they are becoming more like him through discipleship and the power of the Holy Spirit, then their purpose and mission is to make disciples. This is understood through the lens of the Shema that Jesus confirmed as the greatest commandment and “the second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12.31). Loving God with all one’s heart, soul, mind and strength and one’s neighbor as oneself is the platform from which a believer jumps off into mission.

The early church lived this out. They took Jesus at his word when, before he died, he told them, “whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14.12). He further assured them he would not leave them alone. “I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth... I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you... On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (John 14.16–20). Again, after his resurrection, as he gives the mission to his disciples, Jesus says, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28.20). Then, just before his ascension, Jesus assures them again that they will not need to be his witnesses on their own. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1.8). True

to Jesus's word, this is exactly what happened and continues to happen today. Jesus knew that without his Spirit there would be no way his disciples could live out the mission he gave.

So, along with the early church, the church today is a missional church. The church is organized as "an agent of God's mission to the world. In other words, the church's true and authentic organizing principle is its mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church" (Hirsch 82). Ecclesial health is found in incarnational mission and is a part of discipleship and the spiritual formation of believers. The church must not become a closed body in that it should not seek to edify itself, but it must live incarnationally as Jesus did, by going to the people. Jesus was very clear with his disciples. He not only taught them how to live but lived out the principles of the Kingdom of God with them, so they would know how to live as his disciples. This is true today as well, as the church disciples new believers and each other.

The way Jesus taught his way of life to his disciples was not inwardly focused or static. It was quite the opposite. Jesus healed lepers, he prayed, he calmed the sea, he raised people from the dead, he ate with sinners, he turned tables over in the temple, and he taught them about the kingdom of heaven. This type of living was anything but static. In this way, Jesus was teaching them how to live this life of mission. Throughout the centuries, the church has been living this way of life, this mission—God's design for the church.

Hirsch asserts that persecution was the threat to the early church, the church in China, and many other areas, but in the Western church, the threat is much more subtle. He suggests that the North American church's biggest threat is consumerism and that it

has infiltrated the culture of churches without believers even being aware. This can be found in worship services where people come to worship not to be led into worship as a participant but as a spectator. A stirring quote is, “We plainly *cannot consume our way into discipleship*...Consumption is detrimental to discipleship” (45). The heart of the culture within the church must be changed, and Hirsch and Ivan Illich argue that change occurs when an alternative story is told. The current story is institutional or Christendom. This system has been used to the detriment of the church’s primary missionary calling, inadvertently suppressing its Apostolic Genius, according to Hirsch. He suggests a new system that tells an ancient alternative story; the one the early church and other Jesus movements have used. Persecuted Christians know how to do this. They “have to condense and purify their core message that keeps them both faithful and hopeful” (85). The clutter is removed and the main message is proclaimed. This is found throughout the Bible. “Hear, O Israel” based on Deuteronomy 6.4 proclaims that Yahweh is Lord, and in the New Testament the early Christians did not just say Jesus is Lord as a confession only. They were proclaiming that he was the promised Messiah. This was the main message. Idolatry and dualism are still alive and therefore, the message of Jesus is Lord must be known. “Discipleship, becoming like Jesus our Lord and Founder, lies at the epicenter of the church’s task. It means that Christology must define all that we do and say” (94).

Ecclesial health is found in incarnational mission. The church must not become a closed body, and Hirsch argues that the attractional model is not effective in reaching new people to the gospel. The church must go to the people, not with an institutional template, but by presence, proximity, powerlessness and proclamation. This is incarnational

ministry, and he describes how Jesus' ministry looked within each of these "p" words. He also backs this up with 1 Corinthians 9.22–23 where Paul begins by saying he has become all things to all people. He challenges believers to move from the "evangelistic-attractional model to missional-incarnational" (147). This happens best when Christians see that it is God's work and they join him in his mission, not the reverse. This way of the church living missionally is also part of discipleship.

Community as Integral to Discipleship Formation

In Genesis God sets the stage for the need for community by saying, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen 2.18). Sometimes in discipleship a group of believers can lean too heavily on the teaching and learning side of what it means to be a Christ follower and forget the importance of relationships as defined by Scripture. John Stott writes, "Aloneness is not the will of God either in ordinary life or in the Christian life. People need fellowship, and it is God's will that they should have it... I do not think it is an exaggeration to say, therefore, that small groups, Christian family or fellowship groups, are indispensable for our growth into spiritual maturity" (*The Living Church* 86–87).

Stott backs this up in his description of the living church. There is another aspect of the 'four marks of the church' in Acts which had to do with the believers' relationships. This was essential in the life of every believer whether new or old. John Stott writes that those relationships were found and related to the apostles, each other, to God and to the world outside and then he writes, "what we need to do is to humble ourselves before God, and seek the fullness, the direction and the power of the Holy Spirit. For then our churches will at least come close to the essentials of a living church in

apostolic doctrine, loving fellowship, joyful worship and outgoing, ongoing evangelism” (33). Relationships are key to forming new disciples. This was commonly accepted by the early church as their numbers were being added to daily. As a result Stott says, “But the early church anticipated the arrival of new believers, and made provision for their nurture” (32).

This was seen regularly in the church prior to Constantine. True community is where discipleship happened. While faith was an individual choice, the community of faith was where disciples were formed. Alan Kreider indicates that early Christians were much more concerned about “developing practices that contributed to a habitus that characterized both individual Christians and the Christian communities. They believed that when the habitus was healthy, the churches would grow. Their theology was unhurried – a theology of patience” (74). They were unhurried, and they trusted that God would fulfill his purposes. Their work was to remain faithful to the teachings of Jesus by living them out. It was not just theology, doctrine, or rules, it was a faithful life in Christ. It was, as Cyprian quoted to a catechist, “We do not preach great things; we live them” (Kreider 169). “Clearly the early Christians thought their way of life was important, for lifestyle is not only a product of belief; it is a display of what people truly believe” (95). Therefore, it was important to the early church for a new believer to receive intentional formation. They did this by “a process of formation that, as time progressed, was increasingly self-conscious. It was rooted in the habitus of the communities – their reflexive behavior. It was embodied knowledge rooted in predispositions that guided the Christians’ common life and expressed themselves in practices” (134). Discipleship was not possible to do alone then, and it is not possible to do alone now.

With regards to community, Alan Hirsch explains the type of community the church must have. His idea is that with community there is an inward focus based on safety and security whereas, *communitas* is quite the opposite. *Communitas* happens when there is liminality, some type of shift or transition. “It involves adventure and movement and it describes that unique experience of togetherness that only really happens among a group of people inspired by the vision of a better world who actually attempt to do something about it” (Hirsch 221). The church then lives in a liminal context rather than a security context. This is where we can see easily how the early church and persecuted Christians lived in a way that is similar to other true Jesus movements. They lived as pilgrims, not settlers. Jesus gave this example in the way he lived his life. Example after example of not only life in the church but throughout world events and great novels, Hirsch brilliantly explains this beautiful image of the church living out the mission Jesus gave. In fact, “without mission there is no movement, and the community dies a death of the spirit long before it dies a physical death” (237).

In modern times addressing our digital age, Angela Reed adds to the discussion and reinforces the biblical understanding of community through her comments about spiritual companioning. She writes:

This is a sacramental relationship in the sense that the relationship is imbued with divine presence and becomes a visible expression of something invisible. The spiritual companion does not create Christ’s presence but mediates it in the companioning relationship. Christ is at work and the companion simply joins him through the power of the Holy Spirit in that work. God always makes the first move. We participate by offering ourselves to be in a companioning relationship

with another ‘in the service of God,’ thus becoming a means for mediating God’s forgiving, redeeming, and renewing presence. (Reed 13)

Humility Virtue as Foundational in Discipleship

In early Christian communities, believers new and old were continually reminded of the virtue of humility and its importance. The reasons given for humility and the outcomes when practiced warrant attention for discipleship. St. Benedict knew the importance of humility. In fact he admonishes his readers to follow twelve steps to humility he developed plus an extra step where he writes, “The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience, which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above all” (Benedict V.1.2). While obedience is not the first step in his list of 12 steps, it is clear that obedience and submission are valued and necessary to humility and to self-understanding. This list and this section is similar to Paul’s words in Ephesians to “Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ” (Eph. 5.21). Benedict explains that this is important so the “monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear (1 John 4:18)” (VII.67). By practicing humility it becomes a habit that is observed no longer with dread or fear “but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue” (VII.69).

Dorotheos of Gaza, a monk and abbot in the mid 500’s, also taught about humility beginning with Adam and Eve. In their sin when they had a chance to ask for forgiveness, “no trace of humility was found in either one of them” (Dorotheos 83). So it is, he explains, that “without humility it is impossible to obey the Commandments or at any time to go towards anything good” just as Adam and Eve discovered (83). He further aligns obedience and humility together depicting horses that are yoked together so they

stay in step with each other, “so obedience needs to have humility yoked together with it” (90). Obedience is not the only action which needs humility, for none of the other “necessary things” or virtues, such as faith, fear of God or self-control, “can set us right without humility” (95). He writes that that “one of the Fathers used to say, “Before anything else we need humility...because through humility every device of the enemy, every kind of obstacle, is destroyed” (94). He notes that humility is given by God’s grace, “which delivers man from so many evils and delivers him from the greatest temptations” (102). There seems to be an urgency in his tone with reference to humility. Following Christ is impossible without humility; however, he further explains that it is a divine work. When a brother asked one of the elders about humility the elder replied, “Humility is a great and divine work and the road to humility is labor, bodily labor, while seeking to know oneself and to put oneself below everyone else and praying to God about everything: this is the road to humility, but humility itself is something divine and incomprehensible” (101).

Bernard’s treatises to Pope Eugene III were also clear on humility. Recognizing that even the Pope is in need of humility was important to see, since he is the head of the church representing Jesus himself. While it may seem obvious that the Pope should be humble, the world does not often view leaders as people who are humble, and as such will treat those in power differently. This could clearly go the Pope’s head, and Bernard, because of his love for the Pope, Jesus, and the church, is certain to remind the Pope of the importance of humility. He gives a long paragraph explaining humility and then says “a good estate is humility on which every spiritual building is constructed and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. Through humility some possess even the gates of their

enemies” (Bernard 63). It is foundational for every follower of Jesus, including the Pope, and about the Pope he says, “to the extent that he is raised higher than other men, humility raises him above himself” (63). It is the upside-down kingdom of Jesus that disciples of Jesus must learn and begin to understand. It is the kingdom where John the Baptist declares that he must decrease and Jesus must increase. So it is with the Pope, so it is with us. “Indeed, humility is the true and firm foundation of the virtues. For, if humility should waver, the system of virtues is ruined” (179). None of the other virtues are able to stand or be carried out in a person’s life or within a community of faith if humility is not present, undergirding all the other virtues.

Each of these writings raises the question, why humility? What is the reason and why is it so important to have humility? In Benedict, it is where believers find perfect love and delight in virtue. From Dorotheos and Bernard we discover that through humility we can thwart the schemes of the enemy, have obstacles destroyed, and we are able to be obedient because we have died to self and Christ and his power lives in us. We are also made aware that humility is the foundation for all other virtues by God’s grace. God does not oppose the humble and will use a man or woman with humility to carry out his mission in the world. This is learned and lived within community and is where God shapes and develops humility in the lives of his followers.

Wise Counsel and Accountability as Formational in Discipleship

Koinonia has many aspects where discipleship happens which includes receiving counsel and accountability. In an individualistic culture, counsel is usually not received well and has been misunderstood. In the past, believers knew and were reminded of the need of godly counsel. Being able to take counsel requires a humble heart. Humility is

required for someone who is able to give and receive counsel from another and to allow themselves to be held accountable to others. In *The Rule of St. Benedict*, the whole of the monastic life is held together by the community of the monastery and the ways that each person is accountable to each other. In the Rule, Benedict weaves together the “rules” or standards by which the brothers at the monastery should follow. He sets this up in the Prologue explaining in terms of the whole monastery, “In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome. The good of all concerned, however, may prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to safeguard love” (Benedict Prologue 46.47). There are several examples of how even the abbot should take counsel with the entire community on larger issues and seek counsel from the seniors on smaller ones. So, everyone is held accountable and receives counsel, including the abbot. The chapter on the Deans of the Monastery sheds some light on the character of the men Benedict sees as worthy to give counsel. They should be “the kind of men with whom the abbot can confidently share the burdens of his office. They are to be chosen for virtuous living and wise teaching, not for their rank” (48).

Dorotheos of Gaza writes at length about taking counsel and accountability and the reasons why. Using Proverbs 11.14 as his guide, he is very adamant that, “We should not set ourselves up as guideposts” (Dorotheos 122). Believing so fiercely in how the enemy and our own hearts can deceive, Dorotheos continually admonishes the brothers with reminders such as “we should not believe we can direct ourselves. We need assistance, we need guidance in addition to God’s grace,” “he should report everything and take counsel about everything,” “for how can we know the will of God or seek it completely if we believe only in ourselves and hold on to our own will,” and “to a man

doing this consistently there is indeed safety in much counsel” (122–23). This much counsel is not in many people but in much counsel from “someone in whom he has full confidence” (123). With wisdom he explains how the devil does not tempt openly or tempt someone who is on the lookout for temptation, “but he find[s] out that little bit of self-will or self-righteousness and through that, with the appearance of well doing, he will do us harm” (123). This is why, he explains, it is so important to seek counsel and he goes into convincing detail of why the devil hates these “whispers of caution” (123). He hates it because his malice is brought into the light and he is known and “he finds himself unable to lay snares as he wishes” (124). In describing the story of a brother who could not talk about his troubles, “he found he had not formed the habit of revealing his inner thoughts and for this reason the enemy was twisting him round his little finger” (125). This was a wise and perceptive observation by Dorotheos. No matter the era, humans struggle with revealing their inner thoughts and motives to each other, and Dorotheos is aware of this. So he positively advises, “Learn then, brothers, to enquire; be convinced that not to set one’s own path is a great thing. This is humility, this is peace of soul, this is joy” (129). Again, humility is addressed.

In Bernard it is somewhat humorous to look for counsel because the whole treatise to Pope Eugene III is counsel, whether the Pope appreciated it or not. Bernard tells the Pope that although he may know every mystery, “if you do not know yourself, you are like a building without a foundation; you raise not a structure but ruins” (53). Bernard guides the Pope in understanding himself with wise counsel concerning three divisions in consideration of himself: “what you are in nature, who you are in person, and what sort of man you are in character” (54). He also lovingly yet directly reminds Pope

Eugene of who he is. It is a beautiful section written by a friend meant to acknowledge his friend's current position and how God has placed him there, and then Bernard speaks of who the Pope is inside, his limitations, and the humility with which he is to labor. He advises the Pope to "Do all things with counsel and afterwards you will not be sorry" (123).

Philip Spener, a German Lutheran theologian and considered the Father of Pietism in the late 1600's, is given more to the aspect of accountability and need for one another, and in this setting, counsel is received. He discusses in several places how the work of God cannot be carried out by only the pastor. It requires the universal priesthood (Spener 94–95). Believers need each other. One of the best examples of accountability is the section about students and professors of theology. He writes:

Such confidence and friendship should be established among the students that they not only admonish one another to put what they have heard into practice but also inquire, each for himself, where they may have failed to observe to rules of conduct and try at once to put them into practice. They should also come to a mutual agreement to keep an eye on one another and, with brotherly admonitions suitable thereto, see how one or another may accommodate himself. In fact, they ought to give an account to one another and to their professor of how, in this or that situation, they have acquitted themselves in the light of the given rules. (113–14)

The "mutual agreement to keep an eye on one another" is an important aspect of this type of counsel and accountability as well as in discipleship.

Several questions are raised. Why is it important to take counsel within community? Why should believers be held accountable to each other? For Benedict it is practical—to share one another’s burdens which is sharing in the love of Christ. For Dorotheos it is to know God’s will, and in several places he gives good counsel that to take counsel is to not fall away and become a tool of the enemy. Bernard says it is to stay true to your salvation. Spener’s reason is also to stay true. Stay true to the Word of God in truth and in conduct. In all four, the reasons point to the fact that the life of faith in Christ cannot be lived in isolation, and he takes it one step further. Taking counsel and giving an account of one’s life is essential to a deeper relationship with God and others and results in faithful Christian living and authentic discipleship.

Research Design Literature

The purpose of this research was to measure the spiritual transformation that took place in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living among Alpha course graduates from La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, who attended a 10-week experience of spiritual direction. After several somewhat successful attempts had been tried in the past to develop a discipleship catechesis for new believers in Christ from the Alpha course, and based on the themes that arose from the Literature Review, the use of the Rooted curriculum with a few modifications was decided by the researcher as a tool for this discipleship experience. Rooted is a 10-week small group community experience designed to connect participants to God, the church, and their purpose. Together, in a group of 10–15 people from all stages of life, participants will explore the Bible, engage in a prayer and serve experience, share stories, and practice rhythms essential to a healthy spiritual life. These spiritual rhythms are not novel or something the

church recently created; every one of them is found in Acts 2 where the early church began. The modifications used were more doctrinal in nature to center the teaching on a more Wesleyan theology in certain areas such as baptism which are presented in a slightly different way in Rooted.

The research conducted was an intervention method implementing a pre- and post-test completed by each participant, along with one-on-one interviews at the conclusion of the 10-week experience. Qualitative and quantitative research were used to measure biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living with data collection and analysis as instrumental in determining the effectiveness of the research. A variety of qualitative research questions such as the ones Sensing recommends were used as well as several quantitative ones (Sensing 86–88). Additionally, it has been noticed by the researcher in practice that people appreciate simple surveys as well and more open ended questions. So a survey that employed fixed choice responses was also used. Judith Bell states, “Surveys can provide answers to the questions What? Where? When? And How?, but it is not so easy to find out Why?” (14). For the why one-on-one interviews were utilized.

Summary of Literature

The Old and New Testaments provide a biblical foundation of the need for solid Christian discipleship in learning, practicing, and experiencing biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living. In addition, the church throughout history provides examples of this. In every person who is being discipled and learning the ways of Christ, there is also much to unlearn. Jews and Gentiles alike had much to unlearn once they began following Jesus. This is true today in the lives not just of new believers but all

followers of Jesus. Therefore, a robust church must examine how to disciple and train new believers in Christ who are full of the joy of learning and believe that the God of the universe sent his Son to rescue them and through his Spirit is leading and transforming them each day.

As this literature review demonstrates, the themes of identity in Christ and God's redemptive Story must be clearly communicated and reinforced regularly as this is central to how and why disciples of Jesus live out their calling. The literature was also clear that with the arrival of post-Christendom in many parts of the world including the North American continent there is a decline in traditional Protestant churches. Michael Jenkins calls this "the hyperactivity of panic" and includes "this manifests itself in clutching for any and every programmatic solution and structural reorganization in the desperate hope that survival is just another project or organizational chart away" (Jenkins 9). However, this is not what is needed according to the research. The research supports that what is needed is a clear understanding of "what the church is and why it is important and what its purpose is" (Greggs xxix). This is in part the heart of biblical theology—that all believers must understand what/who God says the church is and to live out of that identity. As Kyle Snodgrass says that Ephesians (and this researcher would say is supported elsewhere in scripture) has "as its main purpose *identity formation*. It seeks to shape believers by reminding them how wonderful God's work in Christ is, how significant their unity with Christ is and what living for Christ looks like" (Snodgrass 23). This happens in community which is another strong theme that the research supports and is used in the research project. Within discipleship, the community of other believers, brothers and sisters in Christ, is essential to spiritual formation. In an individualistic

culture such as the United States, this is countercultural. Greggs writes, “Within a society in which the individual rules supreme and in which there is atomization of community ... the Protestant propensity towards individualism and the individual’s relation to God has burgeoned like a weed in the garden of the church community” (Greggs xxvii). Sadly, this is really happening, but it does not have to be that way. Through community, worship, and spiritual companioning there is an exchange of love as demonstrated by the Holy Trinity. Being spiritually formed in community was always God’s idea.

In going forward with this project, the research supports the need for solid discipleship in the church and especially the church in a post-Christendom society which may not be entrenched in the Midwest completely but is headed this way. The Alpha course is set up in a way that already introduces major biblical truths in a warm and loving community atmosphere, but it is not designed to take the participant further in their journey of faith as it is currently structured. There is a need for that next step in discipling new believers in a manner similar to passing the baton to a teammate in a relay race so that the race can continue to be run well.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this project. Beginning with an explanation of the nature and purpose of the project, this chapter goes on to demonstrate how the research questions connect and relate to the research instrumentation used for this project. The ministry context and participants are briefly described as well as the ethical considerations used for this research. Finally, the instrumentation used, data collection and data analysis are included in the conclusion of this chapter.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this research was to measure the changes in spiritual transformation that took place in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living among Alpha course graduates from La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, who attended a 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community. In developing a discipleship strategy for new believers after Alpha, a few La Croix Church staff members heard about a discipleship opportunity birthed out of a Kenyan church based on an Acts 2 model called *Mizizi*, which means Rooted (ROOTED 12). Their sister church, Mariner's Church, in Irvine, California, asked them to help make it contextual for North American churches. The researcher and a number of staff and non-staff from La Croix Church reviewed the material and attended a webinar and after praying and much discussion, decided to look into it further to see if this would be a good foundational discipleship tool for those new to the faith coming from the Alpha course

who were ready to follow Jesus and desired to know how. This discipleship tool was called Rooted. Based on seven rhythms, Rooted is a 10-week experience for participants to establish strong roots and rhythms based on the truth of God's Word practiced individually and in community.

This discipleship strategy is not about more information; it is about transformation. While there is information based on biblical truths throughout the material, the goal is not ingesting more information but providing a safe community through Rooted groups where transformation by the Holy Spirit can take place. Spiritual rhythms are introduced and experienced. Biblical truth is learned through daily devotionals, prayer, and God's Word, both individually and through group discussions.

Research Questions

The following three research questions informed and guided this project in measuring the impact of this 10-week discipleship experience focusing on spiritual direction in community.

RQ #1. What levels of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living were identified among the participants prior to the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?

The reason for this question was to measure the levels of spiritual transformation prior to Rooted in order to determine the base line of where the participants of the Alpha course are in terms of biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living. The statements of the pre-survey are divided into three sections and relate specifically to each of these topics. Statements 13–27 relate to holy love. Statements 28–42 relate to dispositional living. The last set of statements, 43–57, relate to biblical theology.

RQ #2. What levels of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living were identified among the participants following the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?

The reason for this question was to measure the effectiveness of the 10-week experience in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living following the Rooted experience. The statements of the post-survey are divided into three sections and relate specifically to each of these topics. Statements 13–27 relate to holy love. Statements 28–42 relate to dispositional living. The last set of statements, 43–57, relate to biblical theology.

RQ #3. What aspects of the 10-week experience of spiritual direction had the greatest impact on the observed changes in spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living?

The reason for this question was to evaluate the specific aspects of the 10-week experience to determine which parts were most effective for spiritual transformation. One-on-one, semi-structured interviews address RQ#3. This set of questions are open ended questions that were then followed up for further explanation and understanding. The interviews were one-on-one in either an in-person format or held virtually utilizing Zoom. The interviews allowed the participants to speak freely about aspects of the discipleship experience that they may not have been able to express in the post-survey questions or as fully in the open-ended questions. The additional prompts helped them reflect on the aspects of the discipleship experience that most impacted them in their spiritual transformation.

Ministry Contexts

Geographical and historical context. The geographical location for this 10-week discipleship experience was in the Midwest, specifically southeast Missouri, in a small city located centrally on the Mississippi River. Over time this area has been controlled by 20 different Native American tribes, the French, the Spanish, and during the Civil War was held by the Union due to its strategic location on the river. It continued for years to be a bustling river town, and today is a central hub for commerce in the area as it is located 100 miles south of St. Louis and 150 miles north of Memphis. So while the population as of the 2020 census is 42,917, it is estimated that there can be 90,000 on any given day due to commerce, higher education opportunities, and the two large hospitals located here. There is a slightly higher percentage of females (52%) than males in Cape Girardeau.

Cape Girardeau has a racial composition of a white population with nearly 82%, black is second with nearly 13%, followed by Asian at nearly 3%, and two or more races at 2.5%. The mean household income is around \$65,000 with a poverty rate of 23%. Also, worth noting is the median age is 33. Education is a high priority with only 8.5% of the adult population having less than high school education, 26.6% having a high school graduate level, and 65% having some college education through graduate school.

Cultural context. Located in the Midwest Cape Girardeau embodies Midwest values. Missouri has the moniker, “The Show-me” state, and many times the people come across that way when new ideas are presented. Just 30 miles south is a town that is beginning to have a more southern feel. With Southeast Missouri State University and two hospitals present, there is a diversity of people which gives a vibrancy to the city that

keeps Cape Girardeau from feeling like a homogenous city, but for the most part, people are primarily Midwesterners. There are many young families in the area. However, the divorce rate has been rising so a lot of hurt and brokenness is prevalent. Likewise, with the pandemic the context has changed somewhat with feelings of loneliness and isolation on the rise. The numbers of people coming back to in person worship are slowly rising, and most people seem to be more open to community whether it be virtual or face to face.

Political context. The current political climate is slightly less volatile now than it was in 2020. The majority of this area leans toward more conservative values, but depending on who is running for office sometimes the numbers shift slightly toward democratic values. Conservatives win more often than any other political party. This city is the home of Rush Limbaugh so there is the influence of that type of political conservatism.

Participants

Participants were invited from the Spring 2022 Alpha course at La Croix Church who had completed the course and were ready to begin their next steps in discipleship. This included men and women over the age of 18 of whom the majority were white/Caucasian.

Criteria for Selection

The people who were invited to participate in this study were people who had completed an Alpha course at La Croix Church. These people were chosen due to the nature of the research project to measure the spiritual transformation that took place, in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living among Alpha course

graduates from La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, who attended a 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community.

Location: The discipleship experience took place at La Croix Church, 3102 Lexington Avenue, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701. People who lived within 30 miles of this location were able to attend.

Sample size: The sample size was limited to 12 (max of 15) women and men who were able to create with the help of a facilitator and uphold a level of vulnerability and confidentiality. Intimacy and confidentiality in a group setting is necessary for growth and openness to occur.

Age: The researcher chose adults over the age of 18 who had completed high school.

Affinity: The affinity for the participants was the Alpha course and the desire to grow in their faith walk with Jesus.

Other: The invitees were from a previous Alpha course. Preference was given to people who had just completed the most recent Alpha course which occurred February 15, 2022–April 24, 2022. Since the number did not reach the maximum, the researcher allowed for others who had completed an Alpha course at La Croix Church to attend.

Description of Participants

Participants of the discipleship experience were people who attended an Alpha course offered at La Croix Church and were ready for their next step in discipleship. While men and women were invited to participate, there were only women who chose to do so. Six women agreed to the study. Two were married and the other four were single. All lived within a 30 mile radius of La Croix Church and went through the Alpha course,

most during the Spring 2022 course; however, a few went through Alpha earlier than the Spring 2022 course. The participants ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-fifties. They also ranged in years as followers of Christ from brand new believers less than a year up to a few who had been believers for 21 or more years and others in between. All had completed high school or had received their GED, and most had either completed a bachelor's degree or were currently working towards one. Two knew each other well, but the majority only knew each other casually or not at all. Only one indicated that she was involved in a ministry of the church; the rest were not. Four are listed as visitors of La Croix Church, and two are members.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that participants were respected throughout this project strict confidentiality and informed consent were given. In addition, those who assisted in the research and data also signed a statement of confidentiality.

Informed consent. An informed consent form (Appendix B) was given, either through SurveyMonkey or hard copy, to every participant, facilitator, and assistant connected to the project. The form consisted of three parts. 1) The first part of the consent was consent to take part in the discipleship experience, Rooted, along with the pre- and post-surveys and be available for an interview if chosen, for the research of this project. The consent also granted permission for the researcher to use words, answers, phrases, insights, and actions during the time of this project for the purpose of the research. 2) The consent form clearly indicated that consent was entirely voluntary and by signing the consent form they were consenting to all that was indicated in this form including the purpose of the study, the possible risks and benefits to the participants, the methodology

of research, and what the researcher plans to do with the data collected. 3) There was no compensation given to the participants of this project.

Consent was given at the beginning of the project, and participants were regularly reminded that they could withdraw at any time and for any reason. The psychological safety of the participants was paramount to this researcher and the integrity of this project.

Confidentiality. Participants were assured that all identifying names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and any other identifying factors were and will be kept strictly protected and confidential. This includes but is not limited to pre- and post-surveys, interviews, and observations. The researcher also made sure that anyone connected to the project also adhered to the high standards of confidentiality and to use discretion in all situations (see Appendix C – Confidentiality Agreement).

To ensure confidentiality the participants' identity were kept concealed with use of an identification number known only to the participant and the researcher. The researcher designed four part code used was 1) Last number of birth year; 2) Last letter of Mother's Name; 3) Last Number of Street Address; 4) Last Letter of Your Middle Name. Upon completion of the project and academic endorsement of the dissertation, all raw data (i.e. pre and post-surveys and interviews) were destroyed.

Instrumentation

Three researcher designed instruments were utilized for the collection of data.

- (1) RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Pre-Survey (RDQPre-S);
- (2) RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Post-Survey (RDQPost-S); and

(3) RQ #3: Rooted Discipleship Qualitative 1/1 Interview Questions (RDQ1/1)

The RDQPre-S contained four sections: the informed consent, the participants' demographics, their self-identified level of biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living before the 10-week Rooted experience using a Likert scale, and four open-ended questions to self-describe their relationship with God, other, the church, and their purpose. The RDQPost-S contained the same sections as the RDQPre-S. The RDQ1/1 contained questions directly related to RQ#3 for identifying which part of the discipleship experience impacted the participant.

Expert Review

The three assessments used for this project were researcher-designed and, therefore, required expert reviewers to inform and validate the reliability of the data collection. An Expert Review instrument was created (see Appendix D) for the expert reviewers to use which included four specific people proficient in the area and fields of discipleship and/or research. They were: (1) Dr. Mike Voigts, Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation at Asbury Theological Seminary, who provided insight and direction from his expertise in discipleship as well as mentor for this research project; (2) Dr. Ellen Marmon, Associate Professor of Christian Discipleship and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Asbury Theological Seminary; (3) Rev. Brett Cheek, Spiritual Formation and Teaching Pastor at La Croix Church, who understands the discipleship context of this research project; and (4) Dr. Sarah Tlappek, Assistant Teaching Professor at the University of Missouri School of Social Work, who is advanced in research methods, regularly teaches doctoral students working on their Ph.D., and also understands the discipleship context of this research project.

A letter was provided to the four expert reviewers to give them access to and understanding of the research problem, purpose, and the three research questions. They were asked to examine the instruments and determine if they aligned with both the purpose and research questions, and if so, how; to determine which ones were satisfactory; to make suggestions regarding which statements or questions should be included or eliminated; and if there were any new items should be included. Suggestions were made for wording of statements and the order in which each category should be presented in the survey by Dr. Tlapek and Rev. Cheek. The researcher agreed with the suggestions and made the necessary changes to the instrumentation. All were satisfied with the final results.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

Reliability. The project design and the standardized procedures for each of the instruments provided a consistency which ensured the reliability of the measurement. Expert reviewers added helpful comments and suggestions which helped shape and guide the pre and post-surveys and the interviews.

The Pre-survey link from a web-based tool was sent to participants one week prior to the beginning of the project so they had ample time to respond thoughtfully to the statements and questions within the survey. The quantitative section of the pre-survey was designed in a standardized format with a four-point answering system to avoid a neutral response. The qualitative section asked questions that allowed the researcher to gauge and begin to understand the level of transformation each participant had experienced prior to the project. The web-based tool was used for both sections which

allowed the researcher to know the response rate and follow up with those who had not yet responded.

One week following the end of the project, participants were sent a post-survey link. The post-survey was exactly the same as the pre-survey so comparative analysis would be consistent. The interviews for participants who were available were scheduled and held two to four weeks from when the project ended. These were structured in a way where each participant interviewed was asked the same questions, the audio from which was recorded and the video recorded as well if Zoom was utilized.

Validity. The alignment of the purpose statement to the research questions and the instruments directly supported the validity of the findings. The statements created for the pre- and post-surveys along with the open-ended questions addressed the research questions regarding biblical truth, holy love, and dispositional living and how the discipleship experience aided the Holy Spirit in the spiritual transformation of each participant. The interviews centered around discovering which aspects of the discipleship experience impacted the participants the most and also addressed one or two areas of truth gained and steps of discipleship going forward. The Expert Reviews clarified and helped refine the statements and questions including which order would be best received by the participants.

The local context is similar to others across the Midwest portion of the United States but cannot be exactly duplicated. As Sensing states, “While no context is identical to another, there may be enough similar experiences and phenomena between two settings for someone else to utilize” (216). What is transferrable in this research can be followed by others in similar settings.

Data Collection

Pre-Intervention phase: During the last two weeks of the Spring 2022 Alpha course at La Croix Church, Alpha participants, soon to be graduates, were invited to participate in the discipleship project known as “Rooted” and were given the opportunity to sign up in-person and online for the project. One week prior to the start of the project, participants were emailed a SurveyMonkey link which took participants to the Informed Consent Letter first. If the participant consented, then the next page contained questions about demographics, followed by the *RQ#1: Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Pre-Survey*. If the participant declined, then the survey ended right there. If a participant requested a hard copy of the letter, demographics and survey one was provided.

Intervention phase: The 10-week discipleship experience called Rooted. Rooted was the intervention chosen as the discipleship project for Alpha graduates. The project was held at La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri and led by the researcher and an assistant. The 10-week discipleship experience focused on seven rhythms in the life of a follower of Jesus. Those rhythms included Daily Devotionals, Prayer, Repentance, Serving, Generous Giving, Share Your Story and Celebration (Worship) (Rooted). The entire experience began with a meal and a talk given which explained the vision behind Rooted. Then the participants were introduced to each other and week one was presented by the researcher/facilitator.

In addition to weekly meetings with the group, there were five days of daily devotionals the participants were encouraged to read, one for each day as they spent time with Jesus. Journaling questions were at the end of each devotional to prompt further

reflection and examination in their devotional and prayer time with God. At each weekly meeting discussion centered around what the participants shared with each other concerning what God was teaching them during this time with him. There were also two group experiences that took place outside of the normal weekly meeting time. One was a Prayer Experience where the group gathered for three hours at another location for a time of individual and group prayer. A meal was also shared during this time. The second group experience was a Serve Experience. The group decided where they wanted to serve together and scheduled a time to serve in a type of relational ministry/mission for their Serve Experience. This extra meeting was two hours in length.

At the end of the 10-weeks there was a celebration where each participant was given the opportunity to share how God had moved in their lives during this experience together by sharing where they were when they began the Rooted experience and where God has them today. A celebratory meal, music, and a talk given about how to continue in community together after Rooted was shared. The *Rooted Network* has extensive training provided for this type of discipleship experience and was closely followed by the researcher. However, the way the intervention was used by the researcher is found in Appendix C so that others will be able to follow the “methodological protocols and successfully reproduce the intervention” (Sensing 66).

Post-Intervention. One week following the Rooted Celebration participants were emailed an online SurveyMonkey link with the *RQ#2: Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Post-Survey*. A hard copy of the survey was available upon request. They were asked to complete the survey within a week. The researcher utilized the data collection, analysis, and preparation provided by SurveyMonkey to gather

information from the surveys. Participants again used the ID identification code to match pre- and post-surveys.

Interviews: Participants were invited to be interviewed by the researcher and those willing and available were scheduled for their interview two to four weeks after the completion of the discipleship experience. The interviews were held at La Croix Church in an enclosed room for confidentiality. The interview was audio recorded by the researcher and later transcribed by the researcher and the transcriptionist. Data from the transcripts were later organized by themes for the analysis of this data.

Data Analysis

The quantitative results from the pre- and post-surveys were analyzed through the use of SurveyMonkey and the statistical tools provided by this platform. The answers to the open-ended questions were coded by main themes. This was to ensure that the collection of data was manageable and not overwhelming. During this phase the researcher was “careful not to allow a decision [to be] made during the first rounds of data generation [that could] overpower the possible insights” collected from data received later (Sensing 204). Coding was later done in sub-themes that Miles and Huberman call “pattern coding” (Sensing 204).

Coding was also employed with the data collected from the interviews. Transcripts from the interviews were identified, categorized by theme, and organized. Major points of commonality were listed as well as gaps or themes that did not appear. These themes and responses were used to inform the researcher of the effectiveness of the intervention utilized.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Graduates of the Alpha Course at La Croix Church are encouraged to take their next step in discipleship yet find themselves without many effective options. The purpose of this research was to measure the spiritual transformation that took place, in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living among Alpha course graduates from La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, who attended a 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community.

This chapter identifies the participants of this study and their demographics. It also includes the quantitative and qualitative data from the Pre-Survey, Post-Survey, and interviews. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a major findings list derived from the presented data.

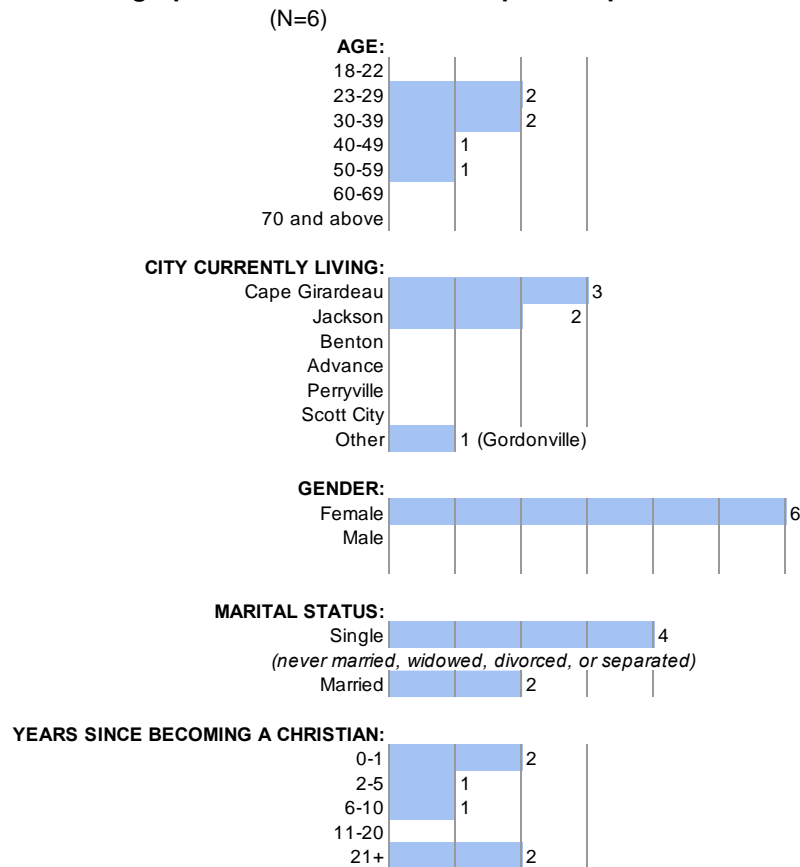
Participants

The invitation to participate in Rooted was given to all who had completed Alpha in the Spring of 2022 which included men and women. The ideal size of a group for Rooted is between 8–15. A total of 50 people who completed the Alpha Course in the Spring of 2022 were invited to participate. Of that number only women chose to participate, and several were not able to participate at the same time as the research group. Nine were able to participate in the group at the designated time, with two dropping out. In the end, only six agreed to participate in the research project. The demographic profile of the six who agreed to participate in this research project are

represented in Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2, and Figure 4.3. They completed and participated in all surveys and the interview.

The age of the participants ranged from 20's to 50's with four who identified as single versus two who identified as married. The range of how many years since becoming a Christian was widespread and varied. Two identified as 0–1 years since becoming a Christian, one identified as 2–5 years since becoming a Christian, one identified as 6–10 years since becoming a Christian, and two identified as 21+ years since becoming a Christian.

Figure 4.1: Demographics of the Rooted Group Participants



The next part of the demographics section indicates some changes between the Pre and Post Survey as indicated in Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3. The changes found were in

the 'Description of Spiritual Journey.' A large majority, five participants, identified that they were 'Growing Christians' with one of the participants identifying themselves as 'Always Growing Christian' in the Pre-Survey to one participant identifying as a 'Casual Christian' in the Post-Survey. Another change was in the frequency of worship. One participant moved from attending worship twice a month to more than twice a month. Perhaps the most significant change was in the last demographic question which asked if they were currently serving as part of a ministry. In the Pre-Survey only one participant indicated that she was serving as part of a ministry, however, in the Post-Survey a total of three indicated they were serving as part of a ministry.

Figure 4.2: Demographics of the Rooted Group Participants (Pre-Survey)

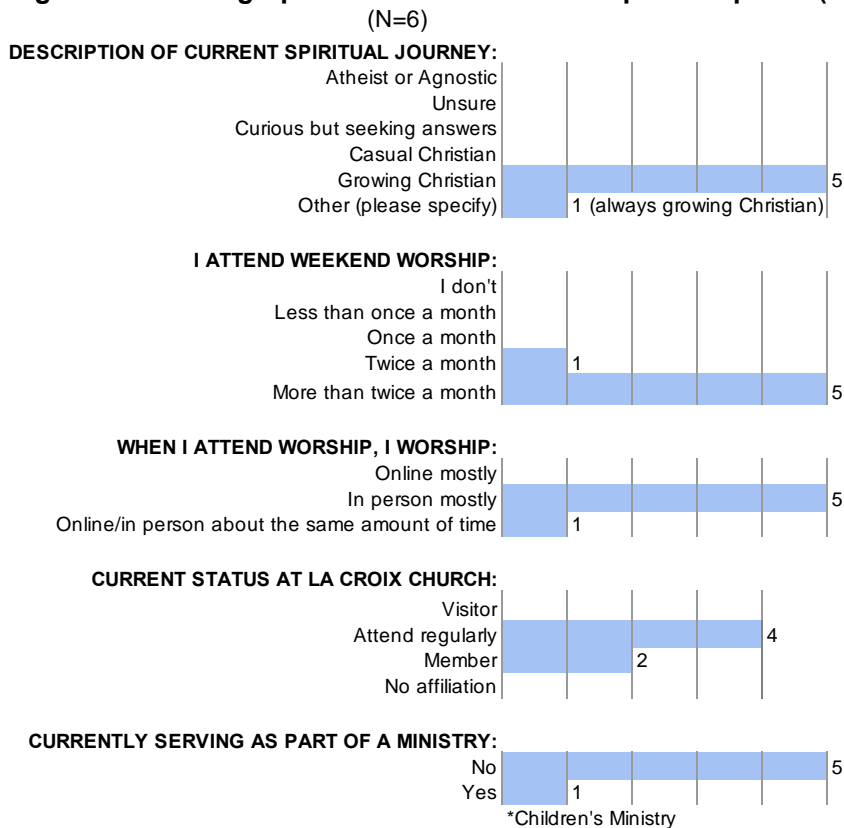
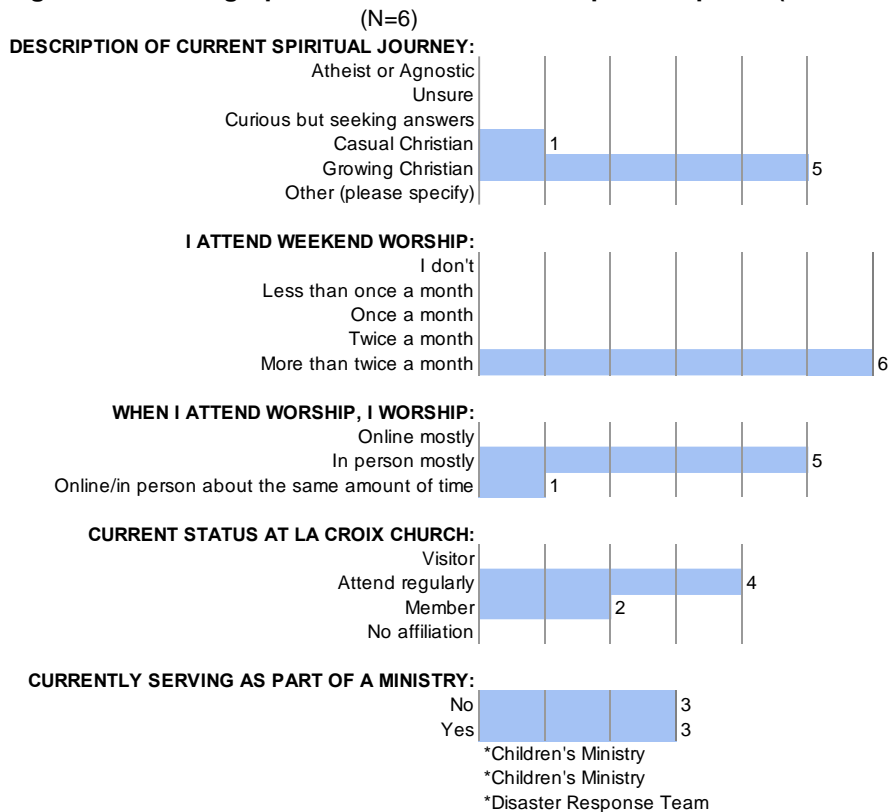


Figure 4.3: Demographics of the Rooted Group Participants (Post-Survey)

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

What levels of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living were identified among the participants prior to the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?

The tool used for collecting the data of the answers for the first research question was in a pre-survey by SurveyMonkey. In the survey,

- ✘ Questions 13–27 measured Holy Love and is readily seen in someone's attitudes.
- ✘ Questions 28–42 measured Dispositional Living and is readily seen in someone's behavior.

- ✘ Questions 43–57 measured Biblical Theology and is readily seen in someone's beliefs.

These three categories are discussed in the order they were presented.

Holy Love

Table 4.1: RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Survey (RQ1a)

QUESTIONS 13-27 (HOLY LOVE)		SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev.
13	It is important to me to spend time with God daily.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
14	It is important for me to pray for others.	0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
15	It is important that I attend worship with other believers weekly.	0	16.67	50	33.33	1.83	0.75
16	I view the Bible as relevant for my life today.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
17	It is important that my relationship with God affects the way I live.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
18	It is important to serve others inside and outside the church.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
19	It is important to share my faith story.	0	16.67	66.67	16.67	2	0.63
20	I view following Jesus may mean I will be uncomfortable sometimes.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
21	I view spiritual practices as essential to staying connected to God.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
22	It is important to know God's will.	0	33.33	16.67	50	1.83	0.98
23	It is important to forgive others when they have wronged me.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
24	It is important to worship God through giving monetarily.	0	16.67	66.67	16.67	2	0.63
25	I view my relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in my life.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
26	I view the church as my family.	0	16.67	66.67	16.67	2	0.63
27	It is important to know God's purpose for me.	0	16.67	16.67	66.67	1.5	0.84
Totals		0	7.77	53.34	38.89	1.689	
		%	%	%	%	1,2,3,4	

In most of the statements concerning **holy love** (attitudes), the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. There were only a few statements where there was slight disagreement. These are the statements:

- ✘ It is important that I attend worship with other believers weekly.
- ✘ It is important to share my faith story.
- ✘ It is important to know God's will.
- ✘ It is important to worship God through giving monetarily.
- ✘ I view the church as my family.
- ✘ It is important to know God's purpose for me.

Categories		
1	SA%	Strongly Agree
2	A%	Agree
3	D%	Disagree
4	SD%	Strongly Disagree
Mean 1, 2, 3, 4		
St. Dev. Standard Deviation		

Dispositional Living

Table 4.2: RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Survey (RQ1b)

QUESTIONS 28-42 (DISPOSITIONAL LIVING)		SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev.
28	I take a day of rest (Sabbath) each week.	16.67	33.33	50	0	2.67	0.82
29	I have a regular time that I read the Bible.	16.67	50	33.33	0	2.83	0.75
30	I take time to deeply study and understand the Bible.	33.33	33.33	33.33	0	3	0.89
31	I attend weekly worship with other believers.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
32	I meet daily with God in prayer.	0	16.67	16.67	66.67	1.5	0.84
33	I take time to listen to God.	0	33.33	50	16.67	2.17	0.75
34	I engage in spiritual practices (i.e. fasting, prayer, etc.) regularly.	0	50	16.67	33.33	2.17	0.98
35	When I have a problem, I go to God in prayer first.	0	16.67	50	33.33	1.83	0.75
36	I readily forgive others when they have wronged me.	0	50	50	0	2.5	0.55
37	Repentance is something I do regularly.	0	16.67	66.67	0	2.17	0.41
38	I serve others out of the purpose God has given me.	0	0	83.33	16.67	1.83	0.41
39	Tithing (giving to God) is something I do regularly.	33.33	50	16.67	0	3.17	0.75
40	I struggle to tell my faith story with others.	33.33	16.67	33.33	16.67	2.67	1.21
41	Telling others about Jesus is part of my life.	0	66.67	16.67	16.67	2.5	0.84
42	I am part of a small group/community of believers who know me well.	0	50	16.67	33.33	2.17	0.98
Totals		8.89	32.22	38.89	18.9	2.312	
		%	%	%	%	1,2,3,4	

In most of the statements concerning **dispositional living** (behavior), the participants' answers were varied and did not always line up together. There was only one statement that indicated a wide range of answers from strongly disagree to strongly agree which was the following statement.

- ✘ Q40 I struggle to tell my faith story to others. (2 SD, 1 D, 2 A, 1 SA)

Four statements had a range from strongly disagree to agree. These were statements where the majority, except for the first one, tended to disagree or strongly disagree and where it should be noted, the statement about tithing was the one that was disagreed with by all except one participant.

- ✘ Q28 I take a day of rest (Sabbath) each week. (3 SD/D, 3 A)
- ✘ Q29 I have a regular time that I read the Bible. (4 SD/D, 2 A)
- ✘ Q30 I take time to deeply study and understand the Bible. (4 SD/D, 2 A)

Categories		
1	SA%	Strongly Agree
2	A%	Agree
3	D%	Disagree
4	SD%	Strongly Disagree
Mean 1, 2, 3, 4		
St. Dev. Standard Deviation		

- ✘ Q39 Tithing (giving to God) is something I do regularly (5 SD/D, 1 A)

Six statements had a range from disagree to strongly agree. Most were in line or half and half with agree or strongly agree except for the statement about telling others about Jesus. In that statement most disagreed.

- ✘ Q32 I meet daily with God in prayer. (1 D, 5 A/SA)
- ✘ Q33 I take time to listen to God. (2 D, 4 A/SA)
- ✘ Q34 I engage in Spiritual Practices (i.e. fasting, prayer, etc.) regularly. (3 D, 3 A/SA)
- ✘ Q35 When I have a problem, I go to God in prayer first. (1 D, 5 A/SA)
- ✘ Q41 Telling others about Jesus is part of my life. (4 D, 2 A/SA)
- ✘ Q42 I am part of a small group/community of believers who know me well. (3 D, 3 A/SA)

Then there were statements that were right on the line of disagree and agree with no indication of feeling strongly one way or the other. Those statements are:

- ✘ Q36 I readily forgive others when they have wronged me. (3 D, 3 A)
- ✘ Q37 Repentance is something I do regularly. (1 D, 5 A)

There were only two statements where everyone agreed or strongly agreed. Those statements are:

- ✘ Q31 I weekly attend worship with other believers. (3 A, 3 SA)
- ✘ Q38 I serve others out of the purpose God has given me. (5 A, 1 SA)

Biblical Theology

Table 4.3: RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Survey (RQ1c)

QUESTIONS 43-57 (BIBLICAL THEOLOGY)		SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev.
43	I believe God is one in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (The Trinity).	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
44	I believe human beings are made in the image of God.	0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
45	I believe God created the world.	0	0	0	100	1	0
46	I believe God hears me when I pray.	0	0	0	100	1	0
47	I believe if you're a good person you'll go to heaven.	33.33	0	66.67	0	2.67	1.03
48	I believe Jesus is fully God and fully human.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
49	I believe sin separates me from God.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
50	I believe my sins are forgiven because of Jesus' death and resurrection.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
51	I believe Jesus' death and resurrection is the only way to heaven.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
52	I believe the entire Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God.	0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
53	I believe the Holy Spirit lives in me.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
54	I believe God wants me to share my faith story with others.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
55	I believe God has a purpose for my life.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
56	I believe the church is the Body of Christ.	0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
57	I believe I can be a follower of Jesus without the church.	16.67	33.33	16.67	33.33	2.33	1.21
Totals		8.89	32.22	38.89	18.9	1.434	
		%	%	%	%	1,2,3,4	

In Table 4.3, questions 43–57 reveal the **biblical theology** (beliefs) of each participant. In this section there was a majority of agree or strongly agree about most of the statements. In fact, two statements in particular had 100% strongly agree:

- ✘ Q45 I believe God created the world.
- ✘ Q46 I believe God hears me when I pray.

The two statements that indicated the widest range of difference in answers in biblical theology are the following statements.

- ✘ Q47 I believe if you're a good person you'll go to heaven. (2 SD, 4 A)
- ✘ Q57 I believe I can be a follower of Jesus without the church. (1 SD, 2 D, 1 A, 2 SA)

Categories		
1	SA%	Strongly Agree
2	A%	Agree
3	D%	Disagree
4	SD%	Strongly Disagree
Mean 1, 2, 3, 4		
St. Dev. Standard Deviation		

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What levels of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living were identified among the participants following the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?

The tool used for collecting the data of the answers for the second research question was in a post-survey by SurveyMonkey. In the survey,

- ✧ Questions 13–27 measured Holy Love and is readily seen in someone's attitudes.
- ✧ Questions 28–42 measured Dispositional Living and is readily seen in someone's behavior.
- ✧ Questions 43–57 measured Biblical Theology and is readily seen in someone's beliefs.

These three categories are discussed in the order they were presented as well as side by side with the data from the pre-survey for comparison.

Holy Love

Table 4.4: RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Post Survey (RQ2a)

QUESTIONS 13-27 (HOLY LOVE)		Pre-Survey results in blue Post-Survey results in light orange					
		SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev.
13	It is important to me to spend time with God daily.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
		0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
14	It is important for me to pray for others.	0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
		0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
15	It is important that I attend worship with other believers weekly.	0	16.67	50	33.33	1.83	0.75
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
16	I view the Bible as relevant for my life today.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
17	It is important that my relationship with God affects the way I live.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
		0	0	0	100	1	0
18	It is important to serve others inside and outside the church.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
19	It is important to share my faith story.	0	16.67	66.67	16.67	2	0.63
		0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
20	I view following Jesus may mean I will be uncomfortable sometimes.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
21	I view spiritual practices as essential to staying connected to God.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
		0	0	0	100	1	0
22	It is important to know God's will.	0	33.33	16.67	50	1.83	0.98
		0	16.67	33.33	50	1.67	0.82
23	It is important to forgive others when they have wronged me.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
24	It is important to worship God through giving monetarily.	0	16.67	66.67	16.67	2	0.63
		0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
25	I view my relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in my life.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
		0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
26	I view the church as my family.	0	16.67	66.67	16.67	2	0.63
		0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
27	It is important to know God's purpose for me.	0	16.67	16.67	66.67	1.5	0.84
		0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
		%	%	%	%	1,2,3,4	

One of the first notable aspects of this section on **holy love** is that every statement was answered with agree or strongly agree with the exception of Q22: It is important to know God's will. Only one participant disagreed with this statement.

The next notable aspect was that two statements were marked strongly agree by all participants. Although the pre-survey indicated that all agreed or strongly agreed with these two statements, there were four participants in each question that moved from agree to strongly agree. Those two statements are the following.

- ✘ Q17 It is important that my relationship with God affects the way I live.
- ✘ Q21 I view spiritual practices as essential to staying connected to God.

In another group of statements there was significant movement from either disagree or agree to strongly agree by a margin of three participants. Those statements are as follows.

- ✘ Q15 It is important that I attend worship with other believers weekly. (pre-survey 2 SA, post-survey 5 SA)
- ✘ Q16 I view the Bible as relevant for my life today. (pre-survey 2 SA, post-survey 5 SA)
- ✘ Q19 It is important to share my faith story. (pre-survey 1 SA, post-survey 4 SA)
- ✘ Q23 It is important to forgive others when they have wronged me. (pre-survey 2 SA, post-survey 5 SA)

In the last group of statements, there was significant movement from either disagree or agree to strongly agree by a margin of two participants. Those statements are as follows.

- ✘ Q18 It is important to serve others inside and outside the church. (pre-survey 3 SA, post-survey 5 SA)
- ✘ Q24 It is important to worship God through giving monetarily. (pre-survey 1 SA, post-survey 3 SA)
- ✘ Q26 I view the church as my family. (pre-survey 1 SA, post-survey 3 SA)

Dispositional Living

Table 4.5: RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Post Survey (RQ2b)

QUESTIONS 28-42 (DISPOSITIONAL LIVING)		Pre-Survey results in blue				
		Post-Survey results in light orange				
		SD	D	A	SA	Mean
						St. Dev.
28	I take a day of rest (Sabbath) each week.	16.67	33.33	50	0	2.67
		16.67	33.33	33.33	16.67	2.5
29	I have a regular time that I read the Bible.	16.67	50	33.33	0	2.83
		0	33.33	66.67	0	2.33
30	I take time to deeply study and understand the Bible.	33.33	33.33	33.33	0	3
		0	20	40	40	1.8
31	I attend weekly worship with other believers.	0	0	50	50	1.5
		0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33
32	I meet daily with God in prayer.	0	16.67	16.67	66.67	1.5
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17
33	I take time to listen to God.	0	33.33	50	16.67	2.17
		0	0	83.33	16.67	1.83
34	I engage in spiritual practices (i.e. fasting, prayer, etc.) regularly.	0	50	16.67	33.33	2.17
		0	0	50	50	1.5
35	When I have a problem, I go to God in prayer first.	0	16.67	50	33.33	1.83
		0	0	83.33	16.67	1.83
36	I readily forgive others when they have wronged me.	0	50	50	0	2.5
		0	16.67	50	33.33	1.83
37	Repentance is something I do regularly.	0	16.67	83.33	0	2.17
		0	16.67	50	33.33	1.83
38	I serve others out of the purpose God has given me.	0	0	83.33	16.67	1.83
		0	0	66.67	33.33	1.83
39	Tithing (giving to God) is something I do regularly.	33.33	50	16.67	0	3.17
		0	66.67	33.33	0	2.67
40	I struggle to tell my faith story with others.	33.33	16.67	33.33	16.67	2.67
		16.67	33.33	33.33	16.67	2.5
41	Telling others about Jesus is part of my life.	0	66.67	16.67	16.67	2.5
		0	50	33.33	16.67	2.5
42	I am part of a small group/community of believers who know me well.	0	50	16.67	33.33	2.17
		0	0	50	50	1.5
		%	%	%	%	1,2,3,4

One of the first notable aspects of the section on **dispositional living** is there are not any statements that received 100% for any of the answers indicating that the answers were varied by the participants.

The next notable aspect is that there are five statements which had one or more participants answer with disagree in the pre-survey who moved their answers to either agree or strongly agree in the post-survey. The largest jump, with a margin of three participants, is in Q34 and Q42. The five statements are as follows.

✘ Q32 I meet daily with God in prayer. (pre-survey 1 D, post-survey 0 D)

✘ Q33 I take time to listen to God. (pre-survey 2 D, post-survey 0 D)

- ✘ Q34 I engage in spiritual practices (i.e. fasting, prayer, etc.) regularly. (pre-survey 3 D, post-survey 0 D)
- ✘ Q35 When I have a problem, I go to God in prayer first. (pre-survey 1 D, post-survey 0 D)
- ✘ Q42 I am part of a small group/community of believers who know me well. (pre-survey 3 D, post-survey 0 D)

Another interesting observation is that there is very little movement in certain statements where the same number of participants chose either strongly disagree or disagree in both pre- and post-survey, such as the following.

- ✘ Q28 I take a day of rest (Sabbath) each week. (pre-survey/post-survey 1 SD, 2 D)
- ✘ Q37 Repentance is something I do regularly. (pre-survey/post-survey 1 D)
- ✘ Q40 I struggle to tell my faith story with others. (pre-survey 3 SD/D, post-survey 3 SD/D)

Biblical Theology

Table 4.6: RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative Pre-Post Survey (RQ2c)

QUESTIONS 43-57 (BIBLICAL THEOLOGY)		Pre-Survey results in blue					
		Post-Survey results in light orange					
		SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev.
43	I believe God is one in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (The Trinity).	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
		0	0	0	100	1	0
44	I believe human beings are made in the image of God.	0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
		0	0	0	100	1	0
45	I believe God created the world.	0	0	0	100	1	0
		0	0	0	100	1	0
46	I believe God hears me when I pray.	0	0	0	100	1	0
		0	0	0	100	1	0
47	I believe if you're a good person you'll go to heaven.	33.33	0	66.67	0	2.67	1.03
		0	50	33.33	16.67	2.33	0.82
48	I believe Jesus is fully God and fully human.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
49	I believe sin separates me from God.	0	0	66.67	33.33	1.67	0.52
		0	16.67	33.33	50	1.67	0.82
50	I believe my sins are forgiven because of Jesus' death and resurrection.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
		0	0	0	100	1	0
51	I believe Jesus' death and resurrection is the only way to heaven.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
52	I believe the entire Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God.	0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
53	I believe the Holy Spirit lives in me.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
54	I believe God wants me to share my faith story with others.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
		0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
55	I believe God has a purpose for my life.	0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
56	I believe the church is the Body of Christ.	0	0	33.33	66.67	1.33	0.52
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41
57	I believe I can be a follower of Jesus without the church.	16.67	33.33	16.67	33.33	2.33	1.21
		16.67	50	0	33.33	2.33	1.21
		%	%	%	%	1,2,3,4	

Statements Q43–Q57 concerning **biblical theology** have some interesting findings. The first is that the two statements that were answered as strongly agree by 100% of the participants in the pre-survey were answered in exactly the same way in the post-survey.

Three statements were answered as strongly agree in the post-survey by 100% that are worth noting. One of which, Q43, had a movement of three participants from agree to strongly agree. Here are the following three statements.

- ✘ Q43 I believe God is one in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (The Trinity). (pre-survey 3 A/3 SA, post-survey 6 SA)

- ✘ Q44 I believe human beings are made in the image of God. (pre-survey 2 A/4 SA, post-survey 6 SA)
- ✘ Q50 I believe my sins are forgiven because of Jesus' death and resurrection. (pre-survey 1 A/5 SA, post-survey 6 SA)

Perhaps the most notable changes, however, were from the movement from agree/strongly agree to disagree/strongly disagree even though it was only by one participant in each statement. In Q57 the same two participants strongly agreed in both the pre and post-survey.

- ✘ Q47 I believe if you're a good person you'll go to heaven. (pre-survey 2 SD/4 A, post-survey 3 D/2 A/1 SA)
- ✘ Q49 I believe sin separates me from God. (pre-survey 4 A/2 SA, post-survey 1 D/2 A/3 SA)
- ✘ Q57 I believe I can be a follower of Jesus without the church. (pre-survey 1 SD/2 D/1 A/2 SA, post-survey 1 SD/3 SD/2 SA)

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What aspects of the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community had the greatest impact on the observed changes in spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living?

The qualitative data collected was primarily collected by two means. The first was through open ended questions in the pre- and post-survey through SurveyMonkey. The second way was through one-on-one interviews.

Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Pre-Survey

Table 4.7: RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Pre-Survey

P=Participant

58 How would you describe your relationship with God?

P1	My relationship is growing. I still fall short in a lot of ways but I am actively trying to do better.
P2	In progress
P3	I am a child. He is my loving, but strict, Father
P4	my most important relationship above all else
P5	Growing
P6	N/A

59 How would you describe your relationship with others?

P1	I have good surface relationships with many people but have very few healthy deep relationships.
P2	I help others as much as I can, I'm not the best at being social
P3	I judge too much
P4	varied
P5	Always seeking
P6	N/A

60 How would you describe your relationship with the church?

P1	I absolutely love La Croix but I have had bad experiences in the past with other churches.
P2	I love it
P3	Lots of ups and downs. The church is made of fallible humans, trying to do God's will, as they see it. Too often I have seen churches become warped by our humanity.
P4	odd question
P5	Always seeking new opportunities
P6	N/A

61 How would you describe your purpose?

P1	I am still trying to figure out what my purpose is.
P2	Unknown
P3	LOVE, not judge
P4	i wouldnt
P5	As a light
P6	N/A

In the four qualitative questions asked in the pre-survey, most answers were short and succinct. These questions addressed the participants' relationship with God, others, and the church, and the fourth question addressed their purpose. These questions did not necessarily correspond to the quantitative statements, but the questions gave participants an opportunity to elaborate more on these particular topics and provided some insight into a few of the statements in the quantitative pre-survey.

Where there seems to be the most hesitancy or uncertainty was with the fourth question, “How would you describe your purpose?” Answers ranged from “I’m still trying to figure out what my purpose is” to “I wouldn’t,” and a few answered by saying, “LOVE, not judge” and “As a light.” Over half of the participants did not know their purpose or chose not to answer. Interestingly, this question revealed some discrepancies with how the participants answered “Q38 I serve others out of the purpose God has given me”. In answering Q38 100% either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Table 4.8: RQ#2 Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Pre-Post Survey Results

	Pre-Survey results in blue
	Post-Survey results in light orange
58 How would you describe your relationship with God?	
1	My relationship is growing. I still fall short in a lot of ways but I am actively trying to do better. God is working in my life daily.
2	In progress loving
3	I am a child. He is my loving, but strict, Father Evolving. I am learning to trust in Him and rely on Him first.
4	my most important relationship above all else I'm leaning in
5	Growing I actually feel like I have a relationship with Him and can always turn to Him. I would say that there is still some barriers that I am working on overcoming from religious trauma growing up.
6	N/A Casual and needing more.
59 How would you describe your relationship with others?	
1	I have good surface relationships with many people but have very few healthy deep relationships. My relationship are growing stronger.
2	I help others as much as I can, I'm not the best at being social patient
3	I judge too much My focus is to love, not judge.
4	varied I'm branching out
5	Always seeking I am very open and don't struggle with connecting with others in person. I feel drained after long interactions though and that sometimes holds me back from opportunities to be with people.
6	N/A I am a very social person.
60 How would you describe your relationship with the church?	
1	I absolutely love La Croix but I have had bad experiences in the past with other churches. I am getting more involved in church.
2	I love it comfortable
3	Lots of ups and downs. The church is made of fallible humans, trying to do God's will, as they see it. Too often I have seen churches become warped by our humanity. The church is an organization made up of mortals, trying to do what they interpret God wants them to do. They are fallible and make mistakes. But I need the church in my Christian walk. So, I need to love, not judge.
4	odd question I'm finding my place
5	Always seeking new opportunities I feel at home at church and very comfortable. I really feel like I am loved and accepted. It makes me feel good being able to serve in the nursery and help make it possible for the church to operate.
6	N/A I attend regularly and feel more connected than ever.
61 How would you describe your purpose?	
1	I am still trying to figure out what my purpose is. My purpose is what the Holy Spirit is doing in me.
2	Unknown directed by God
3	LOVE, not judge My Rooted group believes that God will use me & my story to help others. I don't see how. But I know anything is possible through God.
4	I wouldnt In the making, not sure yet, seeking
5	As a light I am still figuring that out. To some extent I'm sure everyone wonders if they know what their purpose is. I feel like right now I'm meant to bring God into my home and relationship and grow our Christian community outside of church.
6	N/A My purpose is to lead others to Christ through my actions.

In the post-survey there were some interesting comparisons to note, especially in questions Q60 and Q61. In the pre-survey, some of the answers to Q60 (How would you describe your relationship with the church?) seemed distant or did not seem to answer the question. Here are a few examples.

- ✘ P3 – *Lots of ups and downs. The church is made of fallible humans, trying to do God's will, as they see it. Too often I have seen churches become warped by our humanity.*
- ✘ P4 – *odd question.*
- ✘ P5 – *Always seeking new opportunities.*
- ✘ P6 – *N/A*

In comparison, the answers in the post-survey reveal a more personal and specific answer:

- ✘ P3 – *The church is an organization made up of mortals, trying to do what they interpret God wants them to do. They are fallible and make mistakes. But I need the church in my Christian walk. So, I need to love, not judge.*
- ✘ P4 – *I'm finding my place.*
- ✘ P5 – *I feel at home at church and very comfortable. I really feel like I am loved and accepted. It makes me feel good being able to serve in the nursery and help make it possible for the church to operate.*
- ✘ P6 – *I attend regularly and feel more connected than ever.*

As mentioned earlier in this section, Q61 (How would you describe your purpose?) had many answers where the participants were uncertain. Here are some examples.

- ✘ P1 – *I am still trying to figure out what my purpose is.*
- ✘ P2 – *Unknown.*
- ✘ P4 – *I wouldn't.*
- ✘ P5 – *As a light.*

✘ P6 – *N/A*

Here are the post-survey answers which explain much more clearly the participant's purpose.

✘ P1 – *My purpose is what the Holy Spirit is doing in me.*

✘ P2 – *Directed by God.*

✘ P4 – *In the making, not sure yet, seeking.*

✘ P5 – *I am still figuring that out. To some extent I'm sure everyone wonders if they know what their purpose is. I feel like right now I'm meant to bring God into my home and relationship and grow our Christian community outside of church.*

✘ P6 – *My purpose is to lead others to Christ through my actions.*

While these qualitative questions reveal movement and change, they do not necessarily explain what caused or impacted the change. The interviews provided the majority of the data for this research question. All six of the participants were interviewed and were asked the following questions.

Table 4.9: RQ #3: Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Interview Questions

1	Were the weekly workbook devotions/journaling questions helpful to you? Why or why not?
2	What part of the Rooted experience was most impactful for you?
3	What one or two truths will you take away from this experience?
4	What is the next step you will take in following Jesus and his purpose for you? How do you plan to do that and what assistance, if any, do you need?
5	Is there anything you think could have been better about the Rooted experience? Is there anything else you would like to share that I didn't ask?

The first interview question was specific to the workbook devotionals. There were five devotionals per week that went along with each of the lessons. In each written lesson there was scripture to read along with questions to reflect on and space for journaling and prayer. This question addressed Research Question #3. The second interview question directly asked what was most impactful about the Rooted experience which was even

more specific to Research Question #3. Interview questions 3 and 4 addressed Research Question #2, and interview question 5 left room for the participant to address either research question.

There were several initial themes that emerged during the interviews as the participants shared aspects of the Rooted experience that were most impactful to them.

The themes are:

- ✘ The diversity of the people in the group, the weekly discussions in the group, and the dynamics of openness and vulnerability. (mentioned by all 6 participants)
- ✘ Either the Prayer Experience and/or Serve Experience which occurred outside of the normal weekly meetings. (mentioned by all 6 participants)
- ✘ The daily devotionals, journaling and time with God 5 days a week each week. (mentioned by 5 participants)
- ✘ The Strongholds night repenting and praying for each person as they revealed their stronghold. (mentioned by 5 participants)
- ✘ Other spiritual practices introduced, discussed and practiced individually and during the group time such as prayer, sharing 'my story' personal testimony, generous giving/tithing, words of affirmation/prophetic prayer. (mentioned by all 6 participants)
- ✘ Accountability that came with the devotionals and meeting weekly. (mentioned by 3 participants)

Additionally, when broken down further into frequencies, four themes stood out to reinforce the themes listed above, as well as an observation noted based on the topics, curriculum and experiences Rooted provides.

- ✘ A unique and diverse community (mentioned 41x)
- ✘ The understanding that discipleship is a journey and it is not taken alone (mentioned 21x)
- ✘ Introduction, Learning, Practicing and Experiencing specific skills and spiritual practices (mentioned 14x)

- ✕ Hospitality and a welcoming, comfortable, safe environment (mentioned 24x)
- ✕ The observation that every aspect of the Rooted Experience – the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community – was mentioned by at least one of the participants as impactful to them.

The Diversity and Openness within the Group

Each participant shared their experiences about this group in a way that revealed the impact different aspects of the group had on them. Some aspects were how safe they felt and the openness and vulnerability with which people shared. Other aspects included the frequency and regularity of meeting together as a group, and another significant aspect was the impact the diversity of the group had on them, not just in demographics but in perspectives. Here are some responses from interview questions 2 and 5 that explain this theme:

“...we became like a family and we are able to you know lean on each other like, if we were going through a hard time, or if we wanted to be celebrated, it, was just easy, you know this group, of people coming together, who we not all know each other, and had different perspectives of things that we were just all wholesome we're able to like come together.”

“...connecting with others, and having those group discussions with others, who have the same mindset in the same goal as you do, which is to become closer to God.”

“I think with our group we have a lot of diversity the age ranges with the stages of life, I didn't know that the other group had that but it made a difference for me though... but it just taught me to kind of reinforce that we're always in process.”

“And so for me to, I just stepped back from the reading and then stepped into the group setting mm-hmm and like loving on each other.”

“...we really became raw, open and honest. And and that that's amazing. I loved that our group had so many different ages from different walks and at different points. I I truly just like being in groups of everyone who's not just like me 'cause I have so much to learn from other people from other places in their lives, and I I can gain so much from them. You know? I mean I love that.”

"I think for me. It's -- it was more about opening myself to making connections with people. If I hadn't been in Rooted and making that connection to my Rooted family, it never would have happened. That money would have just gone in my bank. You know? So just being open to things like that. Nothing like that's ever happened to me."

"...it was that accountability, and it -- just having connection with people-- other Christians, that it wasn't just friendship. It was -- I think that is when I feel the most connected and my relationship with God is the best."

"I think like knowing that I had nothing to hide from these people. That they literally knew everything about me, but yet didn't know me at the same time. Does that make sense? Like I had just met them, but they knew my struggle. You know what I mean, like they knew everything about me. And I was just comfortable. So I could be myself."

"I didn't think anyone was going to judge me. I was free to talk and free to be exactly who I needed to be even if it was weak, or anxious and frustrated, that was okay."

"We were all different, but like some of us were in the same stage of life and then others were not and it was just cool."

"I wonder if I would get more from a group or the people are kind of like my age...But no, I don't think I would have, because sometimes I can just get people you know, just stuck on a path, so I, think, it kind of brought [more] into your perspective."

"Like the meeting in person was really beneficial and like having that set like, okay, commitment almost."

"And then just meeting weekly. I really looked forward to like seeing the group, every week."

This is just a smattering of responses from the interviews. There are more that could be added. The safety and vulnerability of the group created an environment where the participants felt they could share their own beliefs, attitudes and behavior/experiences and learn and grow through that process.

The Prayer Experience and the Serve Experience

These two spiritual practices took place outside of the weekly group meetings and were for an extended period of time. Both took place outside the walls of La Croix Church. The Prayer Experience was held in the facilitator's home, and the Serve Experience was held at another local church in Cape Girardeau. The opportunity to serve was a meal served to a population of people who are in a lower-economic demographic who live near that church as well as a meal served later in the evening to international college students. Both experiences took the participants out of their comfort zone. All participants were able to attend the Prayer Experience, but there were a few who missed the Serve Experience due to schedule conflicts. This could explain why the Prayer Experience was spoken of as more impactful than the Serve Experience. Here are the responses from some of the participants.

"The prayer experience at your house was -- wow! It just it hit me just so much hit me that day, and just I -- it just really made me see where I had fallen, and and where I needed to really confess and really needed to humble myself and give it to God. That that was huge."

"Probably the prayer experience and kind of everything up to that...up to that prayer experience, I had never prayed out loud, besides, like scripted prayers and stuff like that. So I don't know. It was -- I was really nervous going into it. But it was, just laid back, and I didn't feel like everybody was looking at you, and I don't know. That was really cool."

"The prayer experience was really awesome! I've never done anything like that. I actually thought it was like very -- going into I was like well, this is weird, you know, it's like I don't understand how we're gonna pray for this long and, you know, but it was really cool. I'd never done that before. And I liked where we broke off and just went to be by yourself."

"I just like the prayer experience that we did. Mm-hmm um, I really liked that."

"It (Prayer Experience) was nice to be like just a quiet place your house was just so quiet, and give them a task, and thinking about it, and reading Scripture, and writing down what we thought about it, praying about it, and then just waiting for

the Holy Spirit to just come on you, and I loved it. So it was just it was very nice to like feel that and feel God's presence during that time."

"Maybe our serve experience could have been a little different I don't know. There's like slow moments, maybe and I didn't feel as I was able to... [but] I had a great conversation with that one girl about Jesus, too. So like, then I'm like, oh, no, it was a GREAT time you know what I'm saying?"

"I liked when we went and served at the church and like, got to see people and meet people and stepping out of like my comfort zone...I don't like go to a church, serve people and then sit down with a whole group of people that I don't know by myself, you know what I mean? That's what I did. I didn't sit with anybody that I had already known from our group... There was a lot going on for me that made that specific thing (The Serve Experience) very important to my growth... And so like breaking me away, I don't know, it just shows me a whole different side of myself I guess."

These experiences were an additional layer to reinforce and give practical experience to the spiritual practices of prayer and serving. It is one thing to learn about prayer or to learn about serving. It is quite another to actually participate in them as a community for an extended period of time. A question in the demographics section of the pre- and post-survey also supports the growth and change in serving. In the Pre-Survey only one participant indicated that she was serving as part of a ministry; however, in the Post-Survey a total of three indicated they were serving as part of a ministry. Another area of the pre- and post-survey in the quantitative section reveals growth in the area of holy love in serving others.

18	It is important to serve others inside and outside the church.	0	0	50	50	1.5	0.55
		0	0	16.67	83.33	1.17	0.41

There is also growth in the dispositional living in regards to prayer, but since prayer was practiced throughout the 10-weeks it is difficult to tie the change back to the Prayer Experience solely. Because of that possibility, it will be noted in the heading about other spiritual practices.

Daily Devotionals and Time with God

A Rooted workbook of teachings was given to each participant which contained five daily devotionals each week. These devotionals were designed to help the participants engage the rhythm of daily time with the Lord about a particular teaching on spiritual practices and foundations of the Christian faith using writings, quotes, and scripture along with reflective questions to answer and prayer prompts. Some participants expressed their engagement in glowing terms, while others admitted a bit of a struggle with it at times. Whether it was a struggle or not, five of the participants specifically indicated that it was helpful in keeping them on track in their journey and in teaching the theology of the Christian faith. Here are some of the responses from the participants.

“Yes, because it [daily devotionals] not only referenced Scripture, it referenced other things as well, and I felt like I was getting a different perspective.”

“Yes, because I think they were very structured. But I like the language. It was casual, I think, um and it was long enough that you had to be disciplined to read it but short enough that you didn't have to take a couple of days to read it or anything like that, um and it gave a lot of examples and analogies that make it easier more day to day language um it was easy to apply, was learning.”

“And so I do think the workbook is, is helpful and it will probably be more helpful for me when I'm at a different part of my journey.”

“And then in the middle, it was helpful. It helped me kinda focus on what I needed to focus on. I really didn't do what they said -- told me to do necessarily, but it helped me focus my thinking at least, and I found myself, especially in the middle, as I was reading, writing things down, which was a better mode for me.”

“I really liked having the book, and it also felt like -- it felt like it was -- like I was still making progress and moving. Like the more I could see what we went through and then go back and look at things, that was really cool...So yes, I liked the book and the questions -- some of them were almost like oh, yeah, well, I already was thinking about that, or that question wasn't really necessary...But then there were others that just made you think about things differently. I'm like, oh, I never would have thought to even make that connection.”

“Like I said, I'm not a journaler, but I would reflect on everything, you know, after I read it. But yeah. The book -- I mean the weekly meetings was what I was in it for. Like that was what filled me up. You know the book was, you know, a tool, but what I came for were the people. You know, yeah.”

“I loved the book, and the questions it asked and how it's focused. And I liked that in the book, it didn't feel like it was directed specifically at one type of Christian or, like, it wasn't directed at Baptist versus Methodist versus Catholic...”

Since much of the biblical theology covered throughout this 10-week experience was introduced in the Rooted workbook and then discussed in the group setting, it is unknown which topics were read by each participant which might have led to change. However, in the quantitative post-survey results of biblical theology, it is interesting to see that in the areas of growth were the topics which were covered at the beginning of the 10-week experience. The ones where there was backward movement or no movement, which were covered near the end, suggests that perhaps there was more drop off in the daily devotionals near the end of the 10-week experience. Without further questioning there is no way to know these details. What is known is that the workbook and daily devotionals appear to have guided the participants in concepts that challenged them when they read them and helped guide the discussions during the group time together.

Strongholds and Repentance

The daily devotionals leading up to the group time of week 5 covered the topics of repentance, sin and separation, the hold that deeply imbedded strongholds can have on people, and the freedom that is in Christ. There was also a week of learning about one's identity in Christ. During the group time there were three parts: 1) a time of sharing declaring the desire to have Jesus free them from a particular stronghold that has been identified during that week's daily time with God; 2) repentance; and 3) a time of prayer

as participants pray for one another to be released from the stronghold and have it replaced with God's truth. The Holy Spirit works in this process. Here are the responses from some of the participants as they shared about the impact this had on them.

"The strongholds night was very eye opening because not only was I able to see like it's not only me who struggles and who has a stronghold, other people do too."

"...even though the stronghold night was very emotional, it was still one of my favorite nights. It was, it was very, impactful."

"Oh, I think that the, the night that we did, we shared all of our sins...That's when everyone really starts to connect is when you show your ugly side. People connect with pain, they don't connect with like perfectness."

"I think the Stronghold night was really cool. I think it was very emotional for our group. But -- I don't know -- that night was -- I mean, you could just feel how heavy it was, and just like the weight lifting off everybody else when they said what they needed to say. That was really cool."

"I learned a lot about myself, because it really broke me down and, you know, I learned a lot about who I was. And those kinds of things are things that are important to me in life and strongholds, and all that kind of thing. So cool."

"The strongholds. You know it was so weird for me, because, you know I kinda felt like none of them really fit me. And then, when we were doing the financial [generous giving/tithing], it all of a sudden hit me that there was a stronghold that I didn't even see and that that financial day it was like all of a sudden I was a mess, because, oh, my God, that's a stronghold. Can I go back to stronghold week and and work on that one now, you know. So it was just they're so intertwined and I I didn't realize. Okay, stronghold's over. Let's go on to the next. But it's not. They're so intertwined...And you know, but there's a financial stronghold that I have in my past, that I had completely forgotten about. That had we not gone through the strongholds, I wouldn't have recognized it as a stronghold, you know what I mean?"

Additional Spiritual Practices

While some spiritual practices stood out more than others in the interviews, all spiritual practices introduced were mentioned even if it was only by one or two participants. The interviews also revealed that some participants realized what impacted

them might be different than what impacted others. Here are some of the responses from the participants.

"I just I found my love, for you know God, and I'm more open to praying now, like before if you would have asked me to pray over you, I would have been like I'm like no, no, no, but now, I feel comfortable, like, okay, this person might need prayer, can I touch you can I pray with you like that's just comes naturally now, like and especially for my family to know, let's regroup let's pray about this."

"Forming my story, and and sharing it. I mean this -- my story. I've learned. I learned that my story now is not my story five years ago, which tells me it's not going to be my story in five years. And I never realized that. I mean when I was baptized, I told my story, you know, but that's not the story I told in Rooted 'cause (inaudible). And I never realized that that was -- that's a me evolution, I guess."

"Journaling was very nice, because then you got to like, get all your thoughts out, while you're reading...I got to write down my oh, it said this, and this is what I thought of or I'm going to plan on doing this next time..."

"Financial [generous giving/tithing] is really good because it opened my eyes to the fact that, you know, I can't jump in and tithe 10%. But okay, I can do the 1% and I'm already paying off the credit cards."

"That's my favorite part of Rooted. I take it back. Listening to everyone -- everyone's testimonies was my favorite thing every week. Like I could have just got a popcorn and just like sat there and listened to them all day long...But that was my favorite, I think. The testimonies -- hearing people. Because you don't really know someone until you really hear their journey through."

"And I went, no, let's see what God wants me to do with it. And that same week she had that need, and I just took that example. It was just like I know that's okay. I prayed about it. That's something I never would have done before."

"And I used to be really really afraid of praying, because, I jumbled things up you know, and I would be like say something totally off guard or something, but I've honestly, I feel like I've honed in on my on my praying and I know specifically what and how to do it. And it comes more naturally now and I'm not fishing for things, you know."

"I just thought of something else that was hugely significant and impactful about my Rooted experience...The last day affirmations. I've never been told that that is how others see me. What a life-changer that was. And to get the card listing them as a constant reminder...WOW! Thank you!"

"I love the cardboard testimonies."

“So I think that the way I did this was different than everyone else and because everybody has their own path...but personally for me, I was just learning that my walk looks different than everyone else's. And just because everyone else is getting so much out of all of these things, it doesn't mean that I have to.”

“I think he [God] just reinforced that there's all kinds of different ways to reach people.”

While some spiritual and faith practices seemed to be spoken of more than others, every element and spiritual practice introduced and discussed was referred to by at least one of the participants. Even though the number of participants was low, there were different answers in what impacted people.

Accountability

Accountability was mentioned as impactful several times. Although the word ‘accountability’ was not used by everyone, there were tones of its influence in certain comments. Here are the responses from some of the participants.

“...that having to meet weekly... having the discipline cause like I said the reason I haven't read everything is that I'm not very disciplined in that so having to read it and be prepared and knowing that you guys put effort into preparing for the group kinda made me feel guilty if I didn't prepare for the group so that was helpful to motivate me to do what I was supposed to do, and it was like an agreement with God I don't wanna read, but I'm gonna go read and I'm gonna go, do this, and (long pause) I I just I just liked it.”

“Like the meeting in person was really beneficial and like having that set like, okay, commitment almost. Just having something that was like you made the commitment, you're gonna go, or like accountability for myself.”

“And then just meeting weekly. I really looked forward to like seeing the group, every week.”

These comments indicate that at some level, accountability was important to their growth because it kept them on track and connected with the group.

Discipleship is a Journey

While the participants were not directly asked about discipleship as a journey, it was clear by some of their responses that this was what they began to realize as they were learning and growing in their faith. Here are some of the responses in which this was recognized.

“I think Rooted was hard for me and I don't think that that's like, you know, I didn't expect it to be easy, but it really challenged me, and I think that the time like it happened, you know, all things that were going on in school and work and family and Rooted. I mean it was a lot at once, and I think that I really -- I struggled. But I feel like that's helping me grow...it was hard and that's okay.”

“I was doing it like college instead of like, an experience, a journey, you know.”

“Yes, and nobody's done. And that just lets you know it's just a lifetime.”

“...but it just taught me to kind of reinforce that we're always in process.”

“...like you think somebody's like perfect, and you, like they have their life together. But no, they had a stronghold, and I was like, okay, like let's talk about this.”

“And everybody's just trying to make it, through whatever stage, or whatever obstacles are facing or some people aren't facing any obstacles right now but they will be.”

“...that's what I feel like this helps with is that like, it helps you see where you want to dive into.”

This is a component of the Christian faith that is important for new believers to understand and is woven throughout the 10-week journey in ways that allow the participant to experience and come to this understanding.

Hospitality

Creating a hospitable space is part of the training for facilitators of the Rooted experience. While the word ‘hospitality’ was not specifically mentioned in the interviews as having a direct impact on the participants, it was clear by the frequency of mentioning

aspects of hospitality by all six participants, that it was significant. Here are some of their comments.

"And I was just comfortable. So I could be myself. And whether that was like happy or grumpy or stressed out or, you know. That was okay."

"...feel comfortable to make change I guess. I don't know if that makes sense. But I was comfortable in the environment. And then I was able to really like reflect on things and then yeah."

"I felt comfortable, you know. I didn't think anyone was going to judge me. I was free to talk and free to be exactly who I needed to be even if it was weak, or anxious and frustrated, that was okay."

"...so we got comfortable those first few weeks with each other...But it was, just laid back, and I didn't feel like everybody was looking at you."

"...just for the comfort level because a lot of stuff that is talked about around that, you know, really traumatic and stressful events. So I think it -- that was handled really well."

"I love that you opened your home to us. Yeah I think that just made it so much more special."

"I'm always saying I'm weird, but that's it's just that's what I got out of it was just when it was relaxed and it was welcoming."

"You create a very welcoming, when you teach you, you're very caring, you just (inaudible) with the group, you really do you both you both are great leaders and I feel like it makes people comfortable, yeah makes them comfortable."

"...having that reminder that we're not here to fix anybody, that was like, that was really good. And it's really important."

"Yeah, you didn't make it awkward."

"I feel like you were aware and intentionally making the intention to give everybody opportunity to participate. And then, when they didn't have anything to say there was no pressure to participate, so that was I felt really good."

While not directly asked about this aspect of the 10-week experience, each person referred to it in some aspect of their interview. This is significant because it indicates that growth and learning do not happen in a vacuum or in just any type of environment. The

participants recognized that this environment was different than the typical environments they were in on a daily basis.

Summary of Major Findings

There were significant findings that resulted from the research of Alpha graduates who engaged in a 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community at La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. These findings may have relevance for other churches who offer the Alpha Course, as a possible next step upon completion of Alpha and are ready to begin their walk with Jesus as a disciple. These are the major findings which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

1. Stepping out of areas of comfort within a safe, diverse relational environment/community has a huge potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living.
2. The introduction to, learning, experiencing, and practicing of specific spiritual practices individually and within community has the potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living.
3. All elements of the Rooted Experience—the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community—matter and are valuable in implementation with the potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living subject to each participant's current personal experiences and journey.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Observing that graduates of the Alpha Course at La Croix Church had difficulty finding their next step in discipleship, our church set out to find what would be the best way to lay a solid foundation in discipleship for them. After having tried multiple existing small groups and house fellowships as a next step with some success, we discovered Rooted, a 10-week discipleship experience originating from a church in Kenya who helped Mariner's Church develop it for a North American context. During my research the findings indicated that Rooted provided the needed pieces for discipleship for a new believer including a loving Jesus-following community, foundational tenets and spiritual practices, and hands-on experiences to practice what they were learning.

This chapter identifies three major findings from the research project and explains how these findings are tied to the observations from the one-on-one interviews, pre- and post-surveys, the biblical and theological framework, and the literature review from practitioners and historical movements in Christian discipleship. The limitations, unexpected observations, and further recommendations will also be covered in this chapter.

Major Findings

1. Stepping out of areas of comfort within a safe, diverse relational environment/community has a huge potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living.

Experiencing this finding was a tremendous joy and surprise. Most of the current small groups at La Croix Church are fairly homogenous. For instance, most daytime small groups consist of people who are the same gender and in the same age group with very little diversity at all. As such, many small group leaders have difficulty trying to move their group in a new direction. The groups have become comfortable.

Rooted is a bit different in this regard. When dividing participants into groups for Rooted for this project, there were several things to consider. Participant availability and completion of the Alpha course were essential. However, since Rooted was also offered in our church to more than just people who have graduated from Alpha, there were others participating in Rooted as well. This created a dynamic of people who were not familiar with one another. Therefore, a level of comfort such as is present in a lot of our small groups was not present in the Rooted groups initially. Prior to the 10-week journey there is intentional prayer given for the Holy Spirit to guide our efforts in placing people within the group that will become their Rooted group. Then there is the task of figuring out schedules, maybe a preference of a few people that someone requests to be in their group, and after this game of “tetris,” a community for discipleship for 10-weeks is created with the hope they will continue together after the Rooted experience is completed. For this project the focus was on those who have graduated from Alpha, so that was an important marker for this group.

I observed that on the first night the participants were nervous, excited, and curious about what was going to happen, and then later in the research it was revealed that they had noticed the varying ages, backgrounds, and stages of life even on that first night. Later in the one-on-one interviews many of them commented on this as one of the factors that led to their engagement within the group (see Ch. 4, section *The Diversity and Openness Within the Group*). By week three and the Prayer Experience, there was an opening in the depth of sharing that occurred, and by week five and the Repentance/Strongholds night, the level of sharing and openness was beyond my expectations and those of whom participated in the research. Truly a work of the Spirit was happening as people shared from a place of vulnerability, brokenness, and honesty. By the end of the Rooted experience, I witnessed a level of trust gained in a few short weeks that often takes a lifetime to experience. Each person was able to share from their own lives, experiences, and observations, and listen and learn from one another in a deep way as revealed in the one-on-one interviews. The diversity of the group did not take away from this, but it seemed to only enhance and enrich the time together as different perspectives were shared and honored. Confidentiality, love, and encouragement as well as a welcoming, hospitable environment created the safety needed for each person to open up.

The research in my Literature Review supports how important a healthy Christian community is in discipleship. John Stott's writings in *The Living Church* clearly states that aloneness is not God's will whether people are living an ordinary life or a Christian life. It is important to be with other people. Perhaps one of his strongest statements that supports this finding is when he writes, "I do not think it is an exaggeration to say,

therefore, that small groups, Christian family or fellowship groups, are indispensable for our growth into spiritual maturity” (Stott, *The Living Church* 87).

In addition, historically, these types of groups or communities were key to discipleship in the early church. As Alan Kreider writes, discipleship “was rooted in the habitus of the communities – their reflexive behavior. It was embodied knowledge rooted in predispositions that guided the Christians’ common life and expressed themselves in practices” (134). Discipleship was not possible to do alone then, and it is not possible to do alone now.

The Literature Review also supports the biblical and theological perspective and research of the importance of discipleship in community as well as commenting on the diversity aspect of this finding. The Israelites were formed in community with all generations present as revealed in the teaching of Elijah, King Josiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Even before that time, the Israelites were told by God through Moses to remember his decrees and the covenant he made with them by teaching them to each other in smaller family units, a built-in community with a variety of ages and stages of development. Jesus himself gathered a group of disciples from very diverse backgrounds and ages to be his followers in community with each other, and later they were the ones who would carry out his mission into the world. The early church also gathered and were discipled in community with one another as described in Acts 2. They were made even more diverse when Gentiles were welcomed as followers of Jesus.

The concept of the importance of a Christian community in discipleship informed my decision to choose Rooted as a potential strategy for discipleship for Alpha graduates since Rooted is highly relational within a small group setting, and the research supported

the strength and effectiveness of Christian community to discipleship as well as the diversity of the groups. However, I did not pick up on the diversity aspect of community at first when planning for Rooted so it was a bit of a surprise to me. Although I would hear people anecdotally tell me from other groups in the past how much they enjoy diversity, it was difficult to say whether or not that was just a personal preference or if it actually increased the experience leading to higher levels of spiritual growth. I was glad that our group was diverse enough to render this level of finding for this project.

2. The introduction to, learning, experiencing and practicing of, specific spiritual practices individually and within community has the potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living.

Simply gathering and learning new information about a topic whether it be biblical or otherwise is helpful to learning but is not enough for a deep, life transforming understanding of this new information. This is how many of our classes and, in many cases, our small groups have been at La Croix Church. As mentioned in the Reveal study in Chapter 1, our church was filled with spiritual adolescents over a long period of time, even with strong biblical teaching and small groups. What my research indicated and what I observed was that the information and biblical teachings in the Rooted workbook were extremely well written and very helpful in how an individual began to process and engage with God through daily devotionals and teachings around the foundations of Christianity. However, it was through actual discussion within the group and the practice of these seven spiritual rhythms individually and within community that transformation occurred through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Literature Review supported this finding in a few ways. Again, Alan Kreider observes that the early church was very intentional about instilling and developing the practices of the faith that characterized communities of Christians as well as the individual Christian. About early Christians he writes, “They believed that when the habitus was healthy, the churches would grow. Their theology was unhurried – a theology of patience” (Kreider 74). The habitus, way of life, was modeled and practiced individually and within the Christian community, which is how much of the 10-week discipleship project was experienced.

Another historical example was how the Celtic Christians taught, learned, and lived out their Christian faith. When learning about the Trinity, they not only were taught about the God who was three in one, they learned and experienced this truth individually and in community with one another through creation around them such as the shamrock, through the tasks of their daily lives, through poetry, and through other creative ways. Their faith was taught to them, and then they practiced and lived it out in their daily lives.

In the biblical section of the Literature Review are many examples of how God instructed the Israelites to remember. Many times they were taught a truth God wanted them to know and how they were to live as his people which was then followed up with a practice of how to live out and remember that truth. A few practices that were a part of the community of faith were the hearing of God’s word together, celebrating and observing together the faithfulness of God, along with practicing the laws that God handed down to them through Moses. In the New Testament, Jesus continues these practices with his disciples. He introduces them in a new light that truly connected them with God and formed them more into his image, the people he was calling them to be.

Again, Acts 2 reveals that the early followers of Jesus did not just talk about Jesus, they engaged in spiritual practices together with new believers so that they would be rooted and established in God's love and his will for their lives.

The implication of this finding is important because it reveals that teaching alone is not enough for effective discipleship. It is essential to have biblical truths taught, but it is also important to practice them individually and within a community of believers for healthy formation.

3. All elements of the Rooted Experience – the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community – matter and are valuable in implementation with the potential to impact significant change and growth in biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living subject to each participant's current personal experiences and journey.

While it is evident that there were some aspects of the 10-week Rooted experience that impacted the majority of the six participants, it was also evident that every spiritual practice and element of the 10-week journey was mentioned by at least one of the participants as having an impact on them. This was important to note especially since there were only six participants in the research. Not knowing the background of each individual prior to Rooted, there was no way to determine which spiritual practices or rhythms would be the most impactful to a person on their journey with Jesus. That all elements of Rooted were mentioned indicates that it is important for all seven rhythms to be taught. The research indicated that even the participants realized that they might be impacted differently than the others in the group because each person is on a different journey, while at the same time going on that journey with others.

The Literature Review contained minimal discussion about how people are impacted by the ways of learning and where they are in their journey. What the Literature Review does show is that all elements of discipleship are important to for each follower of Jesus to be taught, to experience, and to live out. Whether it is through the four fold worship model or the early church model, all elements of discipleship are important. Kreider writes, “It [discipleship] was embodied knowledge rooted in predispositions that guided the Christians’ common life and expressed themselves in practices” (134). This took time and was taught regardless of where a person was on their journey of following Jesus. The transformative work through discipleship is the work of the Holy Spirit. As Bernard of Clairvaux reminds Pope Eugene III, “And so, I say, you do your part and God will take care of his satisfactorily without your worry and anxiety. Plant, water, be concerned, and you have done your part. To be sure, God, not you, will give the growth when he wishes” (*Five Books* II.2). While we may not know where someone is on their journey with Jesus, God knows and works according to his will.

The biblical section of the Literature Review covers discipleship well in the Old Testament as the Israelites were taught and reminded of all the important commands and laws of God and his covenant with them. In the New Testament Jesus, continually teaches, models, and gives opportunities for his disciples to learn his “new covenant.” Paul’s time with the Ephesians and his later letter indicates the importance of discipleship in all areas of following Christ. He spent a significant amount of time, up to three years (Acts 21.31) with the church in Ephesus, preaching, teaching, and living out the gospel and discipling them (Acts 20.20–21, 27–38). Then in his letter to the Ephesians he reminds them of their identity and the importance of formation and living in unity the

calling they have on their lives in Christ. Those in leadership are “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4.12–13). Then, later on, the importance of discipleship for believers is so “then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4.14). It is important that all biblical truth is taught regardless of where someone is on their journey.

So while there is not anything specifically mentioned about knowing where a person is in their walk with Jesus in discipleship, there is indication that all disciples were taught all the tenants of the faith and were reminded of them over and over. The third major finding reinforced the importance of teaching, experiencing, and living out all biblical truths and practices of the Christian faith, whether a person was ready at that moment or not. In a healthy discipleship culture, believers need to be reminded of what they believe, and in those reminders, the Holy Spirit will form believers when the time is right in the next area of discipleship he is directing them toward.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The ministry implications of the findings reinforce that Christian community is a vital place for discipleship but even more than that, that a safe and diverse group can increase a person’s understanding and perspective as they grow in their discipleship. This is difficult to find in mainline Christianity where most groups are separated not only by gender but also by age/generation. While there may be occasion for gatherings of this nature due to similar interests and stage of life experiences, the research shows that a

safe, diverse group is essential to growth in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living. Many of the practices and rhythms introduced in Rooted were not new to some of the participants, but the fresh perspective from those who were from different backgrounds and generations opened pathways for new understanding and personal examination that gave room for the Holy Spirit to work in a fresh way. The safety of the group is also important. While examining and stretching oneself with new practices, it is essential for participants to feel a sense of acceptance and safety to truly open up and express what they are experiencing and learning. If this factor is not present, there will not be an openness to risk, and therefore much of the learning process is shut down, if not reversed.

Another ministry implication to consider is that the concepts being taught must be experienced in practice for true learning to occur. This is not a new concept in the field of education, but for some reason the church in North America has not embraced it when it comes to discipleship. We have either valued intellectual knowledge but not putting this knowledge into practice or embraced experience and practice without intellectual knowledge. Both are essential for true life transformation. The Israelites were taught many truths about God, and at the same time they had practices that helped them live out the commands of God. The early church was the same way, biblical truth combined with practice, habitus, helped them live out those truths. Why do we in the 21st century think we should do discipleship any differently? Knowledge alone is not enough for a transformed life. The implication in ministry is that when we are teaching concepts of the Christian faith there ought to be a component of practice and experience involved, both individually and within a safe community of other believers.

The third implication for ministry is that discipleship encompasses teaching all of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Many times it is easy to pick and choose what we feel most comfortable teaching, or choosing those areas of the Christian faith that people seem to like better or gravitate toward but that is short sighted. All of the gospel must be preached, taught, practiced, and lived out individually and within community. Since no two people are in the same place spiritually, it stands to reason that these truths must be taught more than once. Repetition is needed in teaching and practicing. The ministry implication that Rooted ultimately reveals is that a safe, diverse group of people, who hunger for Jesus and who learn and practice the truths of the gospel, will have an enormous opportunity to grow through the work of the Holy Spirit in biblical theology, holy love, and dispositional living and thus be more rooted as a disciple of Christ.

Limitations of the Study

This intervention project was designed for the context of La Croix Church in a medium sized midwestern town and specifically for people who had graduated from the Alpha course. The invitation was to all Alpha graduates; however, only women from Alpha actually signed up for Rooted in this particular session. This is a limitation in that men are not represented. My co-facilitator, a man, was in the all-female group. So there was a male voice from time to time represented, but for the purposes of research, a limitation is that the subjects were only female. Another limitation regarding subjects was the low number of subjects who participated. Two people I anticipated participating backed out of the research at the last minute. Another number of Alpha graduates who may have been open to the research were not available to meet at the time the rest of the group could meet. While this low number yielded some unexpected results, a study with a

larger number of participants would have been more ideal for better validity of the research. One change I would make is to have a few more facilitators go through the IRB training in order to have a larger and possibly more diverse group of subjects for the intervention to see whether the research would yield similar results with different facilitators. Another limitation regarding the subjects was scheduling and participation in the extra experiences outside of the regular group meeting time. For instance, only half of them could attend the Serve Experience. While there was still change noted in the survey in the area of serving, those changes were only made by the ones who participated in the Serve Experience. This limitation of busy schedules outside of normal meeting times should be considered by anyone who wants to replicate this study.

The instrumentation was acceptable, but one change I would make is in the wording of some of the statements. Most of the survey statements were framed in the positive with the exception of a few. If writing them again, I would frame them all in the same format. For instance, most were framed like RQ 36 “I regularly forgive others when they have wronged me.” One that is not framed this way is RQ 40 “I struggle to tell my faith story to others.” When looking at the change in the Likert scale during Chapter 4, this was a bit confusing as most were written in the positive. So RQ 40 could be rewritten as “I easily tell my faith story to others.” This small change would help in viewing movement overall.

La Croix Church leadership went through the steps recommended by the Rooted Network when we began to implement Rooted prior to this study. My co-facilitator and I also went through the recommended Rooted training for facilitating and leading the Rooted experience. Because Rooted is a curriculum that is available to all churches and

training by the Rooted Network is offered for free, there is a strong possibility that those who wish to generalize this study by following the recommendations of the Rooted Network will yield similar results, however, a main limitation in this study (lack of male subjects) may indicate a possibility of yielding differing results.

Unexpected Observations

The following unexpected surprises came along that made an impression on me.

Quick Openness and Vulnerability. One surprise that I was not expecting so quickly was the degree of openness from the participants. Beginning the first few weeks and by the time we had our Prayer Experience after week 3, the participants were sharing at deeper levels of vulnerability than I was expecting. One participant acknowledged it this way in her one-on-one interview.

- ✘ *“I think like knowing that I had nothing to hide from these people. That they literally knew everything about me, but yet didn't know me at the same time. Does that make sense? Like I had just met them, but they knew my struggle. You know what I mean, like they knew everything about me. And I was just comfortable. So I could be myself.”*

This was a pleasant surprise because it helped each person engage in the content more authentically and effectively. The dynamics and vulnerability of the participants and the movement of the Holy Spirit led to a deeper level of transformation. This also surprised me since my co-facilitator was a man. I was afraid that the dynamic of having only one guy in the room would be strange and might create an uncertainty on the participants' part to engage freely, but that was not the case. One participant commented.

- ✘ *I loved having Collin in there. 'Cause he was just like this funny humorous male perspective, you know, that would like just chime in and that was fun. And all the girls. We were all different, but like some of us were in the same stage of life and then others were not and it was just cool.*

The way Rooted is set up, there is only one time that groups are encouraged to separate by gender, and that is during the Repentance/Strongholds week. All other times are combined. So my co-facilitator only missed that one week which was noticed and commented on by this participant.

- ✘ *And I do like how, even though Collin -- we probably all could have said whatever we needed to in front of Collin. I liked that you guys kind of structure it to have only girls or only guys, just for the comfort level because a lot of stuff that is talked about around that, you know, really traumatic and stressful events. So I think it – that was handled really well.*

As a researcher and facilitator, this level of vulnerability made it significantly easier to facilitate the group and look forward to the data results.

Shared Hospitality. Another area that was a surprise were the comments that referred to hospitality. Even though that term was not used often, the comments indicated that hospitality was important in creating safety. While I have read and know the value of good, biblical hospitality, what surprised me was that the participants themselves noticed it to such a degree that they commented on it. A whole study could be researched, and I am sure has been, on hospitality alone in creating space conducive for people to share.

Many times when someone says hospitality in our context, they are referring to providing food and drink. While this is one element of hospitality, it is not the only one. What I noticed was that as my co-facilitator and I set the tone of hospitality in the beginning, the participants themselves also began to offer hospitality to one another. They signed up to bring snacks, they deferred to one another for times of sharing, they encouraged and prayed for one another, they listened intently and put their phones away, their body language invited others to respond. I began by thinking hospitality was only the job of the facilitator(s) and to a degree it is, but it is contagious. I was surprised by

that. They thanked and gave us credit for the hospitality, but my observation is that it was shared hospitality. The participants gave hospitality as much as we did. So this was an unexpected and pleasant observation.

Faithful Attendance. From the outset, participants are encouraged to attend all meetings. If they know they are going to miss more than two, they are invited to wait until the next session of Rooted to attend. This is a big expectation to have of people and raises the standard high for attendance. On top of that, two of the original people who were going to be part of the research chose not to participate. One of the two dropped out before Rooted began, and the second one remained in our group but chose not to participate in the study. So I was nervous that of the remaining six there might be a few who either dropped out or whose attendance was so negligent that it would skew the data. I was pleasantly surprised to see that all participants attended within the expectations placed on them. Many did so even on days they would have preferred to miss. As one participant explained,

- ✘ *See, everything comes down to I I do a job I feel like is important. (K: Yeah) so it would be really easy to justify [missing a week]. And people would be okay, if I said, Hey, we had a trial about a child sex abuse case so I just can't go. And I know that you know, so it'd be really easy I'm sure, for other people who are cops, or doctors or teachers, to go like you understand and then to not be disciplined but going gets you refocused they do that because of that, that I'm going to do this and participate and learn about God and to refocus and that's really good, really, actually, reduces the stress.*

While I should have expected that they would continue with their commitment, it still came as a surprise.

Recommendations

This project sought to discover whether Rooted should be a strategy to be used for the discipleship of Alpha graduates. The data and research with this small sample size

indicates that Rooted is an effective strategy for discipling Alpha graduates. One recommendation based on the findings in the diversity of a group is that it is not necessary for a Rooted group to be comprised of only Alpha graduates. The intervention group had a total of 6 participants. However our entire Rooted group had 10 Rooted participants total, four of whom had not gone through Alpha. My recommendation is not to be as concerned about placing Alpha people in the same Rooted group, as much as just making sure the group is as diverse as possible.

I also highly recommend going through the training that Rooted provides. There is little to no cost for this training, and a coach is provided to guide you along the way, even after Rooted is piloted at one's church. This ensures that this model of discipleship is consistent throughout a church with fewer gaps of inconsistency. Even though I recommend this, there were a few exceptions where our church has varied the teaching for our context. We added teaching around infant baptism which is part of our Wesleyan tradition that is not included in the Rooted curriculum. Another addition is that we offer a short "Ministry Fair" at the beginning of week 8 before the talk on Generous Giving, so that people who have just learned about the importance of serving and using their spiritual gifts in weeks 6 and 7 are able to see and meet people from different ministries within the church to get a better idea of where God might be calling them to serve and use their spiritual gifts.

Another recommendation would be to expand this study to include more than just Alpha graduates. It would be interesting to see what the research results would be between those who have been through Alpha and those who have not. It would also be interesting to break down the data even further to compare the results between Alpha

graduates, those who are currently members of an existing small group, and those who are neither Alpha graduates nor in an existing small group while also comparing and measuring the length of time someone has been a follower of Christ and the amount of change occurring over the 10-week experience. This would help answer the question of whether Rooted is a discipleship strategy for all people seeking to grow in their faith and relationship with Jesus not just Alpha graduates.

Those who would find benefit from this study are those who seek an effective, experiential way through a small group experience to disciple people who have completed Alpha. As mentioned in the beginning chapter, once Alpha is complete, it is each church's responsibility to decide what is the best way to disciple a new believer. Rooted offers one way to do that, which this research reveals is highly effective.

Postscript

There is one memory that stands out to me in beginning this journey. It was when our cohort had its first two week face-to-face gathering in January 2020. Our cohort finally met each other in person, and Dr. Steve Martyn exhorted and impressed upon us the seriousness of discipleship. The Holy Spirit used his words that day to pierce my heart more deeply for the Church to be discipled well and to hunger more deeply for true surrender to Jesus in the life of our congregation as well as my own life. It was as if a light bulb went off about how shallow our discipleship was and how desperately that needed to change. I wept and prayed and came home and wept and prayed some more: a repentance over the condition of discipleship and the deeply felt burden of that reality. Little did I know that what God was birthing in me and our church was an understanding and commitment to not just implement another program of discipleship but to *depend on*

the Spirit to lead us in his way of discipling others. It was a lesson in humility and in giving up control in a lot of ways. I would need that lesson over and over as the Covid-19 worldwide pandemic began two months later that same year. God's timing in breaking my heart was perfect, for it fueled my determination to hold on tight to Jesus as he led me through the rest of the Doctor of Ministry program and my research project.

From the outset this journey has not been a solo journey. From the prompting to pursue a Doctor of Ministry from my supervisor and friend, Brett Cheek, to the reminder from another friend, Greg Haseloff, to apply before the scholarship deadline, to the many hours of encouragement and support from my amazing family, friends, new cohort friends and faculty, and my coach, Dr. Mike Voigts, God has placed incredible people in my life to be my cheering section, my prayer partners, and the ones who believed I could not only complete this degree but make a difference in the life of our church and potentially other churches with the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit. While this was not a solo journey, there were many times when I felt alone. Those were the times that God met me in ways that deepened my faith and caused me to trust and love him even more. One time I felt like I was falling down a hole emotionally, trying to balance working from home and staying connected to people in the church, the pandemic and its effects on my family, plus navigating schoolwork. It seemed like way too much, but God caught me in that hole and lifted me up in that season. He reminded me that he was enough and that he was with me. He even used the assignments to deepen my faith. I can remember a time when our legacy group, *The Cardinals*, were praying for each other and Nathan Weaver prayed that as I worked on my assignments I would see them as an act of worship. God answered his prayer. While the difficulty did not lessen necessarily, my

perspective changed, and the burden was lightened in how I viewed the added responsibility of school on top of an already challenging time.

I deeply appreciated the way most of our assignments pertained to the chapters of our dissertation. Those “ah-ha” moments of writing became a joy, especially during the daunting task of writing the Literature Review. Having to dust off little used skills of exegeting a passage of scripture for an assignment led to a beautiful discovery of the Church in Ephesians that I was later able to use in the Literature Review. So many of the books we read influenced and began shaping me. One that had a profound impact on me was *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* by Alan Kreider. It was an inspiring book of dedication and patience in making disciples by the early church as well as cautionary in terms of the effects of Christendom. The forum posts also were treasures to me as I learned so much from the others in my cohort as well as from our professors.

Having tried several ways to fill the gap in discipleship for new believers, especially those who had completed the Alpha course, those around me in ministry and I knew that those ways were not sustainable or foundational enough for a new believer. I set out to create my 10-week discipleship project when two co-workers introduced me to Rooted. They had heard about it in a webinar and thought it was worth looking into. Gathering about 15 others who were also vested in discipleship of our Alpha graduates, we listened to a presentation about Rooted, asked questions, prayed and sought discernment and decided this might be the best discipleship tool in our context for God’s people at La Croix. I remember not being sure if I would be allowed to use this for my project and was excited when it was approved. While this research project specifically addresses the problem of a discipleship strategy for Alpha graduates, I can say

confidently that the Holy Spirit has opened wide the doors of people's hearts and minds through Rooted in ALL stages of discipleship at La Croix Church.

I am not the same person I was when I started this journey nearly four years ago. I can honestly say that I am thankful for the hardships I have experienced even though in remembering some of them, there is still pain. I am thankful for God's faithfulness in proving to me over and over that he loves me and each one of us more deeply than we can ever truly comprehend. I am thankful for the richness of the relationships God has given me through this cohort as well as the relationships I have outside of this cohort. Each person has loved me well. And I am thankful that God chooses to use me in spite of myself for work in his Kingdom. I pray I can always respond in the way Elizabeth prayed for Mary, which is the verse given to me by the Doctor of Ministry office during our first residency, "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" (Luke 1.45).

APPENDIX A

RQ#1 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Pre-Survey

Part 1: Demographic Information

A. Age Range: ☐ 18-22 ☐ 23-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60-69 ☐ 70 and above

B. City currently living: ☐ Cape Girardeau ☐ Jackson ☐ Benton ☐ Advance ☐ Perryville
☐ Scott City ☐ Other (please specify)

C. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Prefer not to answer

D. Marital Status: ☐ Single (never married, widowed, divorced, or separated) ☐ Married

E. How would you describe where you are on your Spiritual journey? ☐ Atheist or Agnostic
☐ Unsure ☐ Curious and Seeking Answers ☐ Casual Christian (Protestant, Evangelical, Catholic or other tradition)
☐ Growing Christian (Protestant, Evangelical, Catholic or other tradition) ☐ Other

F. Years since becoming a Christian: ☐ 0-1 year ☐ 2-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-20
☐ 21+ ☐ I am not a Christian

G. I attend weekend worship: ☐ I don't ☐ less than once a month ☐ once a month ☐
twice a month ☐ more than twice a month

H. When I attend worship, I worship: ☐ online mostly ☐ in person mostly ☐ online/in person about the same amount of time.

I. Current status at La Croix Church: ☐ visitor ☐ attend regularly ☐ member ☐ no affiliation

J. Currently serving as a part of a ministry: ☐ No ☐ Yes If yes, in what area?

Part II: Pre-Survey using Likert Scale

Please rate yourself to the best of your ability using the following statements from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Choose which best applies: Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4 3 2 1

1. It is important to me to spend time with God daily.
2. It is important for me to pray for others.
3. It is important that I attend worship with other believers weekly.
4. I view the Bible as relevant for my life today.
5. It is important that my relationship with God affects the way I live.
6. Living a comfortable life is important to me.

7. It is important to serve others inside and outside the church.
8. It is important to share my faith story.
9. I view spiritual practices as essential to staying connected to God.
10. It is important to know God's will.
11. It is important to forgive others when they have wronged me.
12. It is important to worship God through giving monetarily.
13. I view my relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in my life.
14. I view the church as my family.
15. It is important to know God's purpose for me.
16. I take a day of rest (Sabbath) each week.

17. I have a regular time that I read the Bible.
18. I take time to deeply study and understand the Bible.
19. I attend weekly worship with other believers.
20. I meet daily with God in prayer.
21. I take time to listen to God.
22. I engage in spiritual practices (i.e. fasting, prayer, etc.) regularly.
23. When I have a problem, I go to God in prayer first.
24. I readily forgive others when they have wronged me.
25. Repentance is something I do regularly.
26. I serve others out of the purpose God has given me.
27. Tithing (giving to God) is something I do regularly.
28. I struggle to tell my faith story with others.
29. Telling others about Jesus is part of my life.
30. I am part of a small group/community of believers who know me well.

31. I believe God is one in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (The Trinity).
32. I believe human beings are made in the image of God.
33. I believe God created the world.
34. I believe God hears me when I pray.
35. I believe if you're a good person you'll go to heaven.
36. I believe Jesus is fully God and fully human.
37. I believe sin separates me from God.
38. I believe my sins are forgiven because of Jesus' death and resurrection.
39. I believe Jesus' death and resurrection is the only way to heaven.
40. I believe the entire Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God.
41. I believe the Holy Spirit lives in me.
42. I believe God wants me to share my faith story with others.
43. I believe God has a purpose for my life.
44. I believe the church is the Body of Christ.
45. I believe I can be a follower of Jesus without the church.

Part III: Pre-Survey Open ended questions

1. How would you describe your relationship with God?
2. How would you describe your relationship with others?
3. How would you describe your relationship with the church?
4. How would you describe your purpose?

1. It is important to me to spend time with God daily.
2. It is important for me to pray for others.
3. It is important that I attend worship with other believers weekly.
4. I view the Bible as relevant for my life today.
5. It is important that my relationship with God affects the way I live.
6. Living a comfortable life is important to me.
7. It is important to serve others inside and outside the church.
8. It is important to share my faith story.
9. I view spiritual practices as essential to staying connected to God.
10. It is important to know God's will.
11. It is important to forgive others when they have wronged me.
12. It is important to worship God through giving monetarily.
13. I view my relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in my life.
14. I view the church as my family.
15. It is important to know God's purpose for me.
16. I take a day of rest (Sabbath) each week.
17. I have a regular time that I read the Bible.
18. I take time to deeply study and understand the Bible.
19. I attend weekly worship with other believers.
20. I meet daily with God in prayer.
21. I take time to listen to God.
22. I engage in spiritual practices (i.e. fasting, prayer, etc.) regularly.
23. When I have a problem, I go to God in prayer first.
24. I readily forgive others when they have wronged me.
25. Repentance is something I do regularly.
26. I serve others out of the purpose God has given me.
27. Tithing (giving to God) is something I do regularly.
28. I struggle to tell my faith story with others.
29. Telling others about Jesus is part of my life.
30. I am part of a small group/community of believers who know me well.
31. I believe God is one in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (The Trinity).
32. I believe human beings are made in the image of God.
33. I believe God created the world.
34. I believe God hears me when I pray.
35. I believe if you're a good person you'll go to heaven.
36. I believe Jesus is fully God and fully human.

37. I believe sin separates me from God.
38. I believe my sins are forgiven because of Jesus' death and resurrection.
39. I believe Jesus' death and resurrection is the only way to heaven.
40. I believe the entire Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God.
41. I believe the Holy Spirit lives in me.
42. I believe God wants me to share my faith story with others.
43. I believe God has a purpose for my life.
44. I believe the church is the Body of Christ.
45. I believe I can be a follower of Jesus without the church.

Part II: Post-Survey Open ended questions

1. How would you describe your relationship with God?
2. How would you describe your relationship with others?
3. How would you describe your relationship with the church?
4. How would you describe your purpose?

APPENDIX C

RQ #3: Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Interview Questions

1. Were the weekly workbook devotions/journaling questions helpful to you? Why or why not?
2. What part of the Rooted experience was most impactful for you?
3. What one or two truths you will take away from this experience?
4. What is the next step you will take in following Jesus and his purpose for you?
How do you plan to do that and what assistance, if any, do you need?
5. Is there anything you think could have been better about the Rooted experience?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share that I didn't ask?

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Letter

The Rooted Experience as a Discipleship Strategy for Alpha Course Graduates

Dear Alpha Graduate,

You are invited to be in a research study being done by **Kim Holman**, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you have completed an Alpha Course at La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, MO.

Participation

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- a. Attend a weekly 2 hour small group (10-15 people) discipleship experience for 10-weeks called Rooted.
- b. Attend three experiences with your Rooted group outside of the weekly experience.
- c. Keep a journal or using the workbook to answer questions from the daily devotionals. These will not be read by the researcher.
- d. Sign a confidentiality statement.
- e. Complete a confidential survey before and after the 10-week experience.
- f. Participate (if available) in an interview within two to four weeks after the 10-week experience with the researcher in a room at La Croix Church or by Zoom. This interview will be audio recorded, or video/audio recorded if by Zoom. You will be further asked to grant Kim Holman permission to use your words, insights and experiences as part of the research project.

Compensation

There is no monetary compensation for participation.

Confidentiality

Although confidentiality will be encouraged and a Rooted covenant will be signed by each participant, it cannot be guaranteed due to the presence of other participants. Your survey and interview responses will be kept confidential using a numerical code instead of your name. Audio and video recordings of the interviews will only be heard or read by the researcher, Kim Holman, and the transcriptionist, who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Research assistants will sign a confidentiality agreement. All digital data will be collected by Survey Monkey with is only used by the researcher and is password protected. All physical documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet located in the researcher's office. All audio and video files will be saved on a password protected computer owned by the researcher. Once the research is complete, all files, both digital and physical, will be destroyed by the researcher within 6 months to a year.

Risks and Benefits

Risks: One potential risk to participating is that it is possible another participant could break confidentiality even though they have signed a confidentiality statement. Another possible risk is that there may be times you feel uncomfortable during the

experience. *Benefits:* While no incentives are offered, you will be helping to improve discipleship for others as we learn from you.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell **Kim Holman** who can be reached at kholman@lacroixchurch.org. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact **Kim Holman** at kholman@lacroixchurch.org.

Continuing to the Pre-Survey means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not continue with the Pre-survey. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you choose not to do the study or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

Interview Consent Letter

Dear Rooted Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview with researcher, Kim Holman, as a follow up to the 10-week Rooted experience directly relating to the research project, *The Rooted Experience as a Discipleship Strategy for Alpha Course Graduates*. By agreeing to this interview with the researcher you will be audio recorded, or video/audio recorded if by Zoom. You are also agreeing to grant Kim Holman permission to use your words, insights and experiences as part of the research project and for possible publication. The interview will take approximately 1 hour of your time.

Your interview responses will be kept confidential using a numerical code instead of your name. Audio and video recordings of the interviews will only be heard or read by the researcher, Kim Holman, the Data Analyst and the Transcriptionist, who will sign a confidentiality agreement. All physical documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet located in the researcher's office. All audio and video files will be saved on a password protected computer owned by the researcher. Once the research is complete, all files, both digital and physical, will be destroyed by the researcher within 6 months to a year.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with this interview. It is possible that there may be times you feel uncomfortable during the experience. If that happens please inform me promptly.

Benefits: While there are no guaranteed benefits, it is possible you will find the conversation meaningful to you. You will also be helping to inform and improve discipleship for others as we learn from you.

A publication could result from this project and if that occurs your identity will remain confidential and I may further alter some identifying details to further keep your identity anonymous.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the interview, please tell the researcher. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact **Kim Holman** at **kholman@lacroixchurch.org**.

Thank you for your participation in this important discipleship research project.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

APPENDIX E

Confidentiality Forms

Confidentiality Agreement Transcriptionist and Data Analysts

The Rooted Experience as a Discipleship Strategy for Alpha Course Graduates

I, _____, have been asked to assist the principal researcher in reviewing, translating and transcribing/coding and/or analyzing the interviews and survey themes.

I agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., audio or video recordings, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher*.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., audio or video recordings, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., audio or video recordings, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

(Researcher - print name)

(signature)

(date)

(Transcriber - print name)

(signature)

(date)

Confidentiality Agreement For Rooted Group Facilitator

The Rooted Experience as a Discipleship Strategy for Alpha Course Graduates

I, _____, have been asked to assist the principal researcher as a Facilitator for the Rooted Experience.

As part of the research team I agree to the following:

- I will assist in the research by facilitating a Rooted group using the same training and Rooted Facilitator Guide as the researcher.
- I will participate in training for the proper Rooted group procedures.
- I will take the required IRB Protecting Human Participants Training Course.
- I will keep all comments made during the Rooted group confidential; I will not discuss what happened during the Rooted group to anyone outside the meeting, with the exception of principal researcher, Kim Holman.
- I will assist the researcher with coding and analyzing data upon completion of the study.
- I have received a copy of this confidentiality statement.

Signature of Person facilitating a Rooted group

Date Signed

APPENDIX F

Expert Review Letter

Dear Recipient,

As a student of the Doctor of Ministry Spiritual Direction for Ministry Leaders cohort at Asbury Theological Seminary, I am currently working on the research project for my dissertation. As part of the research process, I am using two researcher-designed instruments to collect data: (1) Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Pre and Post-Surveys (to collect quantitative and qualitative data); and (2) Interviews (to collect qualitative data).

For reliability and validity purposes it is essential that I have expert reviews and I am inviting you to serve as one of my reviewers. Your academic expertise and experience with the discipleship context of La Croix Church are immensely important and valued highly by me.

Below you will find the following information:

- Discipleship project description which includes the purpose and design of the project and includes the research questions;
- Definition of terms;
- The two researcher-designed instruments;
- Evaluation forms for expert review

Kindly appraise the two instruments using the included evaluation forms, and feel free to include any comments that you deem helpful in improving the collection of data. Upon completion, please return the evaluation to me either in person or via email kim.holman@asburyseminary.edu by March 15th, 2022.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kim Holman

Discipleship Project Title:*The Rooted Experience as a Discipleship Strategy for Alpha Course Graduates***Purpose and Nature of the Project:**

La Croix Church has an average weekly worship attendance, which includes in person and virtual, of 2,200 people. In 2017 a new outreach course was started called the Alpha Course. Through Alpha, people are introduced to Jesus in a way that allows them the safe space to learn about Jesus and the Christian faith while being able to ask any question that may have about life and faith. As the number of Alpha courses increased, the number of new believers worshipping at La Croix Church increased. Unfortunately, besides worship and serving opportunities, there was little to offer these new, excited believers. We noticed there was a discipleship gap. Existing small groups that were well established did not have the needed structure or content for equipping new believers. Their material was for those who were further along in their faith formation or who were not open to new people at all due to the size of the group or the level of accountability within the group. The problem was that the best way to begin discipling new believers, specifically, those who had completed an Alpha course, had not yet been developed. Multiple tries have been made to create next steps but nothing has been implemented that included all the components needed to equip and train these new believers in the foundations of the Christian faith within a smaller community of believers.

In 2020 the researcher was informed about a discipleship experience called Rooted. Developed by a sister church in Kenya of Mariners Church in Irvine, California, Rooted was based on Acts 2 and introduces 7 rhythms followers of Jesus should do. This discipleship experience is practiced in small groups of 10-15 people who meet weekly to discuss the daily devotional from the previous week and how God met with the participants during this time of devotion and prayer. Several experiences pertinent to the Christian faith are also offered and participants are encouraged to engage in those experiences. This is a 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community. The purpose of this research was to measure the spiritual transformation that took place, in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living among Alpha course graduates from La Croix Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, who attended a 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community.

Research Questions:**Research Question #1**

What levels of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living were identified among the participants prior to the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?

Research Question #2

What levels of spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living were identified among the participants following the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community?

Research Question #3

What aspects of the 10-week experience of spiritual direction in community had the greatest impact on the observed changes in spiritual transformation in relation to biblical theology, holy love and dispositional living?

Definition of Key Terms:**Alpha Course**

“*Alpha* is a tool built for local churches based on hospitality, sharing and open conversation. The same Alpha content is run all over the world, by Christians of all traditions, and provides a common expression of proclamation, service and witness. Millions of people have experienced Alpha in over 100 countries and over 100 languages around the globe” (Alpha International). Developed and led by Nicky Gumbel and Holy Trinity Brompton Church in London, the Alpha course has been instrumental in introducing people to Jesus. For this paper participants will have already attended an Alpha course before participating in the 11-week experience.

Biblical Theology

Biblical theology is what is revealed to us in Scripture and is then the “systematic, ordered, and reasoned interpretation and application of what the scripture reveals to us” (Martyn 1). In other words, “There is no Christian theology without the Bible. There is no Bible without an inspired community to write, remember, and translate it, to guard it and pass it on, study it, live by it, and invite others to live by it” (Oden 21). This will be discussed through the category of the Church through worship, discipleship and mission. This is readily seen in someone’s beliefs.

Holy Love

In the gospel of Mark Jesus says to “‘love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12.30-31). John Wesley similarly wrote that “Christian perfection” or holy love is “loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love” (Wesley 34). This is *holy love* and is evidenced by a transformed life. This is readily seen in someone’s attitudes.

Dispositional Living

Dispositional living is a life lived as a “set, loving, self-motivated way of life marked by faithfulness in the primary means of grace” (Martyn 3). Simply put, it is a life where the life of Christ is engrained and is second nature to a person in their thoughts, words and deeds. This is readily seen in someone’s behavior.

**RQ#1 & #2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Pre and Post-Surveys
(For Expert Review Only)**

Part 1: Demographic Information

A. Age Range: ___ 18-22 ___ 23-29 ___ 30-39 ___ 40-49 ___ 50-59 ___ 60-69 ___ 70 and above

B. City currently living: ___ Cape Girardeau ___ Jackson ___ Benton ___ Advance ___ Perryville
___ Scott City ___ Other (please specify)

C. Gender: ___ Female ___ Male ___ Prefer not to answer

D. Marital Status: ___ Single (never married, widowed, divorced, or separated) ___ Married

E. How would you describe where you are on your Spiritual journey? ___ Atheist or Agnostic
___ Unsure ___ Curious and Seeking Answers ___ Casual Christian (Protestant, Evangelical,
Catholic or other tradition) ___ Growing Christian (Protestant, Evangelical, Catholic or other
tradition) ___ Other

F. Years since becoming a Christian: ___ 0-1 year ___ 2-5 years ___ 6-10 years ___ 11-20
___ 21+ ___ I am not a Christian

G. I attend weekend worship: ___ I don't ___ less than once a month ___ once a month ___
twice a month ___ more than twice a month

H. When I attend worship, I worship: ___ online mostly ___ in person mostly ___ online/in
person about the same amount of time.

I. Current status at La Croix Church: ___ visitor ___ attend regularly ___ member ___ no
affiliation

J. Currently serving as a part of a ministry: ___ No ___ Yes If yes, in what area?

Part II: Survey using Likert Scale

Please rate yourself to the best of your ability using the following statements from
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Choose which best applies: Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
4 3 2 1

1. It is important to me to spend time with God daily.
2. It is important for me to pray for others.
3. It is important that I attend worship with other believers weekly.
4. I view the Bible as relevant for my life today.
5. It is important that my relationship with God affects the way I live.
6. Living a comfortable life is important to me.

7. It is important to serve others inside and outside the church.
8. It is important to share my faith story.
9. I view spiritual practices as essential to staying connected to God.
10. It is important to know God's will.
11. It is important to forgive others when they have wronged me.
12. It is important to worship God through giving monetarily.
13. I view my relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in my life.
14. I view the church as my family.
15. It is important to know God's purpose for me.

16. I take a day of rest (Sabbath) each week.
17. I have a regular time that I read the Bible.
18. I take time to deeply study and understand the Bible.
19. I attend weekly worship with other believers.
20. I meet daily with God in prayer.
21. I take time to listen to God.
22. I engage in spiritual practices (i.e. fasting, prayer, etc.) regularly.
23. When I have a problem, I go to God in prayer first.
24. I readily forgive others when they have wronged me.
25. Repentance is something I do regularly.
26. I serve others out of the purpose God has given me.
27. Tithing (giving to God) is something I do regularly.
28. I struggle to tell my faith story with others.
29. Telling others about Jesus is part of my life.
30. I am part of a small group/community of believers who know me well.

31. I believe God is one in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (The Trinity).
32. I believe human beings are made in the image of God.
33. I believe God created the world.
34. I believe God hears me when I pray.
35. I believe if you're a good person you'll go to heaven.
36. I believe Jesus is fully God and fully human.
37. I believe sin separates me from God.
38. I believe my sins are forgiven because of Jesus' death and resurrection.
39. I believe Jesus' death and resurrection is the only way to heaven.
40. I believe the entire Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God.
41. I believe the Holy Spirit lives in me.
42. I believe God wants me to share my faith story with others.
43. I believe God has a purpose for my life.
44. I believe the church is the Body of Christ.
45. I believe I can be a follower of Jesus without the church.

Part III: Post-Survey Open ended questions

1. How would you describe your relationship with God?
2. How would you describe your relationship with others?
3. How would you describe your relationship with the church?

4. How would you describe your purpose?

RQ #3: Rooted Discipleship Qualitative Interview Questions

1. Were the weekly workbook devotions/journaling questions helpful to you? Why or why not?
2. What part of the Rooted experience was most impactful for you?
3. What one or two truths will you take away from this experience?
4. What is the next step you will take in following Jesus and his purpose for you?
How do you plan to do that and what assistance, if any, do you need?
5. Is there anything you think could have been better about the Rooted experience?
Is there anything else you would like to share that I didn't ask?

Expert Review for RQ#1 and #2 Rooted Discipleship Quantitative/Qualitative Pre and Post-Surveys

Statement #	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestion to Clarify Statement
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					

17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28					
29					
30					
31					
32					
33					
34					
35					
36					
37					
38					
39					
40					
41					

42					
43					
44					
45					
Open Ended 1					
2					
3					
4					
Interview 1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

WORKS CITED

- Alpha International*. Alpha, 2014, alpha.org. Accessed 20 April 2020.
- Barton, Ruth Haley. *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence*. InterVarsity Press Books, 2nd ed., 2010.
- . *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*. InterVarsity Press Books, 2008.
- Bell, Judith. *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science*. 3rd ed., Open University Press, 1999.
- Benedict. *The Rule of St. Benedict*, edited by Rev. Timothy Fry, Liturgical Press, 1981.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of the Christian Community*. HarperOne, 1954.
- Bradley, Ian. *The Celtic Way*. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1993.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Message of Deuteronomy*. Edited by J.A. Motyer, InterVarsity Press. 1993.
- Calvin, John. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill, vol. 2, Westminster John Knox Press, 1960.
- Clairvaux, Bernard of. *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*. Translated by John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennan, Cistercian Publications, 1976.
- Collins, Kenneth J. *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*. Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Comfort, Philip W. *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1990.
- Fernando, Ajith. *Jesus Driven Ministry*. Crossway, 2002.

- Finney, John. *Recovering the Past: Celtic and Roman Mission*. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1996.
- Foulkes, Francis. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Ephesians*. InterVarsity Press, 1983.
- Fowl, Stephen E., and L. Gregory Jones. *Reading in Community: Spiritual and Ethics in Christian Life*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.
- Gaza, Dorotheos of. *Dorotheos of Gaza: Discourses and Sayings*. Translated by Eric P. Wheeler, Cistercian Publications, 1977.
- Greggs, Tom. *Dogmatic Ecclesiology: The Priestly Catholicity of the Church*. Baker Academic, 2019.
- Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. HarperCollins, 1996.
- Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Brazos Press, 2006.
- The Holy Bible*. English Standard Version. Crossway, 2020.
- The Holy Bible*. The New International Version, Zondervan, 2011.
- Hunter, George G., III. *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West....Again*. Abingdon Press, 2010.
- Jenkins, Michael. *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-Modern Context*. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- “Join a Group.” *Mariners Church*, 17 April 2021, <https://www.marinerschurch.org/join-a-group/>.

- Jones, Alan. *Cooperating with the Spirit: A Model for Spiritual Formation within the Local Church*, Asbury Theological Seminary, Ann Arbor, 2006. *ProQuest*, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/dissertations-theses/cooperating-with-spirit-model-spiritual-formation/docview/304926514/se-2?accountid=8380>.
- Jones, Beth Felker. *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically*. Baker Academic, 2014.
- Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Kinnaman, David, and Mark Matlock. *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon*. Baker Books, 2019.
- Kreider, Alan. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. Baker Academic, 2016.
- Letterman, Rebecca, and Susan Muto. *Understanding Our Story: The Life's Work and Legacy of Adrian van Kaam in the Field of Formative Spirituality*. Wipf & Stock, 2017.
- Lohfink, Gerhard. *Jesus and Community*. Translated by John P. Galvin. Fortress Press, 1982.
- Marmon, Ellen. "Transformative Learning Theory: Connections with Christian Adult Education." *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry*, 2013.
- Martyn, Steve. "Concrete Categories." *Asbury Theological Seminary*, Doctor of Ministry Spiritual Direction for Ministry Leaders Cohort Presentation, January 2020.
- McNall, Joshua. *Long Story Short: The Bible in Six Simple Movements*. Seedbed Publishing, 2018.

- Moore, Charles E., editor. *Called to Community: The Life Jesus Wants for His People*. Plough Publishing House, 2016.
- Mulholland, M. Robert. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. Expanded ed., InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Muto, Susan, and Adrian van Kaam. *Epiphany Manual on the Art and Discipline of Formation-in-Common: A Fresh Approach to the Ancient Practice of Spiritual Direction*. Epiphany Association, 2004.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Open Secret*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Classic Christianity*. HarperOne, 1992.
- Okesson, Gregg. *A Public Missiology*. Baker Academic, 2020.
- Outler, Albert C. *The Works of John Wesley: Volume 3, Sermons III 71-114*. Abingdon Press, 1986.
- Peterson, Eugene. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*. 1980. InterVarsity Press, 2019.
- Phillips, Susan. *Candlelight: Illuminating the Art of Spiritual Direction*. Morehouse Publishing, 2008.
- Pohl, Christine. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
- . *Living Into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012.
- Powers, Jonathan. "The Fourfold Structure of Worship." DM(SDL) 915A, XI, Seminar I: Biblical and Theological Foundations of Community Spiritual Direction, Nov. 2019, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY. Lecture.

Reed, Angela, Richard R. Osmer, and Marcus G. Smucker. *Spiritual Companioning: A Guide to Protestant Theology and Practice*. Baker Academic, 2015.

Rievaulx, Aelred of. *Spiritual Friendship*. Translated by Lawrence C. Braceland, edited by Marsha L. Dutton, Cistercian Publications, 2010.

Root, Andrew. *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*. Baker Academic, 2017.

ROOTED: Connect with God, the Church, Your Purpose. Rooted Network, 2020.

Roxburgh, Alan J. *Missional MAP-making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition*. Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Seamands, Stephen. "Overcoming Jericho Walls." January 2021.

<https://asburyseminary.instructure.com/courses/2588/files?preview=252045>.

PowerPoint Presentation.

---. *The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Mission and Ministry*. January 2021.

<https://asburyseminary.instructure.com/courses/2588/files?preview=252046>.

PowerPoint Presentation.

---. Stephen. *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*.

InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Snodgrass, Klyne. *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996.

Spener, Philip Jacob. *Pia Desideria*. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, Fortress Press, 1964.

Stott, John. *The Living Church*. InterVarsity Press, 2007.

---. *The Message of Ephesians*. InterVarsity Press, 1979.

Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Pathways: Nine Ways to Connect with God*. 1996. Zondervan Books, 2020.

- Thompson, J.A. *Deuteronomy: An Introduction & Commentary*. InterVarsity Press, 1974.
- Tomlin, Graham. "Evangelism as Catechesis, Hospitality, and Anticipation: A Study of the Alpha Course." *Christian Education Journal*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2013, pp. 91-102.
- Van Fossen, Mark S. *Transformational Discipleship: When Emotional Health and Intentional Discipleship Collide*, Anderson University, Ann Arbor, 2020.
- ProQuest*, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/dissertations-theses/transformational-discipleship-when-emotional/docview/2453688049/se-2?accountid=8380>.
- van Kaam, Adrian, and Susan Muto. *Dynamics of Spiritual Direction*. Epiphany Association, 2003.
- Vest, Norvene. *Gathered in the Word: Praying the Scripture in Small Groups*. Upper Room Books, 1996.
- Volf, Miroslav. *A Public Faith*. Brazos Press, 2011.
- Webber, Robert E. *Worship is a Verb: Eight Principles for Transforming Worship*. Hendrickson Publishers, 1992.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Zondervan, 2017.
- Wesley, John. *John Wesley: A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Kindle ed., Sublime Books, 2014.
- . *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley Vol. 8*, edited by John Telford, Epworth, 1931.
- Wilcock, Michael. *The Message of Psalms 73-150*. Edited by J.A. Motyer, InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. William Collins, 1998.

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*.

HarperSanFrancisco, 1988.

Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God's People*. Zondervan, 2010.

Wright, N.T. *Acts for Everyone: Part 1*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

---. *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church*. William B.

Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

---. "Who are the People of God?" *FULLER Studio*, 2014. Accessed on *YouTube*,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMyenQv_IYA.

---. "Romans 2:17–3:9: A Hidden Clue to the Meaning of Romans?" *Journal for the Study of*

Paul and His Letters, vol. 2, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1–25.