GROWING DISCIPLES IN COMMUNITY: A REVIEW OF SCRIPTURE AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Kathleen Beagles
Andrews University

General Overview

In the Christian world the word *discipleship* is discussed by many, but fully comprehended by few. By discipleship some people mean primarily a response to Jesus' call to "Come, follow Me" (Matt 19:21[1]) or an invitation to a personal relationship with him. For others, it connotes the commission to "Go . . . make disciples" (Matt 28:19), bringing others to a similar belief in Jesus as they themselves have.

Still other Christians understand that, at a minimum, both following Christ and making other disciples are involved in the concept of discipleship, but they are not sure how either of those activities impacts their lives or even what the Christian life would look like if discipleship were practiced on a daily basis.

One author, attempting to take a biblical view of discipleship, poses three questions: "What is discipleship? How is discipleship accomplished? What is involved in prompting discipleship?"[2] J. G. Samra believes there are three reasons for the confusion over what discipleship is. The first reason he cites is that sometimes the Greek word *disciple* in the NT is used in a strictly intellectual sense, thus making discipleship "simply the process of being educated by a teacher," and at other times it "seems to involve life transformation . . . in which case discipleship is seen as the process of becoming like one's master."[3]

The second reason he gives for the confusion over the term is that,

> at times the focus is on the beginning of the process (Matt 27:57; Acts 14:21), in which case discipleship is *becoming* a disciple. At other times (and more frequently) the focus is on *being* a disciple (Luke 14:26-27), in which case discipleship is the process of becoming like one's master.[4]

The third reason Samra gives for confusion is that there are "different referents" for the term disciple. Sometimes the term refers to the masses who occasionally followed Jesus in order to learn about him. Other times it is used for the specific few selected to become "as much like Christ as possible through concentrated, focused life transference."[5]

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[1]Unless otherwise specified all references to Scripture are from the NASB.

[2] J. G. Samra, "A Biblical View of Discipleship," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (April–June 2003): 219.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., emphasis original.

[5]Ibid., 220.

Samra cuts through the confusion and concludes that the term discipleship refers to both becoming and being—both evangelism and growth. "Therefore it is best to think of discipleship as the process of becoming like Christ."[6] "It encompasses both the entry into the process (salvation) and growth in the process (sanctification)."[7] "All Christians are disciples and are called to participate in the discipleship process, both by receiving instruction and living out their faith for others to see and imitate."[8]

The ideas in Samra's simple definition and explanation of discipleship echo in S. W. Collinson's meticulously crafted definition of discipling in the theological monograph *Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus' Educational Methods for Today's Church*.

> Christian discipling is an intentional, largely informal learning activity. It involves two or a small group of individuals, who typically function within a larger nurturing community and hold to the same beliefs. Each makes a voluntary commitment to the other/s to form close personal relationships for an extended period of time, in order that those who at a particular time are perceived as having superior knowledge and/or skills will attempt to cause learning to take place in the lives of others who seek their help. Christian discipling is intended to result in each becoming an active follower of Jesus and a participant in his mission to the world.[9]

Collinson gives the aim of discipling as "the attainment of maturity and development of the ability to become a teacher or discipler of others."[10] Combining ideas of both Samra and Collinson, discipleship and discipling seem to be inextricably linked in aim and process. "All Christians are disciples and are called to participate in the discipleship process, both by receiving instruction and living out their faith for others to see and imitate,"[11] including intentionally discipling others for the purpose or aim of their "attainment of maturity" and their "development of the ability to become a teacher or discipler of others,"[12] in part by simply "living out their faith for others to see and imitate."[13]

Samra's questions, "What is discipleship?" and "How is discipleship accomplished?" seem to be answered in the combined explanations of discipleship and discipling already discussed. Both discipleship and discipling involve participating in the processes of receiving instruction from God and others and living out one's faith for others to see and imitate for the purpose of their spiritual maturity and their ability to disciple still others.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., 234.

[8]Ibid.

[9]S. W. Collinson, *Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus' Educational Methods for Today's Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 164.

[10]Ibid., 160.

[11]Samra, 234.

[12]Collinson, 160.

[13]Samra, 234.

However, his third question—"What is involved in prompting discipleship?"—is a more complicated question to answer. Many dedicated disciplers and religious educators have offered theories, models, and personal praxis to attempt to answer that question.

Models of Discipleship

Since the mid-twentieth century in the United States, there have been "three streams of thought regarding discipleship."[14] B. Hull sees the rise of organizations such as The Navigators and Campus Crusade for Christ as the first of these streams, calling it "Classic Discipleship." The characteristics of this approach to discipleship include mentoring, disciplined Bible study and memorization, and training in witnessing—personally and publicly. The strengths of the approach include focus, method, and measured performance. "The essential and lasting strength of classic discipleship is its commitment to Scripture and the importance of sequence and segmentation in training people well."[15] However, the weaknesses include a lack of addressing the disciple's inner life and the tendency of the discipleship to last only as long as a program did.

The second stream of thought regarding discipleship that Hull reports is the spiritual formation movement. This movement recaptures "ancient exercises practiced by Jesus, his disciples, and the monastics."[16] Many of these "ancient exercises" were not embraced by the participants in the Protestant Reformation when they made their break from their Catholic heritage. Hull states:

> By definition spiritual formation is a process through which individuals who have received new life take on the character of Jesus Christ by a combination of effort and grace. The disciple positions himself to follow Jesus. The actual process of reforming, or spiritual formation, involves both God's grace and the individual's effort.[17]

Hull believes that "the weakness of the spiritual formation movement— at least from an evangelical point of view"[18]—is that it is easily infiltrated by secular worldviews and other religions and philosophies. It is important to distinguish Christian spiritual formation from others. Hull believes that the greatest strength of this stream of discipleship is that it "causes us to slow down twenty-first-century life long enough to ponder what's going on in us and around us."[19] But he also believes that "recently the spiritual formation movement has also incorporated the focused and 'let's get things done' nature

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[14]B. Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 18.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 19.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

of the classic discipleship movement, creating a richer and more thoughtful approach to transformation."[20]

The third stream of thought Hull calls "environmental discipleship"; however, it is also called "psychological discipleship" or "relational discipleship." L. Crabb,[21] J. C. Wilhoit,[22] and J. A. Gorman[23] write about community or sometimes family. J. D. Jones[24] and C. E. Nelson[25] speak of congregation, "encompassing the ways people get along."[26]

Hull sees this third stream as addressing "one of the least-developed concepts in discipleship."[27] That concept is "how the environment of a group determines what grows or dies within that environment."[28] He considers this "least-developed concept" important for discussing discipleship because "the most important issues in spiritual transformation are the presence of acceptance, integrity of relationships, and trust."[29]

Looking at all three streams of discipleship, Hull sees the classic discipleship movement as having mandated trust: "You must be accountable to me."[30] He sees the spiritual formation movement as having required submission: "If you want to be a part of our society, you must subject yourself fully to it. No negotiations."[31] But, he believes that

> the therapeutic society we live in has developed its own environment, which accepts nearly anything, no matter how damaging it might be. . . . Fortunately, some thoughtful Christians have "spoiled" the therapeutic world, introducing some very important insights that create trust and allow disciples to flourish.[32]

Some of the "very important insights" (among many others) that are in varying ways connected to the "therapeutic world" can be found in the work

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[20]Ibid.

[21]L. Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth: Where People Connect and Are Forever Changed* (Nashville: W. Publishing, 1999).

[22]J. C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ Through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

[23]J. A. Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

[24]J. D. Jones, *Traveling Together: A Guide for Disciple-forming Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006).

[25]C. E. Nelson, *Growing Up Christian: A Congregational Strategy for Nurturing Disciples* (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2008).

[26]Hull, 20.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

of H. Cloud and J. Townsend,[33] L. Crabb,[34] P. R. Holmes,[35] and P. R. Holmes and S. B. Williams.[36]

Hull believes that "these three movements—classic discipleship, spiritual formation, and environmental discipleship—are now converging to create a new, full-bodied discipleship, with the potential to transform the church in the next twenty-five years."[37]

P. Hertig sees the great commission recorded in Matt 28:18-20 as a "post-resurrection declaration of God's universal reign."[38] He points out that to "'make disciples (*mathēteusate*) is the main verb, and thus the focal point of Jesus' mission. 'Going,' 'baptizing,' and 'teaching' are parallel participles subordinate to 'make disciples.'"[39] Hertig continues:

> The resurrection of Jesus led to the final mission mandate which involved more than proclaiming, but also demanded the surrender to Jesus' Lordship through the making of disciples. . . . Disciples are urged both to understand Jesus' words and to apply them without compromise (Matt 7:24-27). . . . Disciple making is not a performance; it is total submission to God's reign.[40]

Hertig claims that what prompts discipleship is a sense of holistic mission (to bodies and souls in social contexts)—"the central expression of the Christian faith."[41] E. M. Jacob says that "Christian mission is the response of Christians to the presence of God, and their participation in God's action to liberate all people."[42] The explanation considered previously—that both discipleship and discipling seem to be participating in the processes of receiving instruction from God and others and living out one's faith for others to see and imitate for the purpose of their spiritual maturity and their ability to disciple still others—is a strong corollary to Jacob's "Christian mission," if not the same thing.

[33]H. Cloud and J. Townsend, *How People Grow: What the Bible Reveals about Personal Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

[34]L. Crabb, *Connecting: Healing Ourselves and Our Relationships* (Nashville: W. Publishing, 1997).

[35]P. R. Holmes, *Trinity in Human Community: Exploring Congregational Life in the Image of the Social Trinity* (Tyrone, GA: Paternoster, 2006).

[36]P. R. Holmes and S. B. Williams, *Becoming More Like Christ: A Contemporary Biblical Journey* (Colorado Springs: Authentic Media, 2007); idem, *Church as a Safe Place: A Handbook Confronting, Resolving, and Minimizing Abuse in the Church* (Colorado Springs: Authentic Media, 2007).

[37]Hull, 20.

[38]P. Hertig, "The Great Commission Revisited: The Role of God's Reign in Disciple Making," *Missiology: An International Review* 29/3 (2001): 343.

[39]Ibid., 346.

[40]Ibid., 347.

[41]Ibid.

[42]E. M. Jacob, "Discipleship and Mission: A Perspective on the Gospel of Matthew," *International Review of Mission* 91/360 (2002): 102.

Yet another model to help answer the question, "What is involved in prompting discipleship?" follows a family model. J. Petersen, in *Lifestyle Discipleship: The Challenge of Following Jesus in Today's World,* describes spiritual parenting.[43] This model attends to the spiritual development of the newer or younger Christian, adapting the role of the discipler to meet the changing needs of the one being discipled. In 1 Thess 2:7-10, the disciple is described as a little child and the discipler as being "gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children." The needs that the "child" has are for protection and love; meeting those needs is what will "prompt discipleship" in the new/young disciple.

Paul also implies an "adolescent" stage disciple. The discipleship-prompting that this group needs is that of a father "exhorting and encouraging and imploring" (1 Thess 2:11). The discipler must take on a slightly different role with a disciple in a different stage of discipleship. Petersen says that "the objective of the 'father' is to equip the child or youth to live a life worthy of God, to live as a citizen of His Kingdom ought to live."[44]

As the disciples grow and mature, they become brothers and sisters (see 1 Thess 1:6-10 and 2:13-16), peers, standing "shoulder to shoulder."[45] The goal, of course, is maturity in Christ, and it can happen only over time. Different stages of discipling initiative require different parenting roles to be taken by the discipler.

There are still other models that a discipler can use in "prompting" discipleship in others and that inform what methods can be used. A three-stage model was proposed in the discipleship classic, *The Training of the Twelve,*[46] originally printed in 1871. A. B. Bruce sets forth three stages—believers in Christ, fellowship with Christ, and chosen to be trained by Christ.[47] Hull adds a fourth stage to Bruce's three in order to "show how the disciples finished their training and moved on to carry out their mission."[48] He calls Bruce's first stage, "Come and see," Bruce's second stage, "Come and follow me," and his third stage, "Come and be with me." The fourth stage, which Hull adds, he calls, "Remain in me."[49]

Closely related to the concept of discipleship is the concept of being transformed into Christ's image—the result of choosing, following, and remaining in him. Hull suggests a six-fold definition of the transformation

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[43]J. Peterson, *Lifestyle Discipleship: The Challenge of Following Jesus in Today's World* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994).

[44]Ibid., 59.

[45]Ibid.

[46]A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve: Or, Passages Out of the Gospels Exhibiting the Twelve Disciples of Jesus under Discipline for the Apostleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963).

[47]Ibid., 11-12.

[48]Hull, 169.

[49]Ibid., 170.

of disciples.[50] K. Boa explains the process of growing Christian spirituality, the desired result of true discipleship, as a "gem with many facets."[51] His model includes 12 facets, providing an approach for every personality type. According to D. J. Harrington, "Christian spirituality is discipleship, that is, a positive response to the call of Jesus despite or even because of our personal unworthiness."[52]

Rick Warren's Life Development Process, which, according to G. Ogden, is one of the "most popular and copied public discipleship models," involves "covenant membership" (making a commitment to Christ), "the covenant of maturity" (committing to "basic spiritual disciplines of growth"), "the covenant of ministry" (using one's experience and gifts for others), and "commitment to missions" (compassionate service).[53] This model is portrayed in the form of a baseball diamond, with everything centering around the pitcher's mound in the middle, which is "magnification or worship."[54] Warren's model implies that after a commitment to become a "disciple" of Christ, one also commits to a life of spiritual growth through disciplines—a life of relational service and compassionate ministry using one's gifts and abilities in the context of corporate worship.[55] The questions Warren raises are, Are these commitments adequate for prompting discipleship? and How are the commitments prompted?

Discipleship Models and Adolescents

Particularly designed for adolescent catechesis, L. Henning's tripod construct grows out of "question six of the 'Baltimore Catechism' [which] explains that God made us to know, love and serve him 'in this world, and to be happy with him forever' in the next."[56] Henning suggests a framework for adolescent discipleship that has three legs—to know, to love, and to serve God. This three-legged-stool formation supplies a stable foundation when the legs are balanced. The seat that rests on these legs is life experience. These legs, of course, are known to educators as the cognitive construct (to know God), the affective construct (to love God), and the behavioral construct (to serve God). Henning observes that "those who work with young people have become aware of the importance of methodology in discipleship formation."[57] She points out that looking at the ultimate discipler and model, Jesus Christ, makes it obvious "that

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[50]Ibid., 130.

[51]K. Boa, *Conformed to His Image* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

[52]D. J. Harrington, "Dynamics of Discipleship," *America* 196/3 (2007): 38.

[53]G. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 53.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

[56]L. Henning, "Forming Disciples of Jesus in Parish and School," *Momentum* (September–October 2007): 56.

[57]Ibid., 57.

it is not just what we teach but how we teach it and live it that is of supreme importance."[58] The message is definitely impacted by the messenger and, for young people, observing in the lives of their disciplers the lived experience of being a disciple is crucial for them to be able to internalize the head and heart knowledge they are taught. "For young people, truth is verified by experience."[59] The personal spiritual experience of the discipler of young people is definitely "hidden curriculum" in the discipling methodology, especially if it is not congruent with the cognitive and affective aspects of the curriculum.[60]

Prompting discipleship in children and youth is also addressed by D. M. Hunneshagen as he approaches confirmation ministry—or what he calls the "discipleship training of children and youth."[61] Based heavily on developmental theory and research, his model, or basic framework, includes "4 turnings, 6 disciplines, and 19 assets."[62] He sees "the congregation as a whole as the primary instructor."[63] The first avenue it uses for this disciple-making task "is *Kerygma*—the church's proclamation and sharing of the Good News with undiscipled people."[64] The second avenue used "is *Koinonia*—the Christ-infused fellowship in which loving, caring, forgiving relationships are built and nurtured."[65] The third avenue "is *Diakonia*—the body of Christ serving people and the world at their point of need."[66]

The actual discipleship being prompted involves four "turnings"—a concept Hunneshagen takes from the mission and purpose statement of his Lutheran congregation. The "turnings" are "1) turning to Christ; 2) turning to the Christian message and ethic; 3) turning to a Christian congregation; and 4) turning to the world in love and mission."[67] He states that "mature discipleship does not emerge until all four 'turnings' have occurred."[68] The local congregation particularly is the agent that "prompts" this maturing discipleship. The turnings can occur in any order, but he emphasizes the importance of these turnings beginning to happen in childhood and youth.[69] Hunneshagen names

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[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid.

[60]See, e.g., J. Martin, "What Should We Do with a Hidden Curriculum?" in *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education: Deception or Discovery?* ed. H. Giroux and D. Purpel (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1983).

[61]D. M. Hunneshagen, "Discipleship Training of Children and Youth," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 41 (2002): 192.

[62]Ibid., 190.

[63]Ibid., 191.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid., 191-192.

[69]Ibid., 192.

six disciplines that are actions a committed Christian disciple will undertake: worship, prayer, Bible study, giving, service, and witness.[70]

Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets"[71] is the source from which Hunneshagen's congregation chose 19 assets that they felt they had the capacity to address. These assets are based on research that has identified 40 positive experiences and qualitities that children and teenagers need, such as "'External Assets' of: #3 other adult relationships, #15 positive peer influence, #18 youth programs, and #19 religious community."[72] They chose many more "Internal Assets," including everything listed under positive relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities.[73] Focus on the Family's *Parenting Compass* Web site supplies scriptural references to underline the importance of each of the assets.[74]

T. S. Gibson also approaches discipling youth from an ecclesiological perspective. Although not promoting a model of discipleship, he states that "congregations should foster an environment of discipleship and accountability in which spiritual growth can take place."[75] He maintains that "church programming that separates people by age or social status prevents Christians from hearing the insights of the entire community. The concept of church family somehow gets lost."[76] He recommends "intergenerational connectedness" that promotes "multigenerational worshiping communities wherein young and old, single and married, share and learn together."[77] He claims that "congregational connectivity among teenagers and the entire body of Christ is key to helping adolescents understand the importance of remaining active in the church."[78]

Obviously, models abound that have been created to answer Samra's questions: What is discipleship? How is discipleship accomplished? and What is involved in prompting discipleship? All the models, in one form or another, involve connecting with and growing in relationships with God and with others. A growing connection with God leads one to a deepening understanding of the relationship with him through the revelation of his Word; the resultant more selfless, growing connection with others as disciples

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[70]Ibid.

[71]E. C. Roehlkepartain, *Building Assets in Congregations: A Practical Guide for Helping Youth Grow Up Healthy* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1998).

[72]Hunneshagen, 192.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Focus on the Family, "The 40 Developmental Assets, *Parent Compass* (www.parentingcompass.com/WhatAre.asp).

[75]T. S. Gibson, "Congregational Connectivity: The Key to Keeping Youth in the Church," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 31/1 (2004): 10.

[76]Ibid., 9.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

who obey God's command to love others as themselves results in their ministering to the needs of those others.

All the models that deal with discipling others involve disciples in one way or another equipping others through teaching, nurturing, or example to grow in spiritual maturity as they in turn begin to disciple still others.

Growing Disciples in Community Model
Conceptual Framework

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">PERSONAL PROCESSES OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
The processes through which an individual Christian grows in spiritual maturity and fruit-bearing (John 15:5-8).</td></tr>
<tr><td>UNDERSTANDING
Learning the truth of God's relationship with humanity through Jesus Christ, the Word (John 8:31; Matt 4:4).</td><td>MINISTERING
Participating in God's mission of revelation, reconciliation, and restoration (Matt 25:40; 28:19, 20).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">CONNECTING
"Loving God completely, ourselves correctly, and others compassionately" (Boa, 25ff.; Matt 22:37-38; John 13:35).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">"All Christians are disciples and are called to participate in the discipleship process,

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both by receiving instruction and living out their faith for others to see and imitate"
(Samra, 234).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">EQUIPPING
Intentionally walking "alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ" (Ogden, 129; Deut 6:4-9; Eph 4:15-16).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">COMMUNITY PROCESS OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLING
The "discipleship living" within the "body of Christ" (local church, Christian home, Christian friends, Christian teachers) that impacts others' attitudes toward and engagement in the individual processes of maturing as a disciple.</td></tr>
</table>

Personal Processes of Discipleship

Connecting With God and Others

Theological Base

The dynamic process of being a disciple of Christ is rooted in connections. Jesus said: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Matt 22:37-38).

When Jesus says we are to love God with all our hearts, he is quoting from the *Shema* (Deut 6:4-9), words that observant Jews probably recite several times a day. "But when Jesus goes on to say that we are to love others, he tampers with the sacred creed of his contemporaries. He adds to the *Shema* by quoting Leviticus 19:18, and in so doing creates a new creed for his followers."[79] If everything depends on these two commandments, then they could be said to be the foundation of everything it means to be a Christian—everything it means to follow and be a disciple of Christ. Being a disciple of Christ depends on the process of connecting—relating intimately with God and developing positive relationships with others. Christ has called us to be his friends (John 15:15).

Implied in "relating intimately with God" is an increasing understanding of and acceptance of oneself. A religious educator at the turn of the twentieth century stated that "the work of God needs men and women who have learned of Christ. The moment God's workmen see Him as He is, that moment they will see themselves as they are, and will ask Him to make them what they ought to be."[80]

From a growing connection with God and an honest and growing understanding of themselves, disciples will be able to grow in ability to connect with brother and sister disciples (John 1:12; Rom 8:16). Jesus is quoted in the book of John as saying, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Paul spelled out what that would look like in Rom 12:10: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor," and in Rom 12:16: "Be of the same mind toward one another."

L. G. Jones notes: "We long for holy friendships that shape and deepen our discipleship in authentic ways, so that we become the people God calls us to be."[81] He continues by stating:

> My own sense of holy friendships arises out of reflection on the Wesleyan class meetings of the 18th century. These gatherings nurtured community because of their formative and transformative power and because the ways in which they addressed people's yearnings created a significant movement

[79]S. McKnight, "What is the Focus of Spiritual Life? Jesus Creed," *Christian Century*, 7 September 2004, 23.

[80]E. White, *Manuscript Release* 18 (Silver Spring, MD: White Estate), 340.

[81]Jones, 31.

of faithful living. Holy friends are those people who challenge the sins we have come to love—they know us well enough to see the sins that mark our lives.[82]

Crabb says that "releasing the power of God through our lives into the hearts and souls of others requires that we both *understand* and *enter into* a kind of relating that only the gospel makes possible, a kind of relating that I call *connecting*."[83]

J. H. Hellerman, in *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community*, places the horizontal aspect of connecting—developing positive relationships with others—squarely in the center of what being a growing disciple in community is all about.

> Apart from Christ, I have no solid basis on which to build healthy relationships with my fellow human beings. But as a child in God's family I belong to a group where relational integrity and wholeness are to be the norm. Salvation thus has tremendous sociological as well as theological ramifications.[84]

Social-Science Base

Correlations have been discovered that promote connection with God and connection with oneself. "Correlational analysis revealed a relationship between identity status and frequency of praying" in adolescents.[85] Literature on mental health and adolescent religiosity and spirituality shows that higher levels of religiosity and spirituality were associated with better mental health,[86] indicating that connection with God and/or others who claim to follow him resulted in a better integrated sense of self as well.

In 2003, the Commission on Children at Risk released a report to the nation called *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*. This commission is a "group of 33 children's doctors, research scientists, and mental health and youth service professionals."[87] After investigating "empirically the social, moral, and spiritual foundations of child well-being," the Commission identified a crisis made up of the "deteriorating mental and behavioral health of U.S. children," and "how we as a society are thinking about this deterioration." They concluded that "in large measure

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[82]Ibid.

[83]Crabb, *Connecting*, 5.

[84]J. H. Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2009), 126.

[85]J. P. McKinney and K. G. McKinney, "Prayer in the Lives of Late Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescence* 22/2: 279.

[86]Y. J. Wong, L. Rew, and K. D. Slaikeu, "A Systematic Review of Recent Research on Adolescent Religiosity/Spirituality and Mental Health, *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 27 (2006): 161-183.

[87]Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities* (New York: Institute for Family Values, 2003), 5.

what's causing this crisis . . . is a lack of connectedness, . . . close connections to other people, and deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning."[88] In their report, they concluded that "what can help most to solve the crisis are *authoritative communities.*"[89]

"Authoritative community" has become a "new public policy and social science term, developed for the first time" in the commission's report. The commission's short definition of the term is "groups that live out the types of connectedness that our children increasingly lack. They are groups of people who are committed to one another over time and who model and pass on at least part of what it means to be a good person and live a good life."[90]

"The majority of research suggests that the term [spirituality] deals with connections and relations to ourselves, others, and the world around us. It refers to both a sense of interiority or an inner reality and a sense of being connected beyond one's own self, connected to *something* 'greater.'"[91]

<center>Understanding God Through His Word</center>

Theological Base

While all the law and the prophets can be said to depend upon the two great commandments (Matt 22:40)—love to God and to one's neighbor—a deepening understanding of the truth of God's relationship with humanity through Jesus Christ, the Word deepens and enriches discipleship both in its vertical connections (with God) and horizontal connections (with others). "Disciples are urged both to understand Jesus' words and to apply them without compromise (Matt 7:24-27)."[92]

Jesus said to those who believed him: "If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31). Later in the book of John, he is recorded as saying, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). What God has revealed in both the living and the written Word is a vital part of being connected with and following Jesus as his disciple. To Satan, in the wilderness of temptation, Jesus quoted Deut 8:3, saying: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4).

The written Word explains what meditating on and understanding this Word will do for those involved in the processes of Christian discipleship. Paul states to the Corinthians that "all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of

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[88]Ibid.

[89]Ibid., 6.

[90]Ibid.

[91]David Watson, cited in S. l. Bosacki, "Spirituality and Self in Preadolescents: Implications for a Connected Curriculum," *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education* 23 (2002): 56.

[92]Hertig, 347.

the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His *very own* image in ever increasing splendor *and* from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18, AMP, emphasis original).

The Amplified version of 2 Cor 3:18 points out that the dynamic of spiritual formation (being transfigured) is occurring as disciples of Jesus behold him in his Word. If we accept the concept of spiritual change through "beholding" Christ through His Word, then we should be able to expect increased spirituality with increased understanding of the truth of God's relationship with humanity through Jesus Christ, the Word.

A growth in understanding as operationalized in the Growing Disciples in Community model is an integral part of discipleship. Writing about "The Challenge of Being Jesus' Disciple Today," O. E. Alana states that being a Christian disciple in today's context "requires each person to spare time each day for *Bible* reading, reflection and praying with the Scriptures which will lead to a life-style based on Christ's teaching. This is what discipleship is all about: *focusing on Christ and letting His spirit transform our lives.*"[93] "Gerhard Barth lists understanding as the essence of being a disciple. *Suniemi* (to understand) occurs frequently in Matthew (e.g. 16:12; 17:13) and is seen as an essential prerequisite for the words of God to be fruitful (13:1-23, 51)."[94]

Social Science Base

The behavioral sciences do not provide much in the way of empirical studies regarding the effects of understanding as operationalized in this study—learning the truth of God's relationship with humanity through Jesus Christ, the Word. P. L. Benson, E. C. Roehlkepartain, and S. P. Rude state that

> through the years, many scholars have documented the relative lack of attention to issues of religion and spirituality in the social sciences in general . . . and, more specifically, in the study of adolescence . . . and childhood. Although pioneers in psychology . . . considered religiousness and spirituality to be integral to the field of psychology, the study was marginalized through much of the 20th century.[95]

The National Study of Youth and Religion was conducted from 2001 through 2005, involving both a nationwide random phone survey of parents and teens and face-to-face in-depth interviews with selected adolescents. The interviewers "found very few teens from any religious background who are able to articulate well their religious beliefs and explain how those beliefs connect to the rest of their lives."[96]

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[93]O. E. Alana, "The Challenge of Being Jesus' Disciple Today," *African Ecclesial Review* 42 (2000): 114.

[94]S. W. Collinson, "Making Disciples and the Christian Faith," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29/3 (2005): 51.

[95]P. L. Benson, E. C. Roehlkepartain, and S. P. Rude, "Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence: Toward a Field of Inquiry," *Applied Developmental Science* 7(2003): 206.

[96]C. Smith and M. L. Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of*

In *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, D. Willard states that "as a pastor, teacher, and counselor" he has "repeatedly seen the transformation of inner and outer life" that he attributes to "memorization and meditation upon Scripture."[97] He quotes David Watson's comment during his struggle with cancer:

> As I spent time chewing over the endless assurances and promises to be found in the Bible, so my faith in the living God grew stronger and held me safe in his hands. God's word to us . . . spoken by his Spirit through the Bible, is the very ingredient that feeds our faith. If we feed our souls regularly on God's word, several times each day, we should become robust spiritually just as we feed on ordinary food several times each day, and become robust physically. Nothing is more important than hearing and obeying the word of God.[98]

Ministering to Others

Theological Base

Disciples of Christ involve themselves in God's mission of revelation (Matt 10:24-27; Rom 1:16-17)*,* reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19)*,* and restoration (Job 33:26; Ps 80:7, 30; Isa 58:8, AMP; Luke 9:11, AMP; Acts 3:21). They obey Christ's injunction to go, make disciples, and teach them everything he had commanded (Matt 28:18, 20)—how to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and their neighbors as themselves (Matt 22:37, 38). They reveal Christ in their lives and help reconcile others to a restoring relationship with him for themselves, actively obeying the second great commandment— to love their neighbors as themselves (Matt 22:37, 38).

According to Hellerman, the biblical portrayal of reconciliation offers a "hope-giving promise of lasting and meaningful relationships."[99] He adds that "we can define reconciliation as the restoration of a right relationship with Father God and the restoration of right relationships with our fellow human beings who, through conversion to Christ, become our brothers and sisters in faith."[100]

Hertig says:

> If we claim to love our neighbor, then we cannot possibly avoid sharing the good news of salvation with our neighbor, but love of our neighbor does not stop there. Stott clarifies the full scope of mission, pointing out that our neighbor "is neither a bodyless soul" that we should love only our neighbor's soul, "nor a soulless body that we should care for its welfare alone, nor even a body-soul isolated from society.[101]

American Teenagers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 262.

[97]D. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), 151.

[98]Ibid., 176-177.

[99]Hellerman, 138.

[100]Ibid.

[101]Hertig, 348.

He continues: "The great commission coupled with the implicit great commandment may be summed up as 'love in action.' This means that the mission of God must be applicable to the whole person, the whole society, and the whole world."[102] Thus, Jacob notes, "Christian mission is the response of Christians to the presence of God, and their participation in God's action to liberate all people."[103]

Hellerman adds that

> No biblical image of the atonement has greater potential to resonate with our relationally broken culture than the good news that we can be reconciled to God and to our fellow human beings through the death of Jesus on the cross. But the new gospel of reconciliation must take on incarnate form.[104]

Social Science Base

Research on adolescents does not indicate how ministering to or helping others affects their spirituality as much as it focuses the other way around. Research shows that, compared to students not reporting much religious activity, those considered religious were more involved in community service. "Students who believe that religion is important in their lives were almost three times more likely to participate in service than those who do not believe that religion is important."[105]

The same researchers add that

> for many, caring values, attitudes, and behaviors were not independent of their spirituality; rather, all aspects of their morality were governed by their religious beliefs and experience, which informed their goals of service and care and which were closely related to their identity.[106]

Another way of reporting this effect of religiosity and faith on ministering is to say that "students with strong religious beliefs or faith traditions engaged more readily in community service because they perceived service as the morally right thing to do."[107]

In the National Survey of Youth and Religion, it was found that more self-reportedly religious teens were much more likely to do noncompulsory volunteer work or community service. The "devoted" were more likely to be involved than the "disengaged." Reportedly the "most religious" were significantly more likely "to engage in the kinds of volunteer and service

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[102]Ibid., 349.

[103]Jacob, 102.

[104]Hellerman, 138.

[105]J. L. Furrow, P. E. King, and K. White, "Religion and Positive Youth Development: Identity, Meaning, and Prosocial Concerns," *Applied Developmental Science* 8 (2004): 19.

[106]Ibid.

[107]S. R. Jones and K. E. Hill, "Understanding Patterns of Commitment: Student Motivation for Community Service Involvement," *Journal of Higher Education* 74 (2003): 533.

activities that bring them into contact with racial, economic, and religious differences."[108] Although all religiosity is not discipleship, this study equates religiosity with intent to be a disciple of Christ. The self-reported religiosity in the studies cited was not being used as a perjorative construct as it is in some studies. Collinson states about growing discipleship that

> the actual learning process itself involves participants going out from the community to be involved in service and mission to the world. It does not focus on personal growth for its own achievement but in looking outward and serving others finds personal growth as a by-product.[109]

The individual processes of discipleship discussed above are connecting with and growing in relationships with God and with others, which leads to a deepening understanding of a relationship with him through the revelation of his Word, and the resultant more selfless, growing connection with others as we obey God's command to love others as ourselves results in our ministering to their needs. In one way or another, these broad processes umbrella the various models of discipleship already discussed.

Collinson states that those who respond to God's call to come into a close personal relationship of learning and following him "begin the lifelong task of knowing him personally, learning his will for their lives as revealed through the Scriptures and serving him through the use of their ministry gifts."[110]

One ministry to which all disciples are called is discipling others. This idea is implicit in most of the discipleship models already discussed.

Community Process of Discipling

Equipping One Another

Theological Basis

For the purpose of this discussion of the Growing Disciples in Community model, the process of discipling others is being called *equipping*, and being defined as intentionally walking "alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ."[111] This construct of discipling is reflective of Eph 4:15-16:

> but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

The construct is also reflective of Deut 6:4-9:

> Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all

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[108]Smith and Denton, 230.

[109]Collinson, "Making Disciples and the Christian Faith," 241.

[110]Ibid., 244.

[111]Ogden, 129.

your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

To "parents and those who work with them in relation to spiritual formation," C. E. Nelson states the following:

Notice that the Shema is addressed to individuals who belonged to a distinctive community. The characteristics that defined Israel were its understanding of God, its worship, and a way for individuals to live according to laws and teachings from God's representatives. Although we Christians live in a different era that seems more complex than ancient Israel's, the situation is about the same. The church, as our community of people with similar beliefs about God, is our Israel. . . . Through adults in the congregation, especially parents, the Christian faith is communicated to children first in their families and later in . . . church-related activities.[112]

The *Shema*, then, is addressed to adult disciples—not only parents—in a specific religious community who are being commanded to have God in their own hearts and then to sit, walk, lie down, and rise up always in a frame of mind of intentionally walking "alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ."[113]

"The Shema is both the content and the method of religious education," states Nelson.[114] As operationalized in this paper, religious education is the same as "teaching them to observe all things"—part of the discipling that was commissioned in Matt 28:20.

Discipling

Previously Collinson's meticulously crafted definition of discipling was presented in full. In it, she describes the intentional relationship, over time, through which one believer passes on knowledge and skill in spiritual matters to another while also receiving the same from someone else.[115]

Collinson gives the aim of discipling as "the attainment of maturity and development of the ability to become a teacher or discipler of others."[116] Of Samra's three questions, the third one, "What is involved in prompting discipleship?" is the one that is directly about discipling—called for the purpose of this model, equipping.

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[112]C. E. Nelson, "Spiritual Formation: A Family Matter," *Family Ministry* 20/3 (2006): 15.

[113]Ogden, 129.

[114]Nelson, "Spiritual Formation," 17.

[115]Collinson, *Making Disciples*, 64.

[116]Ibid., 160.

Hull points out that Jesus provided on-the-job training,[117] starting the "do it" and then "teach it" model (see Matt 10:1-42 and Luke 10:1-24). "In the Gospels becoming like Christ was accomplished by physically going where He went, seeing what He did, hearing what He said."[118] In Acts and the Epistles, however, discipleship was not accomplished by time spent in Jesus' physical presence.

Imitation

In the place of the word *discipleship*, the idea of imitation came to the forefront. It was a concept with which the world was well acquainted. Samra explains its biblical use as follows:

> Several words express this idea: . . . "to use as a model; imitate, emulate, follow," 2 Thess 3:7-9; Heb 13:7; 3 John 11 . . . "one who imitates someone else; does what that person does," 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Eph 5:1; 1 Thess 1:6; 2:14; Heb 6:12 . . . and . . . "one who joins with others in following an example," Phil 3:17. . . . In other passages (e.g., 1 Cor 7:7-11; Gal 4:12-20; Phil 4:9; James 5:10-11) these terms are not used, but the concept of doing what another did is present. . . . Two important verses combine these ideas: "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord" (1 Thess 1:6), and "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).[119]

Samra asserts that imitation is similar to discipleship in that it is a process of lifestyle transference to the next generation. It can happen through learning from those not physically present, like the examples from Scripture, or it can happen through incarnation, as less mature disciples are discipled by and choose to imitate more mature disciples "who are incarnating Christ's character."[120] In the words of Collinson, then, "the attainment of maturity is the aim of this lifestyle transference through imitation."[121] As Samra would say, "all Christians are disciples and are called to participate in the discipleship process, both by receiving instruction and by living out their faith for others to see and imitate."[122]

Gorman states that

> equipping by its very nature is not just teaching skills but holistically growing people up in Christ's way of living and loving so that the whole body ends up increasing in maturity in him. . . . Thus kingdom people who are walking in the truth naturally put into practice Spirit-directed skills of supporting, caring for, and building up others in the body relationship.[123]

[117]Hull, 177.

[118]Samra, 223.

[119]Ibid., 223-224.

[120]Ibid., 224.

[121]Collinson, "Making Disciples and the Christian Faith," 160.

[122]Samra, 234.

[123]Gorman, 17.

Collinson says: "Thus the faith community itself became the vehicles for discipling, under the Lordship of the ascended Christ. . . . And members of the discipling community became both teacher and taught, disciple-maker and disciple."[124]

"Discipleship/imitation seems to take place on a large scale (all the followers of Christ or all believers in a particular church) and at the same time it takes place on a more focused scale with a select few."[125] In the Growing Disciples in Community model, equipping, which could also be termed discipling or imitation, takes place by the "select few" of family members and friends, but it also takes place "on a large scale (all the followers of Christ or all believers in a particular church)."[126] Those being equipped or discipled imitate those "perceived to be" more mature disciples in the body in whatever way they choose to live "out their faith for others to see and imitate."[127]

Social Science Base

Hidden Curriculum

The lived-out "faith for others to see and imitate" is often a "hidden curriculum" that goes counter to the planned discipling curriculum. It is for this reason that in the *Shema* (Deut 6:4-9) the adults were told to have the commands of God "on their hearts" before they were told to "teach them diligently" to their children. Nelson (2008) states that

> belonging to a congregation forms one's spiritual life because belonging influences a person to be like the group. Thus, the regular interaction of church members is a powerful form of education because it influences the perspective by which members interpret the Christian faith.[128]

This includes members of all ages. For instance,

> if congregations understood that the church is exactly the place teenagers need to voice their doubts and still be accepted, then congregations would provide the kind of study and practice of Christian living that teenagers need to upgrade their image of God to adult status.[129]

L. Kohlberg, a Harvard professor who specialized in research on moral education and reasoning, stated that "the phrase [hidden curriculum] indicates that children are learning much in school that is not formal curriculum, and the phrase also asks whether such learning is truly educative."[130] Martin

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[124]Collinson, "Making Disciples and the Christian Faith," 110.

[125]Samra, 226.

[126]Ibid., 234.

[127]Ibid.

[128]Nelson, 97.

[129]Ibid., 65.

[130]L. Kohlberg, "The Moral Atmosphere of the Schools," in *The Unstudied Curriculum: Its Impact on Children*, ed. N. V. Overly (Washington, DC: Association for

elaborates on the idea of hidden curriculum by pointing out that "it is not just formal educational settings which have hidden curricula. Any setting can have one and most do."[131] When she asserts that hidden curricula exist in nonschool settings, she considers it not only legitimate but also "theoretically important that we recognize explicitly that hidden curricula can be found anywhere learning states are found."[132]

In light of Martin's elaboration, a corollary statement to Kohlberg's might be that the phrase *hidden curriculum* indicates that younger and/or less mature disciples are learning much at home, school, and church that is not discipleship or intentional religious education curriculum, and the phrase also asks whether such learning is helping them grow in spiritual maturity and likeness to Christ. Collinson remarks that "desirable attitudes and values are influenced more by the hidden curriculum than by intentional teaching."[133]

In testing the Growing Disciples in Community model, indicators of equipping are drawn from the hidden-discipling curriculum of personal faith and relational attitudes of family, friends, teachers, and fellow church members rather than from any formal or nonformal discipleship curriculum.

Modeling, Mentors, and Authoritative
Community

In "Spiritual Modeling: A Key to Spiritual and Religious Growth?" D. Oman and C. E. Thoresen note that "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling."[134] Therefore, they believe it would be potentially powerful to "give people the tools to establish effective relationships with individually appropriate spiritual models whose lives facilitate the observational learning of important spiritual skills,"[135] which they have termed observational spiritual learning.

The Commission on Children at Risk reported that young people were in a crisis in the United States because of lack of connectedness with

> authoritative communities," defined as "groups that live out the types of connectedness that our children increasingly lack. They are groups of people who are committed to one another over time and who model and pass on at least part of what it means to be a good person and live a good life.[136]

The Commission did not necessarily equate "authoritative communities" with the communities of disciples one would hope would be peopling

Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1970), 105.

[131]Martin, 134.

[132]Ibid.

[133]Collinson, "Making Disciples and the Christian Faith," 189.

[134]D. Oman and C. E. Thoresen, "Spiritual Modeling: A Key to Spiritual and Religious Growth? *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 13 (2003): 149.

[135]Ibid., 158.

[136]Commission on Children at Risk, 6.

Christian churches. However, qualitative research done by D. Nuesch-Olver on college freshmen at a Christian university "underscored the power of mentoring and accountability in their faith journey. To a person, they used language that clearly illustrated their conviction that relationships were of higher importance in the shaping of their faith than programming."[137] "All the students who wrote about practicing steady spiritual disciplines of personal prayer and scripture reading, pointed to a love relationship with Christ modeled by their mentors."[138]

Role Models and Social Capital

C. Smith, researcher in the National Study of Youth and Religion, considered the "existing theoretical explanations for . . . religious effects" in the lives of young people disjointed and fragmented. He attempted "to formulate a more systematic, integrated, and coherent account of religion's constructive influence in the lives of American youth."[139] He suggests the following:

> Religion may exert positive, constructive influences in the lives of American youth through nine distinct but connected and potentially mutually reinforcing factors. These nine distinct factors cluster as groups of three beneath three larger conceptual dimensions of social influence. These three larger dimensions are (1) moral order, (2) learned competencies, and (3) social and organizational ties. The nine specific factors that exert the religious influences are: (1) moral directives, (2) spiritual experiences, (3) role models, (4) community and leadership skills, (5) coping skills, (6) cultural capital, (7) social capital, (8) network closure, and (9) extra-community links.[140]

Factors from Smith's theory that were used to undergird the Growing Disciples in Community model of discipling adolescents are the moral-order factor of "role models" and the social-and-organizational-ties factor of "social capital." By the moral-order dimension, Smith is suggesting the idea of "substantive cultural traditions grounded upon and promoting particular normative ideas of what is good and bad, right and wrong, higher and lower, worthy and unworthy, just and unjust, and so on, which orient human consciousness and motivate human action."[141] By the social and organizational ties dimension of religious influences, Smith is referring to "structures of relations that affect the opportunities and constraints that young people face, which profoundly affect outcomes in their lives."[142]

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[137]D. Nuesch-Olver, "Don't Make Jesus Cry: A Qualitative Analysis of Spiritual Autobiographies of Older Teenagers," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 4/1 (2005): 101.

[138]Ibid.

[139]C. Smith, "Theorizing Religious Effects among American Adolescents," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42 (2003): 17.

[140]Ibid., 19.

[141]Ibid., 20.

[142]Ibid., 25.

About his factor of "role models" under the dimension of "moral order," Smith states:

> American religions can provide youth with adult and peer-group role models, providing examples of life practices shaped by religious moral orders that constructively influence the lives of youth, and offering positive relationships that youth may be invested in preserving through their own normatively approved living. [143]

About his factor of "social capital" under the dimension of "social and organizational ties," Smith states:

> American religion is one of the few, major American social institutions that is not rigidly age stratified and emphasizes personal interactions over time, thus providing youth with personal access to other adult members in their religious communities, affording cross-generational network ties with the potential to provide extra-familial, trusting relationships of care and accountability, and linking youth to wider sources of helpful information, resources, and opportunities.[144]

It is this role-modeling and intergenerational social capital that can supply the need Samra sees for imitation,[145] that Nelson sees for an upgrade of our young people's image of God,[146] and that Oman and Thoresen see for observational spiritual learning.[147] Even though Smith talks about "extra-familial, trusting relationships of care and accountability" as coming from the religious community other than parents, the role-modeling and intergenerational social capital work across the lines of social impact and include everyone in a young person's life who claims to be a Christian or a disciple of Christ.[148] That includes Christian families, peers, faculty and staff in institutions of formal Christian education, as well as everyone involved in the local church community—whether they feel they are directly connected to the young person or not. Everyone is role-modeling and providing social capital—positively or negatively.

Family and Friends—The First Village

In the *Review of Religious Research*, it was pointed out that it "indeed 'takes a village' to socialize a child religiously,"[149] but that the family is the first village. Reviewing literature of the late 1980s, Boyatzis and Janicki summarized that

[143]Ibid., 22.

[144]Ibid., 25.

[145]Samra.

[146]Nelson.

[147]Oman and Thoresen.

[148]Smith.

[149]C. J. Boyatzis and D. L. Janicki, "Parent-child Communication about Religion:

parents establish "religious capital" for their children upon which children's religious beliefs and attitudes may grow (Iannaccone, 1990), and parents' practices and beliefs constitute a "personal religious community" (Cornwall, 1987) that conveys a "religious salience" (Hoge & Zulueta, 1985) and provides "cognitive anchors" (Ozark, 1989) for children's development.[150]

W. Black did quantitative and qualitative research to determine "future church attendance of youth beyond high school."[151] He created a Lasting Faith Scale. While church attendance is not the same thing as discipleship, it is a highly correlated product of active discipleship. Black reported that

> The significant findings from the surveys and the themes from the interviews were compared and analyzed and the resulting framework indicated four domains of influence on continued faithfulness in church attendance following high school graduation. These four domains were:
>
> • Discipleship and spiritual depth
> • Family influences
> • Mentoring and intergenerational influences
> • Relationships.[152]

In their own research, Boyatzis and Janicki attempted "to analyze the frequency, structure, and content of parent-child communication about religion."[153] They hoped that the information they gathered would "help build theories about religious socialization."[154] They were suggesting a bidirectional rather than a unidirectional style of communication that would be "akin to an authoritative parenting milieu in which parents value their children's views."[155] They found that "the most common contexts for religious conversations were prayer, bed time, and meals."[156] Studying children between the ages of 3 and 12, they found that survey responses in which parents reported that they talked with their children nearly every day were not corroborated by diaries that were kept of the actual conversations. They also found that the children initiated the conversations equally with parents and that parents tended to give answers rather than to help the children explore their own thinking and to share their own thinking process on the topic.[157]

Survey and Diary Data on Unilateral Transmission and Bi-directional Reciprocity Styles," *Review of Religious Research* 44 (2003): 252.

[150]Ibid.

[151]W. Black, "The Search for Lasting Faith: Development of a Scale to Predict Continued Faithfulness in Church Attendance Following High School Graduation," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 6/2 (2008): 55.

[152]Ibid.

[153]Boyatzis and Janicki, 253.

[154]Ibid., 253.

[155]Ibid., 254.

[156]Ibid., 258.

[157]Ibid., 252.

Building on previous research about parent-child religious conversations, D. C. Dollahite and J. Y. Thatcher built a conceptual model that summarized the "variations in conversational processes" that they found in the qualitative research.[158] As was suggested with the younger children studied by Boyatzis and Janicki,[159] Dollahite and Thatcher found that when "parent-adolescent religious conversations" were youth-centered, the experience was more positive for both the parents and the adolescents.[160]

Whatever the direction of the conversations about religion, M. L. Gunnoe and K. A. Moore reported the following from their longitudinal study on youth aged 17 to 22:

> Religiosity during young adulthood is best predicted by the presence of religious role models during childhood and adolescence. Religious youth tended to have religious friends during high school and religious mothers. . . . In keeping with social learning theorists' tenets that learners are more likely to imitate role models they positively regard, highly supportive religious mothers were particularly likely to foster religiosity in their children.[161]

Smith and Denton state that "a lot of research in the sociology of religion suggests that the most important social influence in shaping young people's religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents."[162] They concluded: "In sum, therefore, we think that the best general rule of thumb that parents might use to reckon their children's most likely religious outcomes is this: 'We'll get what we are.'"[163]

Church and Church School—
The Rest of the Village

If the "first village" is the family in religious socialization of the young, the rest of the village is the church and all those associated with it. Goodliff says that in the postmodern society "family is too fragile an institution to bear the burden of responsibility we placed upon it."[164] Collinson continues to quote and to comment on Goodliff regarding the role of the church in the face of family breakdown in society:

[158]D. C. Dolahite and J. Y. Thatcher, "Talking about Religion: How Highly Religious Youth and Parents Discuss Their Faith," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23 (2008): 611-641.

[159]Boyatizis and Janicki.

[160]Dollahite and Thatcher, 611.

[161]M. L. Gunnoe and K. A. Moore, "Predictors of Religiosity Among Youth Aged 17-22: A Longitudinal Study of the National Survey of Children," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2002): 620.

[162]Smith and Denton, 56.

[163]Ibid., 57; see also C. D. Bader and S. A. Desmond, "Do As I Say and As I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors Upon Religious Transmission," *Sociology of Religion* 67/3 (2004): 313-329.

[164]Goodliff, as cited in Collinson, "Making Disciples and the Christian Faith," 194.

"The church, not the family, is the institution that primarily conveys God's grace and is the community to which we owe our prime allegiance." His belief strongly supports our contention that the household of faith, the discipling community, is ideally suited to the task of nurturing the spiritual development of its members no matter what the nature of their home or family environment. As the faith community with its multiplicity of gifts carries out the mission of Christ to the world, it can provide an effective environment in which children and adults are nurtured to grow and develop to the full extent of their potential.[165]

In 2000, faculty and students in the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary reviewed "the empirical literature regarding mentoring relationships with adolescents. . . . The sparse literature addressing mentor influences on adolescent religious beliefs" paid special attention to "the manner in which mentoring supports faith development."[166]

"Anecdotal reports . . . suggest that mentoring is the essential element in youth discipleship."[167] The research that the team reviewed broadly defined "mentoring as the establishment of a personal relationship between a non-parental adult and an adolescent."[168] Even though the nature and content of the various relationships they studied varied, "their purpose is to encourage, support, and motivate young people."[169] They go on to say that "the Christian tradition of discipleship might be considered a subcategory of mentoring, where the focus of discipleship is on nurturing a young person's faith within the context of daily experience."[170] They consider there to be a "great deal of conceptual overlap between mentoring and the Christian tradition of discipleship. Nevertheless, there is little empirical data evaluating the impact of mentoring or discipleship on adolescent faith development."[171]

D. Lambert attempted a study that would provide direction for those interested in scholarly research in the area of ministry to youth. In order to try to ascertain the most pressing needs for research, he used a "consensus-building strategy," taking information and opinions from experts in the field and trying to come to a sense of agreement on important topics. He also found that the faith development of youth was rated highly by experts and practitioners as an area needing research. The second area receiving high support was the area of relationships.[172]

[165]Ibid.

[166]W. T. Aoki, P. A. Engert, A. A. Turk, R. Wilson, J. Chen, and E. Latu, "Mentoring and the Discipleship of Adolescents: Research and Applications to the Church," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 19/4 (2000): 377.

[167]Ibid., 378.

[168]Ibid.

[169]Ibid.

[170]Ibid.

[171]Ibid.

[172]D. Lambert, "Determining Research Needs in North American Christian Youth Ministry: A Delphi Study," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 3/1 (2004): 79-80.

In their recommendations to the church, Aoki et al. suggested that "opportunities for 'hanging out' and informal interaction should be integrated into the program so that youth can see adults as approachable and available just to talk. Although contemporary culture often labels 'just talking' as non-productive, it is essential to building relationships."[173] In becoming involved in discipling a young person, "an appropriate role for the mentor in this situation is to come alongside the adolescent, modeling Christian virtues and beliefs, without pushing the adolescent to champion the cause of the church."[174]

Aoki et al. conclude with the following:

> Although the church should not lose sight of its directive to make disciples of all nations, neither can it neglect the important task of nurturing its own adolescents. . . . The nuclear family remains the most fertile ground for nurturing our young. Nevertheless, the church cannot leave this important task exclusively to parents—who often struggle themselves to balance work and family. . . . The health of our youth depends upon the strengths of an entire community.[175]

"Church" as an "entire community" does not mean the church with the most well-developed youth ministry. Gibson claims that "youth ministries must be willing to sacrifice numbers before sacrificing scriptural teaching that calls for a united community of believers working together for the same cause—glorifying the name of Jesus throughout the world."[176]

Gibson goes on to predict that a sense of connectedness in community may, in fact, keep young people from exiting the church:

> When teenagers recognize the essential nature of the church in their spiritiual growth, come to see their importance to the church, and realize the relevance of the church in society, . . . a likelihood exists that they will not exit the church at the point of late adolescence. . . . Instead, because they experienced connectivity within their congregations during the spiritually pivotal stage of adolescence, students will remain active in the church even upon graduating high school.[177]

Conclusion

This review has attempted to find, in both Scripture and current literature, answers for the questions What is discipleship? How is discipleship accomplished? and What is involved in prompting discipleship? Looking at various definitions, aims, purposes, and models, it appears that discipleship and discipling are intrinsically related.

The Growing Disciples in Community model involves processes that are based in Scripture, supported by the social sciences, and that umbrella the elements found in a wide sampling of discipleship/discipling models.

[173]Aoki et al., 382.

[174]Ibid.

[175]Ibid., 383.

[176]Gibson, 12.

[177]Ibid., 12-13.

Connecting with God and others is based on the two great commandments of Matt 22. The benefits of connecting are spelled out in much of the literature on spirituality and the need for community.

Understanding God through his Word is based on Matt 7:24-27 and John 8:31 and is the method for transformation based on 2 Cor 3:18. Little literature in the social sciences is at all related to this process of discipleship.

Ministering to others is firmly based on innumerable passages of Scripture related to God's missions of revelation (Matt 10:24-27), of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19), and of restoration (Acts 3:12) and our involvement with him in fulfilling them on this earth. Social science research points out the tendency of young people involved with religion to be more involved in altruistic and humanitarian activities, which are ways in which they minister and participate in God's mission.

Equipping one another is rooted in Eph 4:15, 16 and Deut 6:4-9. Discipling is the term that correlates well with this construct. Other ideas that parallel and enrich, or in other ways are related to it, are *imitation*, *hidden curriculum, modeling, mentoring, authoritative community,* and *role models* and *social capital*. All Christians—from the family, friends, church school, or church congregation—are, either actively or passively, discipling and equipping the adolescents they come in contact with as those adolescents choose to be disciples of Christ or choose not to be.