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Transformative Journeys: An 8-Month Engagement of Integrated Discipleship
Through Service Learning

By

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Abstract

Church leaders continue to look for initiatives that will help them lead their congregants to become disciples of Jesus. They are often pressured to do more bible study, increase prayer, or help others serve more in the church or their community. Is discipleship these unique activities or is it better to view it as an integration of them; to see that deep transformation will occur only as these various disciplines or activities encounter each other?

This project looked at the impact of an 8-month integrated discipleship initiative following the pedagogical framework of service learning. It used the integration of personal and group reflection, scriptural reflection, classroom learning about a specific concern to society's marginalized and hands-on serving in the area of concern. The five aspects were cycled through on a monthly basis over the 8 months.

The initiative demonstrated significant formational impact including an understanding of personal gifting, an increased appreciation for the value of scripture and the realization that unresolved tensions are part of formation. Using narrative research, it allowed participants the opportunity to express in their own words what their transformation looked like. It indicated that when various activities intersect each other, there is an increased formational effect.

In the end, seven conclusions were articulated with implications for the local church.

Acknowledgements

I am passionate about helping Christians become disciples; to learn the joy of denying themselves, taking up their cross daily and following Jesus. As a pastor in a large church, how can we do this effectively? That has been my quest through this project.

I am forever grateful to my friend and mentor Luciano Del Monte. When I was only 19 years old in my second year of university, he decided that he would walk with me on the road of discipleship. That 3 year journey shaped me in more ways than I ever imagined at the time. But Luch always told me that I had a great foundation from my childhood that he was simply able to mold. For this foundation I am grateful to my parents, John and Viola, who really did seek to serve God and continue to do to this day. They were never content with past knowledge from Sunday school; they kept reading, listening and learning to know Christ more. They modeled Paul's words, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize."

My church, North Park in London, Ontario, Canada, continues to allow me to experiment with ideas and initiatives that will help its members grow. They do not place on me the restrictions that I see in many churches. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Pastors continually look to understand how to practically help their congregants become devoted disciples of Jesus. They often encourage them to read the bible more, pray more and perhaps serve more. In all of this they may still wonder if what they are doing is effective. The initiative undertaken in this project, Engaging Journeys, brought together several aspects of discipleship. The desire was to determine the transformational impact that integrating these disciplines had on the participants.

Ministry Context

North Park Community Church is a non-denominational church located in London, Ontario. It was started in the mid-1960's by 12 families looking to reach out to the North East part of the city. It has grown to a current attendance of 2,000+ during 5 weekend services with a pastoral staff of 13 plus support staff. A full range of programs are offered for everyone from infants to seniors. North Park also has an offsite ministry centre 5 km southwest of the church that works with low income Canadians. This area also includes a significant population of refugees and immigrants. In addition, North Park has an active global missions focus with approximately 15% of its \$2.5 million budget dedicated to these efforts. Church leadership takes place through Elders (Oversight), Pastoral Staff (Ministry Leadership) and Deacons (Care, Missions, Administration).

In 2005-2006, staff and other leadership began having a sense that the church needed to make a more concerted effort to reach out to the City of London. It was precipitated with a comment they heard: "If your church were to close down tomorrow, would anyone in the community miss you?" The challenge moved them to a season of reading and sharing insights at weekly staff meetings. This reading was based around a new stream of literature on the topic that has become known as "missional living".

My role at that time was Pastor of Small Group ministry and I had already concluded that there were many small groups that could be healthier and more effective in creating disciples. It was my belief that much of this had to do with the groups not reaching out beyond their group. These were groups that were meeting on a consistent basis and yet were often growing stale and losing their sense of purpose. Often these groups would simply stop meeting and no one could fully articulate why.

I concluded that North Park's threefold vision for small groups (grow in your relationship with God, grow in your relationship with others, serve the Kingdom of God through acts of service) was not being fulfilled adequately. Groups were engaging in the first two aspects but giving very little attention to the third aspect, acts of service. This confirmed my growing understanding of discipleship that requires all three components to be part of someone's life. It would be improbable to see any significant life change taking place with one missing; these groups were falling short in encouraging people to become true disciples of Jesus.

The staff conversations led to a new effort by North Park to reach out to the many social needs of London through an initiative called "Engage." The initiative had three areas of focus: *LEARN* about the needs of London, *GIVE* to the needs of London and *SERVE* the needs of London. The launch of this took place in the fall of 2007 with an 8 week message series. To provide opportunities of service, North Park partnered with 8 non-profit agencies in the city – faith-based and secular. I was asked to lead this initiative which I continue to do. It was a missing component that would definitely enhance the church's ability to help others become disciples.

North Park has continued to partner with various non-profit agencies and makes serving opportunities known through a variety of means. This includes a catalog of opportunities, its monthly publication called "The Link", its website (www.northpark.ca) and the weekly bulletin.

Tentative Opinions about Discipleship Efforts

As this initiative has developed over the past four years, I have become personally aware how churches can segment various components of discipleship. The North Park Engage service opportunities that people have connected with have been a positive experience and dozens have spoken with me about the impact they have had on their lives. The assumptions that were made about North Park's need to impact the City of London were affirmed. However I believe that as church leaders we assumed people were integrating these new opportunities to serve with other means of discipleship such as scripture study, personal reflection,

prayer, etc. In conversations with people at North Park, it is clear that this may not be the case – they segment their activities and do not typically combine spiritual disciplines for an integrated discipleship journey. Churches offer many types of programs and assume that people will understand how to blend them appropriately; my experience indicates that this is not reality.

Reflecting on the programs for spiritual growth that have been offered at North Park the past 6 years also indicates that their format may be a deterrent to spiritual growth as they are typically seminar style and take place in a classroom. Their short length, an evening or perhaps up to 6 weeks, does not allow the content to be incorporated into someone's life in any significant way. Seldom do they have any hands-on experiences. As such people do not truly grasp the content and therefore do not make it a regular part of their lives.

If Christians want to be led into a deeper relationship with God there is an important role for church leaders. What should this look like? How should church leaders engage with them for the purpose of discipleship?

Opportunity

North Park has the opportunity to formally link the community service that was established through the Engage initiative to other aspects of discipleship. This integrated experience should enhance spiritual formation.

Response

The question to be explored is: *would offering an 8-month combined service learning experience that provided a monthly routine of reflective learning and reflecting practice increase the spiritual formation that takes place in someone's life?*

The explanation of the above is the following:

- 1) Eight-months – this length was an attempt to balance the importance of being long enough to become normative in someone's life while being short enough to ensure people would decide to join. It also fit the flow of the church's calendar year that starts in September and ends in June. The timeframe of this initiative was October through May.
- 2) Reflective learning and practice – this blended both in-class learning and hands-on serving with an intentional integration of personal and group reflection. The reflection was important to increase the probability of learning. This will be discussed in chapters two and three.
- 3) Monthly Routine – The reflective learning and practice followed a monthly rhythm. Each month was another cycle of all components, providing participants 8 cycles of learning, serving and reflecting. The experience was enhanced as each iteration built on the previous one.

Definition of Terms

Integrated Discipleship – This is a view of discipleship that recognizes the importance of linking together spiritual disciplines. It is not merely an addition of disciplines such as having a bible study with one group, attending a prayer meeting with another group and serving at a homeless shelter with a third group. It is an integration of them all, allowing them to simultaneously build on each other.

Society's Marginalized – This reflects communities of people that are left on the fringes of society. They are often powerless, not properly cared for and often misunderstood. Examples would include the homeless, disabled and those in prison. The term that was used during the research interviews was “less fortunate.” During the project I realized that this term is paternalistic in nature and that it was necessary to use a term that better reflected these communities. The only time the term “less fortunate” is used in this document is for direct quotes from those that were interviewed. The literature from the past 10 years on Missional Living has been integral in helping churches see the importance of engaging with the marginalized.

Project Limitations and Delimitations

- 1) Life Impact of Participants – the research aspects of this initiative focused only on the participants and how their lives were impacted. Future research could look at the impact on the families of the participants, the organizations they served with, the people that they served, the leaders of each unique area of service, as well as the impact on North Park as an organization.
- 2) Volunteer Participants – this initiative was promoted within the North Park context and people were asked to voluntarily sign up. One could argue that they were already predisposed to life change and are sensitive to the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives so that the life change that was observed was inevitable. What would happen if people were randomly asked to participate who would otherwise not sign-up? This would be a valuable future study.
- 3) Non-Profit Organizations – For ease of implementation, the initiative was limited to working with the current non-profit relationships that North Park already has developed. As a result, the areas of service were limited to certain issues – homelessness, refugees, disabilities, unplanned pregnancy. If someone who wanted to participate in this initiative did not feel a connection to any of these areas, he or she may have chosen not to participate.
- 4) The number of people that were accepted to participate was limited by the capacity of the non-profit organizations to provide them with meaningful

serving opportunities over the 8-month period. Each learning track was capped at 8 participants.

- 5) The framework of the research was limited to 8 months in length and the research looked at the life impact at the end of the 8 months. It would be beneficial to measure the impact one year after the end of the initiative to determine the “stickiness” of the life change.

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

It has been a privilege to lead the Engage initiative for North Park since its inception in 2007, and in many ways I have a personal attachment to its ongoing effectiveness. In addition, my active involvement in life-on-life discipling relationships has a 25 year history. I have witnessed positive life change in the lives of many individuals. Admittedly, my engagement in life-on-life discipling has not been as integrated as I have now come to understand. I neglected to lead those I was discipling into active service in the local community as I believe scripture calls us to. The Engage initiative helped me recognize its importance. This project allowed me to experiment and further understand a broader definition of integrated discipleship and its impact on people’s spiritual formation.

The Importance of the Project to North Park

Any service-oriented focus such as North Park’s Engage initiative can easily become a program that accomplishes nothing more than people feeling good for a period of time. It must become part of a model of integrated

discipleship to be truly formational – this will give it a strong foundation. This initiative will give North Park a better understanding of what it will take to help move people into a deeper relationship with God and possible life changing impact. Other opportunities can then be developed from the learning. While this initiative has a focus to serve in the City of London, Ontario, similar initiatives could be set up to help people serve within the ministries at North Park, such as children or youth. It could also be used for those wishing to have a global impact.

Beyond North Park, I have had numerous conversations with leaders in other churches, and it is apparent that many are looking for ways to practically serve their communities. In addition, the question of how to help congregants become devoted disciples of Jesus is also an area that is frustrating many. This project would be transferable to other church contexts and provides a framework with which to engage with their congregants.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

Observing personal spiritual formation using a fresh programmatic approach to discipleship is the focus of this research project. A desire for an increased understanding of pursuing discipleship in a more integrated way is what spawned this project and thesis. As such, this chapter looks at discipleship through the lens of pastoral leadership and comments on the leader's role and the opportunities that should be explored.

Christian Discipleship

Misunderstanding Discipleship

An important part of a pastor's role is to help his or her congregants embrace discipleship. I believe many are misinformed when they presuppose that anyone who calls himself or herself a Christian is a disciple. It is important to recognize that a disciple of Jesus is more than someone attending a service on Sunday morning and perhaps participating in a bible study group during the week.

The literature supports the above conclusion. Discipleship authors are as apt to write about what being a disciple is not as they are to affirm it. "If I were to choose one word to summarize the state of discipleship today, that word would be superficial. There appears to be a general lack of comprehension among many who claim Jesus as Saviour as to the implications of following him as Lord." (Ogden 2003, 22) "I find it both sad and appalling that we've used the great doctrine of justification by faith of God's grace to teach that people don't really

need to follow Jesus to be Christians” (Hull 2006, 17). “But Jesus consistently focused on people’s center: Are they oriented and moving toward the center of spiritual life (love of God and people), or are they moving away from it?” (Ortberg 2002, 34). The theme from these authors is a lack of intensity, a lack of focus. There is a stagnation that can take place in the life of Christians that would make them non-disciples of Jesus. It is our role as leaders to ensure that those under our care are pursuing discipleship, not simply a contentedness in saying that they are a Christian.

Bonhoeffer and Willard provide tough words around this as they attempt to move people into a deeper commitment to discipleship.

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace with the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. (Bonhoeffer 1995, 44)

We need, in fact, do nothing less than engage in a radical rethinking of the Christian conception of salvation. What does it mean to be “saved?” What do people understand when they hear “salvation,” “redemption,” and other New Testament terms used to refer to God’s action in restoring women and men to their intended place in this world? Is it possible that we’ve been robbed of the words’ true and coherent concepts? (Willard 1988, 32)

Willard furthers his argument when he states that “Our communities and our churches are thickly populated with people who are neurotic and paralyzed by their devotion and willing bondage to how they feel” (Willard 1998, 99).

Discipleship, to Willard, is something that we do out of obedience, not because it always feels right or is popular to be a part of.

Understandably, there will always be a tension when discussing discipleship. Are disciples following Jesus out of obedience or are they following Jesus because they fully grasp his love for them and are simply responding to this love? What is clear is that a disciple of Jesus has a focus to live a life that imitates Him. The rest of this chapter will give clarity to this.

Definition of Discipleship

The following is my working definition of discipleship for this initiative. The rest of this chapter will give credence to it. *An individual who believes the historical Jesus as having been miraculously raised from the dead, submits to him as having authority over their life, and who actively engages in activities such as prayer, scriptural reflection, community with like-minded individuals, and service to the marginalized for the purpose of growing in their love for God and other people, both those who submit to the authority of Jesus and those who do not submit. As part of their love for others, disciples of Jesus eventually will engage with others to help them also understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.*

Bible Passages: Shaping the Discipleship Conversation

There are several scriptures that have been formational in my understanding of discipleship and have guided my calling as a pastor. Matthew 16:24 speaks to the intensity of the disciple's commitment to Jesus. The cost of following him was made clear when Jesus states that the disciple "must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow" Denial of self is at the core. Life is

not to be lived selfishly but for the Kingdom of God as Jesus modeled.

Congregants need their pastors to model this for them.

Matthew 28:18-20 is the “Great Commission” that Jesus gave his disciples prior to his heavenly ascension. They were to encourage others to become disciples and they would use the approach modeled for them by Jesus. Implicit in this is that disciples make disciples – they replicate themselves. This calling is still relevant today.

The church is now the representation of Jesus to the world. (Romans 12:4-6, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Ephesians 1:23, 5:12, Colossians 1:18, 24) This would include the call to help people become disciples of Jesus. The Apostle Paul highlights in Ephesians 4 how God has provided the church with gifts in order to “prepare God’s people for works of service.” These works of service help the disciple fulfill his or her role to build the Kingdom of God. As a pastor, I must affirm that I have been gifted as well to “prepare God’s people.”

Additionally, Paul replicates Jesus’ call to make disciples when he urges Timothy to take the things that he has been taught and “entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). This continues the theme of disciples building into others so that they too can fulfill their calling as a disciple. There is no denying the theme that the church is still called to encourage people to be disciples of Jesus today.

“Disciple making is seeking to fulfill the imperative of the Great Commission by making a conscientious effort to help people move toward spiritual maturity – drawing on the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, utilizing the resources of the local church, and fully employing the gifts, talents and skills acquired over the years.” (Adsit 1996, 40)

Sider furthers this in stating: “The ultimate goal of evangelism is not to win converts but to make disciples” (Sider 2002, 65).

Understanding Discipleship

At the core of any understanding of discipleship is the recognition that Jesus is the focus. These authors would agree: “toward maturity in Christ” (Ogden 2003, 129); “adherence to the person of Jesus” (Bonhoeffer 1995, 87); “intimate union and daily contact with Christ” (Hull 2006, 28). Hull goes on to claim, “The Christian faith and following Jesus are irrevocably linked. You can’t have one without the other” (Hull 2006, 47).

Several authors provide longer definitions of discipleship. Bonhoeffer states that “Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus, and therefore, submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross” (Bonhoeffer 1995, 87). Hull iterates that “The heart of being a disciple involves living in intimate union and daily contact with Christ. Discipleship...is about the immense value of God at work in one individual life and the resulting impact on other lives” (Hull 2006, 28). One can appreciate the emphasis on life change that they promote - Bonhoeffer uses the harsher words of adherence and submission while Hull uses the more engaging word of intimacy. In either case, the disciple is progressing toward a Christ-likeness.

Boa and Henrichsen offer more detail in their definitions, outlining activities that are part of the life of the disciple.

What does it take to finish well? How can we run in such a way that we can say with Paul “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” (sic) I have arrived at a set of seven such characteristics: 1) Intimacy with Christ, 2) Fidelity in the spiritual disciplines, 3) A biblical perspective of the circumstances of life, 4) A teachable, responsive, humble, and obedient spirit, 5) A clear sense of personal purpose and calling, 6) Healthy relationships with resourceful people, and 7) Ongoing ministry investment in the lives of others. (Boa 2001, 451)

The disciple is one who in every area of his life determines from the bible what is right and lives it consistently, ...is in constant touch with people in need, ...is in tune with the voice of the Spirit of God, ...and one of the fundamental requirements for true discipleship is a spirit of desperation that burns deep within the soul. (Henrichsen 1988, 31-36)

These definitions, with their articulation of activities, are useful for someone wanting to understand what a disciple looks like, to hear about the practical activities that he or she engages in. The caveat here is that there is always the fear someone might go through the external actions as described above with little to no internal change of the heart; this is valid. However, without some way of understanding what a disciple is all about from a practical perspective, it is difficult to know where to begin. These points can be helpful, especially to a new follower of Jesus.

To understand external action in relation to internal life change, Boa speaks to both. Externally he is looking for spiritual disciplines, healthy relationships and investment in the lives of others – these could all be measured. He is also looking for a teachable and humble spirit and a sense of calling and intimacy with Christ. These are much more difficult to measure externally and yet important to realize if one is actively pursuing being a disciple of Jesus.

Henrichsen shows a similar balance ending off with the phrase “a spirit of desperation that burns deep within the soul.” There is a passion that a disciple has for Jesus that is evident.

Understanding that discipleship is not an independent activity is also important to understand. Ogden emphasizes this in his definition.

Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well. (Ogden 2003, 129)

Pastors need to have an integrated view of what it means to be a disciple if they are to lead others into this realm of discipleship.

Gospel of Matthew: Jesus' Method of Discipleship

We live in a very different cultural, political and socio-economic climate from when Jesus walked with his disciples. Literally translating Jesus' methods into our present-day context will not be feasible. However, there are themes and practices that we can glean from his interactions that can guide us as we help others become disciples today. John Perkins so aptly summarizes the Gospel of Matthew: “choose a few from the many, teach them, be a servant to them, and make disciples” (Perkins 2000, 193). In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus commands his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). This section journeys through the gospel of Matthew and discusses six themes that give direction to an understanding of discipleship. Although one of the other Gospels could have been chosen for this exercise, choosing one helps to focus the

conversation. In addition, the key command to make disciples comes from Matthew 28:19.

The themes from Matthew that give insight to developing practical activities to lead others that will be discussed here are: 1) it was a personal interaction; 2) there were faith stretching experiences; 3) they interacted and learned through questions; 4) they went on mission together with practical tasks; 5) Jesus gave them a vision for what things could and would be like; and 6) scripture was used consistently in the learning.

Personal Interaction

“Making disciples takes time. It cannot be done through a series of lectures and a training seminar in the church, nor can it be done by reading a book. It cannot be rushed....Disciples are made, not mass-produced” (Henrichsen 1988, 109). Far too many churches develop programs that move people through an assembly line with the anticipation that they will emerge as mature followers of Jesus. This is misguided. Jesus’ approach was very personal.

From Matthew 4:18 when Jesus calls Simon, Andrew, James and John to Matthew 26:75, and Peter weeps when he realizes that he had just denied knowing Jesus, there is a sense of deep personal connection between Jesus and the 12. Matthew 5:1 begins the great teaching of Jesus that we refer to as the Beatitudes. Before it begins, the verses describe a personal setting for the context: “Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them” (Matthew 5:1-2). The image

is that of friends sitting together to learn from their teacher in the natural flow of life.

Matthew 8 presents an interaction with the family of Peter. “When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him” (Matthew 8:14-15). They experience the personal and physical pains of life together; this includes family members as well.

Matthew 12 provides a further example: “At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.” (Matthew 12:1) A simple description of friends walking together that continues to illustrate the personal aspect of the relationship.

In Matthew 17:1, “Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.” This is a situation where the disciples are allowed to see Jesus being transfigured while interacting with Moses and Elijah, a demonstration of the intimate relationship Jesus had with them.

Finally, before Jesus is about to be arrested, he takes his disciples with him for a time to pray. “He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me’” (Matthew 26:37-38), Nothing is kept hidden in the discipling relationship – both the joys and the sorrows are shared.

Faith Stretching Experiences

Jesus' interactions with his disciples included numerous faith stretching experiences that required them to fully trust Jesus. Matthew 8 tells the story of a boat excursion when a storm quickly comes up – Jesus is asleep.

The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”
(Matthew 8:25-27)

“You of little faith” Jesus says to them. Perhaps he expected them to be further along the journey than they were. Maybe it was his way of letting them know the power that was available to them through him. Whatever his thinking, Jesus allowed their faith to be stretched.

Matthew 14 outlines another boat on the water experience that included a storm. In this situation Jesus is not in the boat but comes to them walking on the water. Peter, who perhaps is beginning to gain faith, asks to step out of the boat and walk to Jesus.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:29-31)

Not a complete success but a step in the right direction. Jesus continues to allow them to have these experiences to stretch their faith.

Interaction Through Questions

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew there is a series of interactions with Jesus and his disciples that occur through questions. In Matthew 13, Jesus has just finished telling a parable about a farmer sowing seed and the impact on the seed as it falls on different types of ground. “The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” (Matthew 13:10). They have been listening for a while and at some point they determine that they decide they want to know more about this parable. Jesus willingly explains his rationale for using parables and provides an explanation of its meaning. Further in the chapter, Jesus tells three more parables about weeds, mustard seeds and yeast. “Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field’” (Matthew 13:36). Once again, Jesus is willing to interact with them and provide a full explanation. In the same chapter Jesus tells two more parables; however, this time it is Jesus who asks the disciples a question: “‘Have you understood all these things?’ Jesus asked. ‘Yes,’ they replied” (Matthew 13:51).

There is an interesting interchange where on one hand Jesus is speaking to the crowds, and yet at the same time he is providing a teaching moment with his disciples through the interchange of questions. By the end of the chapter you develop a sense that they are beginning to understand.

A shift occurs in chapter 15. After Jesus finishes telling another parable while interacting with the Pharisees and others in a crowd, the disciples again ask for an explanation. “Peter said, ‘Explain the parable to us.’ ‘Are you still so dull?’

Jesus asked them” (Matthew 15:15-16). The tone implicit in Jesus’ response indicates that he is expecting them to understand more by this time. It appears that Jesus wanted the nature of their interactions to change.

In chapter 16 the disciples now appear to no longer want to interact with Jesus around questions – it may be due to their recent rebuke from Jesus.

When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.” Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand?” (Matthew 16:5-9)

Compared to the other interactions the disciples had had with Jesus, this one appears humorous. The disciples do not want to disappoint their teacher and try to keep their ignorance hidden.

Other examples could be examined (18:1, 18:21, 19:25, 26:8) that give further evidence of this. It is apparent that interaction around questions was an integral part of the discipleship journey.

On Mission with Practical Tasks

There were many practical, hands-on activities that Jesus had the disciples involved with. Many of these were faith stretching as discussed previously. On two separate occasions Jesus had the disciples assist in feeding 5,000 men plus women and children (Matthew 14:15-21) and then 4,000 men plus women and children (Matthew 15:32-39). No doubt these experiences were designed to

stretch their faith but practically speaking the disciples were needed to carry out the actual work of ministry.

Matthew 10 articulates an incident where Jesus sends his disciples out to complete ministry on their own. He spends a significant amount of time outlining the mission to make sure that they have the necessary training for the task, and then they are sent off.

So active was the involvement of the disciples with Jesus that others began to come to them to have needs met. Matthew 17 tells the story of a man who brings his son to the disciples for healing.

When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." (Matthew 17:14-16)

Although the disciples were not successful on this occasion, Jesus explained to them what they needed to know for the next time. The disciples were seen as co-workers with Jesus no matter what the task was.

Finally, in Matthew 21 Jesus sends two of the disciples into town to get a donkey for him to ride into Jerusalem, and in Matthew 26 the disciples make preparations for the Passover celebration.

Overall, discipleship involved active engagement in practical activities of ministry and service.

A Vision for the Future

In chapter 16 of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus begins to share with his disciples a vision for the future. This vision included what he would experience personally as well as what they would be encountering in their own lives. It begins right after a conversation in which Peter exclaims that Jesus is the Messiah. Once there was clarity about who Jesus was, a picture of the future was revealed.

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (Matthew 16:21)

A few verses later, Jesus paints a picture of what life must become like for anyone who desired to follow him.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)

In chapter 18:18-19, Jesus declares that whatever the disciples bind or lose on earth will also be done in heaven. In Matthew 20:23 Jesus explains to James and John that they will also “drink the cup” that Jesus drinks. In chapter 24:9-35 there is an explanation describing how the disciples will be handed over to be persecuted. In Matthew 26:1-2 Jesus shares that he is about to be handed over to the authorities to be crucified and finally in Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus gives them their final mission to go and make disciples of all nations.

In all of these interactions, Jesus provides the disciples with a vision for the future. It is important in the process of discipleship to be aware of how life fits in the grand vision.

The Importance of Scripture

The final theme in the gospel of Matthew being considered for the purposes of this thesis is the centrality of scripture. On a number occasions Jesus uses scripture to explain what happened or what is going to happen, grounding his work in the scriptures that he would have been taught as a boy. Beginning with his 40 days in the wilderness when he used scripture to defend against temptations to quoting Psalm 21 as he is hanging on the cross, scripture was central to his life.

This list offers as sample of the scriptures Jesus referred to.

Matthew 10:35	Micah 7:6.
Matthew 11:10	Malachi 3:1
Matthew 13:13	Isaiah 6:9-10
Matthew 15:7	Isaiah 29:13
Matthew 19:1-6	Genesis 1:27, 2:24
Matthew 19:18-19	Deuteronomy 5:16-20, Leviticus 19:18

The important point to grasp from these examples is not so much the details of the scriptures that Jesus quoted in these contexts but the fact that he did draw on scripture as a foundation for his ministry. It is my opinion that church leaders are moving their congregants away from an in-depth understanding and engagement in scripture. From the topical messages that are given during weekend services to the popular Christian books that people are encouraged to read, pastors may not be allowing scripture by itself the opportunity to influence. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 declares that “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.” (NIV) Jesus, through his use of the scriptures that he was taught, emphasized to his disciples the importance of them and the relevance that they had in a variety of situations. Pastors are called to give the same importance to them for those they lead.

In their recent book, *“Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth,”* authors Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson highlight that “nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture.” Churches need to “inspire, encourage and equip their people to read the Bible – specifically, to reflect on scripture for meaning in their lives” (Hawkins 2011, 19). Sider would agree when he states, “Holistic ministry must stand on a firm biblical foundation. The more that Christians are solidly grounded in the Word, the greater their openness to the voice of the Holy Spirit calling them into mission” (Sider 2002, 171).

Summary of the Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew demonstrates that there are a number of components integrated in the process of discipleship that must be considered as churches develop their approaches to discipleship. Simplicity is not the answer. Pastors must embrace the full spectrum of thought and action as Jesus modeled. Discipleship is an integrated experience. This project demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach.

The rest of this chapter will highlight the importance of the missional aspect of discipleship, reflect on the lives of John Perkins and Ronald Sider who demonstrate a life of integrated discipleship, and finally look at a South American perspective from C. Rene Padilla.

Missional Perspective: Disciples Reach Beyond Themselves

Disciples serving and reaching beyond themselves is an important area to explore. It is my opinion that many people who confess to being a Christian too often declare their faith private, something between them and God. Research by the Barna Group would support this. Faith for many "entails drawing people away from reliance upon a local church into a deeper connection with and reliance upon God." And "if a local church facilitates that kind of [godly] life, then it is good. And if a person is able to live a godly life outside of a congregation-based faith, then that, too, is good." (Christianity Today, January 2006) My assumption is that the loneliness of this type of faith experience is one of the reasons why there has been so much interest in the idea of missional living the past ten years. Christians have realized that there has been something missing.

Adding to this argument is the emphasis of the suburban middle-class church to only take care of the needs of its congregants. This is accomplished with multiple programs to meet the needs of the many demographics of those who attend the church. Unfortunately, there often is little to no concern for the needs of its extended community. The importance of reaching beyond one's own needs as

part of the call to be a disciple must be brought to life in new ways if churches are to fulfill their role. It is the role of the pastor to lead out on this.

Leadership Network has confirmed through its work that there are churches that have begun to embrace a mindset with activities commensurate with this.

Churches that are leading the charge in becoming more generous are taking their giving to a whole new level. Generous churches are teaching differently about money and going to great lengths to model generosity. This next generation of churches continues to advance the idea of generosity even further by modeling a generous life at every level of leadership and concentrating on ministry to change the hearts of their congregations.
(http://leadnet.org/resources/download/generosity_becoming_a_fundamental_spiritual_discipline_for_churches)

Willard speaks to this when he states that "... the new life in Christ simply is not an inner life of belief and imagination, even if spiritually inspired. It is a life of the whole embodied person in the social context" (Willard 1988, 111).

Discipleship is a lived experience in society; it must have legs to walk on so the world around it will also experience its life-giving impact – without that, it is not discipleship.

To fully embrace this Jesus-centric, service-oriented lifestyle, congregants need to be shown the way. As such, the hands-on process of discipleship is important to understand. A disciple will act as he or she is trained to act. Two authors key in on this.

Jesus came into the world to become involved with His people. And in His involvement with His disciples, He trained them. The principal, then, is this: where there is no involvement, there is no real training. In order to meet the needs of the person whom we are training, we have to know that person and be involved with him.
(Eims 1978, 88)

Instead of inviting people to a program or class for which they sign up, attend and complete their assignments, they are invited into a relationship of mutual love, transparency and accountability. Of course, discipling relationships contain programmatic elements, such as a curriculum, but the relational dynamics are primary. (Ogden 2003, 124)

The focus of life-on-life in the training of a disciple will then be lived out by the disciple as he or she engages with others. Leaders in the church need to embrace this methodology and agree with the Apostle Paul when he says “imitate me” (1 Corinthians 4:16). Integrated discipleship must include teaching a disciple to understand the importance of meeting the needs of others. This is not an add-on or something nice to do, it is integral and tied completely with what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. “The disciple is one who is in constant touch with people in need” (Henrichsen 1988, 32). Foster builds on this when he states: “Our world is hungry for genuinely changed people...Let us be among those who believe that the inner transformation of our lives is a goal worthy of our best effort” (Foster 1998, 11).

Bonhoeffer has some of the most poignant words that challenge the disciple to see the importance of serving the world around them. First, they must recognize the importance of impacting the here and now. “The disciple then must not only think of heaven, they have an earthly task as well. Now that they are bound exclusively to Jesus they are told to look at the earth whose salt they are” (Bonhoeffer 1995, 116). In addition, the disciple is in a community of disciples where collectively they are making a difference. “The followers are a visible community; their discipleship visible in action which lifts them out of the world –

otherwise it would not be discipleship.” (Bonhoeffer 1995, 117) And finally, without service to others one must question whether they truly are a disciple.

All this is perfectly clear: the aim of the Christian life is to produce those good works which God demands.... We can never boast about them, for we are ourselves his workmanship. Yet it remains true that the whole purpose of our new creation in Christ is that in him we might attain unto good works. (Bonhoeffer 1995, 296)

Pastors must embrace an integrated view of discipleship that includes active service. It must be modeled through intimate life-on-life relationships that will be replicated over and over. Overall, any discussion of serving one’s community as a follower of Jesus without embedding it in the larger conversation of discipleship will lack long-term impact.

Missional Mindset: Insight from the Past Decade

The discussion above has been gaining significant attention in North America in the past 10-15 years. Numerous authors have come forward with books on the topic now referred to as “missional living.” This has been a welcome addition to the literature and has sparked enthusiasm in many churches.

In their recent book, Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile provide a synopsis of the numerous books that have been written since the late 1990’s. In it they outline the various perspectives that the books have taken and how their different emphases impact the outcome. At the core, one can appreciate their desire to see the church move forward in practical ways – concepts, properly understood, must always lead to action. In their words:

“Ideas matter. They shape our understanding of reality, frame our interpretations of life, and help to inform our choices.

But what we really believe, that to which we are truly committed, is what becomes embodied in those choices that we actually make and the practices in which we engage.” (Gelder 2011, 5)

The pastor’s role is to turn people’s knowledge of their faith into practices that line up with what they claim to believe.

Several missional authors have provided insight to help lead congregants into a life of integrated discipleship. This section highlights two areas. First, these authors provide a language that helps to explain the missional life. Second, they encourage leaders to keep moving people forward, no matter how uncomfortable it might seem – for those being led and for the leader.

Language of Mission

Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, in their book *The Shaping of Things to Come* (2003) provide language that shapes our thinking and helps guide conversations. They refer to a “bounded-set” framework versus a “centered-set” framework of thinking. A bounded-set mentality has the church building fences of dogmatic beliefs and activities that define who is “in” and who is “out.” This leads to a set of rules and regulations that the church develops and teaches to its congregants – disciplinary actions are taken for not abiding by these rules. In contrast, a centered-set mentality has no such boundaries but works at telling and living out the story of the love of Jesus and the life he calls us to embrace. This lifestyle is so freeing and alive that people would be attracted to it. It is about trying to live out Jesus’ words when He said “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from

me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). This simple language shift can have an enormous impact in creating space for a disciple to grow. Interestingly, in my experience I have found that at times people appear to prefer life in a bounded-set framework. Perhaps life is easier with a list of do’s and don’ts versus the freedom to write your own life’s story, one that is guided by, and guiding others to, Jesus. Yet for someone to truly embrace a missional mindset, he or she needs to be freed of fences and boundaries that constrict his or her ability to serve as God is calling him or her. As pastors we need to take congregants to this place. This language helps.

In his book “The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church,” Alan Hirsch provides us with the concept of “liminality,” being on the threshold of passing into another state of being but not yet there. This provides language to explain the command of Jesus when he said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it” (Luke 9:23-24). As pastors, we are calling people into a new way of existence. This can be seen as frightening and may provide a level of discomfort, yet we must press on. Being provided with new language such as “liminality” to describe a situation can be helpful as we seek to move people in new directions – a life beyond themselves and outside of the safety of “bounded-set” thinking.

When a group of like-minded people begin to walk through the place of liminality together, they then experience what Hirsch refers to as “*communitas*,” a deep sense of loyalty to a cause.

From my perspective ... liminality and *communitas* are more the normative situation and condition of the pilgrim people of God. This is certainly the case of the phenomenal Jesus movements in view; it is in the conditions of shared ordeal that these Jesus movements thrive and are driven to the activation of Apostolic Genius. What is clear is that both the early Christian movements and the Chinese underground church experienced liminality through being outlawed and persecuted. (Hirsch 2006, 222)

The question that should be on every pastor’s mind is how to guide their congregants into the space of liminality as they move from a shallow faith to that of being disciples of Jesus. Integrated discipleship is at the core.

Leslie Newbigin’s seminal book “*The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*” paints a picture for the disciple that is also beneficial; it supports the “centered-set” mentality. “There has been a long tradition which sees the mission of the church primarily as obedience to a command...It tends to make mission a burden rather than a joy, to make it part of law rather than part of the gospel” (Newbigin 1989, 116). Through all of the discomfort that life can bring, how can we teach and model a life of joy as Newbigin describes? He furthers this argument when he states the following:

When Jesus sent out his disciples on his mission, he showed them his hands and his side. They will share in his mission as they share in his passion, as they follow him in challenging and unmasking the powers of evil. There is no other way to be with him. At the heart of mission is simply the desire to be with him and to give him the service of our lives. At the heart of mission is thanksgiving and praise. (Newbigin 1989, 127)

Newbigin also recognizes the importance of discipleship being lived out in the context of a local congregation. It is not only through individual acts, but through the impact that a community has as it lives and serves together. This further supports Hirsh's idea of *communitas*. Pastors must guide their congregants in a discipleship process that is integrated, leading them through a zone of liminality while centering them on the person of Jesus Christ. This will encourage them to live a life beyond themselves. Newbigin would agree.

If the gospel is to challenge the public life of our society...it will only be by movements that begin with the local congregation in which the reality of the new creation is present, known and experienced, and from which men and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members as sign, instrument and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society. (Newbigin 1989, 232)

The Challenge to Keep Moving Forward

Reggie McNeal, in his book *This Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*, urges church leaders to keep pressing on. What worked in the past will not be adequate for the future. "The current church culture in North America is on life support. It is living off the work, money and energy of previous generations for a previous world order" (McNeal 2003, 1). Recognizing that we always want to honour those who built the local church to what it is today, we must not allow the love of the past to hold the local church back from accomplishing what God has called it to do in this time.

As part of the process, McNeal challenges the church to reflect on how it views and engages its community. He fears that it is missing an opportunity. “But since the church is absent from the streets, people are turning to all kinds of false answers to their spiritual quest. Church members then have the gall to sit inside the church and pass judgment on people for their errant beliefs” (McNeal 2003, 41). Finally, he questions the methods churches have embraced as they guide people in mission. For me the better terminology is how the church is helping people become disciples of Jesus. “Yet we have turned our churches into groups of people who are studying God as though they were taking a course at school or attending a business seminar. We aim at the head. We don’t deal in relationship. And we wonder why there is no passion for Jesus and his mission” (McNeal 2003, 70). Overall, McNeal challenges church leaders to develop the ideas, activities and capacities to impact their culture within their local church context – this as a key component of integrated discipleship.

Roxburgh and Romanak (2006) also call for church leaders to be the driving force in moving their congregations to impact their community. The value they bring is the insight into organizational cycles and change management. In it they make the leader aware of the unique yet difficult task that is before him or her.

Missional leadership is not effectiveness, meeting the inner, spiritual needs of self-actualizing and self-differentiating individuals or creating numerical growth. It is different from building healthy, non-anxious relationships among members of a congregation so that they appear attractive to people outside the church. Missional leadership is cultivating an environment that releases the missional imagination of the people of God. (Romanak 2006, 122)

Furthering this argument, they write to convince church leaders that their calling is to ensure those under their care never become complacent. Their thinking embraces the values of self-denial from Matthew 16:24 and calls the pastor to this understanding and to live it out.

Creating a missional congregation is a stretching, confusing experience for people. They fear the transformation means losing traditions and beliefs that have sustained them all their lives. In some ways, this is the case. It is important for leaders to connect with the biblical narratives, where God draws both Israel and the church out of their established comfort zones for them to rediscover their true purpose in being people of witness and mission in the world. (Romanak 2006, 180)

This is similar language to that of Hirsch when he speaks of liminality.

The message for the pastor/leader is to face the reality in front of him or her. The changes he or she introduces may not come easily or naturally.

Understandably there are processes that others have developed that can be used; however, as a leader you are dealing with people, not widgets.

Approach change with care, and yet with a strong desire to move people to a new place.

Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders by Earl Creps, furthers the leadership arguments of Roxburgh and Romanak by dividing the pastor's leadership disciplines into two categories – disciplines of the leader and disciplines for the organization/congregation. For each, Creps provides six different disciplines and demonstrates their significance. The discipline of spiritual friendship as well as the discipline of passing the baton within the organization are two examples from their writing.

Spiritual friendship means that a “Relationship involves more than learning about others as a form of market research so we can adjust our methods to their sensibilities. It also involves internal change catalyzed by spending time with the people God reaches out to through us” (Creps 2006, 57). This requires one to lead by setting the pace in reaching out to the community. This supports Henrichsen’s comments from earlier in this chapter: “The disciple is one who is in constant touch with people in need” (Henrichsen 1988, 32).

The congregational discipline of passing the baton implies that “Baton passers have to place as much faith in the next runners as they place in themselves” (Creps 2006, 181). How will we as leaders learn the art of passing on what we have learned? Jesus’ example from the Gospel of Matthew explored earlier in this chapter spoke to this. Yet how well do church leaders embrace this idea? This is not simply passing on information through preaching. Creps is referring to life-on-life interaction that leads to the disciplee eventually building into the lives of others, supporting the earlier discussion on discipleship.

Transforming Mission by David Bosch provides a look at the New Testament as a guide for us. “I will argue that, in this respect, the New Testament witnesses to a fundamental shift when compared with the Old Testament” (Bosch 1991, 15). Bosch then works through the narrative of the life of Jesus. He looks at the Gospel of Matthew and argues for mission as disciple-making. He also looks at the Luke-Acts connection and the idea of practicing forgiveness and solidarity with the poor. Finally he reflects on the Apostle Paul and his mission.

Gary Nelson in his book *Borderland Churches* gives further support for the ideas already presented. With respect to liminality he states:

“As a starting point in the new emerging reality, we must embrace what might be called ‘a ministry of inconvenience.’ This is a required attitudinal change in most churches. No matter how well we understand the times we are in, it is impossible to be effective as the church without crossing boundaries of comfort, culture and convenience.” (Nelson 2008, 4)

With respect to the role of the church leader, he also argues that the leader must set the pace for his or her congregants.

“It will be impossible to lead others to places of effective missionary engagement if we, as leaders, are uncomfortable in the borderlands. Borderland living for the church requires catalyst leaders who are more than pastoral caregivers or great visionaries. They live what they teach... They are comfortable in their cultural contexts and able to relate genuinely to the ‘unfaithed.’ Christian leaders must become borderland friendly.” (Nelson 2008, 9)

He goes on to add: “We get sidetracked into focusing on the activity of the church rather than its purpose. We have chosen to look more at models that would be helpful for its success and growth without seeking to search deeper into what it must become.” (Nelson 2008, 45) Pastors must be willing to step into the liminal space first and be an example for others.

Nelson’s additional argument is for patience. We expect instant results from simple seminars or classes, however we need to get into the frame of mind that life change takes time; we must embrace the process. “The crisis of leadership is not that we lack a reimagined future. It is that we lack the courage to be patient enough to see it emerge over time” (Nelson 2008, 101).

Finally, Alan Hirsch discusses “The genius of APEPT.” APEPT (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) refers to the verses in Ephesians where

Paul states: “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 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” (Ephesians 4:11-13). The opportunity for pastors is to allow the various gifts of the body to build into the life of the church. Too often churches emphasize one of the five gifts over the others; Hirsh argues that we need to keep these gifts in tension. His church went so far as to have a leadership team of five individuals, each determined to have one of the five gifts. He argues that established churches promote the pastor/teacher gift, and the apostolic and the prophetic are left out. Interestingly, it was the apostolic gifted people that would have planted the church in the first place and yet they become sidelined in favour of a culture of comfort. In addition, it is the prophet that the church needs to hold it accountable to its call to impact the community.

As we develop people through integrated discipleship, we must embrace all of the gifts the Spirit has given the church.

**Lives that Embrace Integrated Discipleship:
Ronald Sider and John Perkins**

Ronald Sider and John Perkins have had a profound impact on the lives of many through their life’s work and their writing over several decades. I have chosen to include their ideas to speak to this issue because I have been able to connect with both of them. I have been influenced by John Perkins while participating in two Christian Community Development Association (CCDA)

conferences, an organization that he was instrumental in starting. Canadian, Ronald Sider has been at North Park on two occasions in my time there. He has spoken to the church as a whole and also participated in a smaller venue seminar that I attended. He is the Professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry and Public Policy at Palmer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. Both men have shaped my understanding of what it means to be formed as a disciple of Jesus in an integrated sense.

This section examines four specific areas that are highlighted in their writings: (1) you need to embrace Jesus as Saviour AND Lord; (2) sin is both a personal as well as a societal issue; (3) ministry must balance both word and deed; and (4) the local church must play a central role. The first three speak to the complexities of integrated discipleship and the tensions that are faced but must not be ignored – the pendulum cannot swing to either side. The final point emphasizes the importance of the local church in developing disciples, the context that I work in on a daily basis.

Jesus as Saviour and Lord

“Many contemporary Christians act as if it is possible to divide Jesus up, accepting him as Savior and neglecting him as Lord. But Jesus Christ is one person. He cannot be torn apart in that way. Either we accept the whole person, Lord and Savior, or we do not accept him at all” (Sider 2005, 67). With these pointed words, Sider urges his reader to view the Christian faith in an integrated way. My encounters affirm this as well and both authors have some important

comments to make. “The evangelical church – whose basic theology is the same as mine – had not gone on to preach the whole gospel” (Perkins 1976, 99).

Perkins, who had direct involvement in the Civil Rights Movement in the Southern United States, was bothered by the minimalist message that the churches he encountered were preaching. Sider would agree with Perkins’ comments when he states:

Too often, churches today might preach cheap grace to a Zacchaeus, offering forgiveness and acceptance from God without calling for any change in his lifestyle and business practices. Again and again, however, the Bible insists that we cannot enjoy a right relationship with God without also pursuing right relationships with our neighbors. (Sider 2002, 53)

Church leaders must call people to a complete picture of discipleship. This can only happen when they embrace it themselves.

To correct this, both authors challenge the reader to a better understanding of scripture, to not filter what they read in the bible so that they only see what supports their preferred views. “It amazes me how we can be so versed in the Scriptures yet never get around to asking ourselves the right questions. The burden of proof is on us just as it was on Jesus” (Perkins 1993, 71). Sider uses similar language. “I am convinced that at the heart of our problem is a one-sided, unbiblical, reductionist understanding of the gospel and salvation. Too many evangelicals in too many ways give the impression that the really important part of the gospel is forgiveness of sins” (Sider 2005, 57).

Perkins made a discovery in his own life when he began to take the scriptures that he knew and put them into practice. “But it was not until I attempted to live out what the Scriptures said that I really knew God’s will. In

other words, God's will is in the Scriptures, yes, but after my mind was transformed by God's Word, then the Scriptures had to be put into practice" (Perkins 1993, 140). Perkins' life exemplifies the idea of Jesus as Saviour and Lord. At one point, when he was beaten one more time by the white, racist police, he realized that he had a decision to make with respect to how he needed to respond. He had witnessed many different responses. With Scripture guiding him, he knew what he needed to do. "But you know, I couldn't hate back. When I saw what hate had done to them I couldn't hate back. I could only pity them. I didn't ever want hate to do to me what it had already done to these men" (Perkins 1976, 158). This was a response from a man who had determined to make Jesus Lord of his life, not merely Saviour. Pastors must guide their congregants in the same way of life.

Sin – Personal and Societal

Recognizing sin as both personal and societal is important to embrace. In his groundbreaking book from the 1970s, "Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger," Sider reveals to the reader the implications of what society is valuing and what it chooses to measure. "It is hard to measure the value of friendship, unspoiled nature, and justice. But Gross National Income (GNI) is easy to measure. The result is our competitive growth economy where economic success and material things are all-important to many people" (Sider 2005, 25). Sider wanted his reader to clearly see what was occurring in society and how they were getting swept up

in a system that was misguided. Their lack of awareness and action as individuals led to sin at the societal level.

Perkins highlights the scriptural implications when he notes that God had concerns for both the wrongs of the person as well as society as a whole. “If you take all the verses in the Bible and organize them under themes, the two major themes with the most individual verses supporting them are God’s hatred for idolatry and God’s concern for the poor and the oppressed” (Perkins 1993, 141). Both of these, idolatry and concern for the poor, are individualistic and societal sins. Leaders need to enter into the conversation of societal sin. What should the church’s response be?

Sider would agree with Perkins when he writes:

We also need to discover that in the Bible, sin is both personal and social. Again and again, the prophets make it perfectly clear that we sin by lying, stealing, and committing adultery, and also by participating in unjust legal and economic systems without doing what God wants us to do to change them. Sin is both personal and social, so overcoming evil demands both personal and structural transformation. (Sider 2005, 74)

Being a disciple is having a clear understanding of the sin in our own lives and the society around us. Without this acknowledgement, we will continue to live self-centred lives that miss the life that Jesus is calling us to.

A Balanced Approach – Word and Deed

Both Perkins and Sider decided to write and become active because of the imbalance they saw and experienced with the churches that they were connecting with as well as other organizations. Perkins, with his work in civil rights, was

involved with many different churches and organizations and experienced a lot of imbalance. One was an imbalanced theology. “While restoring a sense of God’s love for the poor and desire to see them liberated from economic and physical oppression, liberation theology has often stopped short of a strong message of spiritual liberation” (Perkins 1993, 41). Another was an imbalance he encountered with different organizations.

I had to watch ardent civil rights activists who could see the social inequities, but who left God out of the picture and thereby ignored the basic spiritual needs that existed. Still, I decided that if something was right, I would do it as a command from God and not be scared out because some non-Christians also thought it was right. (Perkins 1976, 107)

While Perkins was trying to live what he deemed was a balanced life, he also recognized that he had to live in the midst of many unbalanced contexts as he sought to influence the culture around him.

Sider challenges the imbalance he sees in evangelical circles. “As evangelicals we claim to embrace the Bible as our final authority. One of the most common themes in the Scriptures is that God and his faithful people have a special concern for the poor. Why this blatant contradiction between belief and practice?” (Sider 2005, 22). Sider was aware that at times churches did attempt to care for others through their actions; however often their actions were the only aspect to their engagement, speaking about Christ to meet the needs of the heart was not evident.

A prevalent myth in many churches is that if you give non-Christians a chance to rub shoulders with Christians, they’ll catch a dose of the gospel. This myth is sometimes used to justify not making any special effort to provide evangelism programs or training. It allows churches to feel that they are obeying the Great

Commission just by doing good deeds for Christ's sake. (Sider 2002, 63)

Both authors would agree that the gospel of Jesus means that practical needs are met and that the message of salvation is proclaimed. Perkins states:

The gospel, rightly understood, is holistic. It responds to people as whole people; it doesn't single out just spiritual or just physical needs and speak to those. Christian community development begins with people transformed by the love of God, who then respond to God's call to share the gospel with others through evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice. (Perkins 2000, 21)

Sider would agree:

How did Jesus announce his gospel? By word and deed! Words would have been enough if his gospel was just the forgiveness of sins. But since his gospel included the wonderful fact that the long-expected messianic kingdom was now actually becoming visible in history, not just talk about it. (Sider 2005, 63)

Sider also encourages ministries to take a similar approach. "If you believe that persons are both material and spiritual beings, then your social ministry should combine spiritual and material aid." (Sider 2002, 103)

Embracing the Tensions

It is important to keep in mind the built-in complexities of discipleship in light of the tensions just described. It has been my experience that most people, myself included, lean to one side of each tension. This implies that in their discipling of others, they will emphasize the aspect they lean toward. It is important recognize this upfront and make a conscientious effort to live a life that is more balanced and to also lead others in a balanced way as well. One can appreciate the emphasis that Sider and Perkins have provided to this discussion.

The Role of the Local Church

Both men see an important role for the local church to play and yet they also have concerns for the impact the church is not having currently. First, both authors make comments about local churches and their inability to have an impact on Christians and on society. Perkins, due to his inner-city emphasis, challenges the suburban local church context.

Historically, however, what we the church do has not matched up with what we say...It is very difficult because many suburban churches do not disciple people who are capable of answering such a call. In many cases their discipleship goes only as far as their suburban lifestyle will let it. Then they make the mistake of organizing their Christianity around their chosen lifestyle, rather than vice versa. (Perkins 1993, 66)

How often do we interpret our calling and the bible in a way that will not impact the lifestyle we desire? How can church leaders move their congregations to a fuller understanding of discipleship even if it is uncomfortable?

Sider's comments about the church centre on the balance between word and deed when he states that "Some churches have a lopsided emphasis on social ministry. Other churches have a one-sided focus on evangelism. But most churches simply do too little of both." (Sider 2002, 145)

Second, both authors challenge churches with a number of questions to take their responsibility seriously and embrace the opportunity to impact their community. Perkins will once again emphasize that plight of the poor.

We in the church cannot separate our Christianity from the hopelessness of the urban poor. If so, then something about the gospel has failed. Indeed, when our Christian faith is confronted with the reality of the urban poor, we are challenged by significant questions that go to the very heart of the gospel: What should Christian community look like in an hour such as this? What

should the body of believers look like? What are the marks of an authentic church in an hour such as this, of a church responding to the poor? (Perkins 1993, 29)

Sider takes a broader view and wonders what it will take for the church to set itself apart from society.

If the church is truly a visible social order that lives like Jesus rather than the world, if the church is a community that understands that Jesus' challenge to what was wrong in the status quo was part of his proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom, if the church seeks to be a visible manifestation of Jesus' dawning Kingdom rather than a carbon copy of the fallen world which is passing away, then the church inevitably is profoundly countercultural. (Sider 2005, 103)

Both authors are hopeful and see an opportunity for the church to take a primary role of leadership in dealing with societal issues.

I believe there is only one group of people in society who can overcome these obstacles. God's people have solutions that are qualitatively different from any other approach to the poor. The best that God's people have to offer is relationships with the poor that reflect the kind of careful, quality attention we have in our own families. (Perkins 1993, 28)

Sider would agree: "The church, as the corporate body of Christ, serves as the model and agent of Christ's Kingdom on earth" (Sider 2002, 95).

Insight from Latin America: Rene Padilla

Rene Padilla is a South American theologian who has studied in North America. Much of his writing has challenged the North American mindset and theology as well as their tactics in sending missionaries to the majority world. I believe his global insights provide a local challenge as the church tries to meet

community needs and lead those in its congregation to serve as an important component of integrated discipleship.

I'm questioning the isolation of most white American churches from reality in the world. Many, many, many of the members of those churches seem to think that the world ends up in suburbia, and that everybody more or less has the same kind of ideals and life standards and lifestyle and so on. And they seem to ignore the fact that a large majority of people really are not worrying...not worried about how to have three cars or four, how to have a bigger home, or more beautiful church sanctuary, and so on. They are so much more concerned about day to day life, how to survive.
(Wheaton College Archives)

The arguments that Padilla gives in his writing for how the Western church views and engages with the majority world are as relevant for how local churches view and engage the various issues of their community, be it the homeless, disabled or mentally challenged. “[T]he church in Latin America is a church without a theology” (Padilla 2010, 115). This comment could also be stated as “the homeless in Canada are a group without a theology” or “the disabled in Canada are a group without a theology” since the majority of theological reflection being undertaken is by middle to upper class individuals. Just as Padilla is frustrated with the proliferation of Western literature incorrectly influencing the majority world, so too should we be frustrated with our narrow theological views that we use as we serve in our communities. “[T]he gospel still has a foreign sound or no sound at all in relation to many of the dreams and anxieties, problems and questions, values and customs in the Majority World” (Padilla 2010, 142). This would also translate to the varying “societies” within each community’s context, be it the homeless, incarcerated, disabled, or others.

Padilla provides some solutions that must be embraced. First, he would insist on a renewed emphasis for discipleship when he calls for “a new stress on Christian discipleship as involving the placing of the totality under the Lordship of Jesus Christ” (Padilla 2010, 148). Here he uses similar terminology outlined previously when he speaks to the importance of mission in the life of the disciple: “It is not surprising that the more integrated – and biblical – paradigm of mission should take time to be established” (Padilla 2005, 47). In addition, Padilla writes that “The cross has lost its offense, since it simply points to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us but does not present a call to discipleship” (Padilla 2005, 40).

Second, he challenges church leaders to take a stand. “Pastoral work, therefore, must choose between a minority that accept the demands of the gospel and a consumer majority that is falsely committed to Christianity” (Padilla 2005, 75.) As Hirsch argued in his ideas around APEPT, Padilla would agree that we have allowed certain gifts to be silenced: “When, in its desire to avoid conflict, the church accommodates itself to the spirit of the age, it loses the prophetic dimension of its mission and becomes an agent of the status quo” (Padilla 2005, 81.)

Finally, he would agree that we need to embrace a new journey that will inevitably lead us into liminal space – or into the borderlands as Nelson argues.

Since the Word became flesh, the only possible communication of the gospel is that in which the gospel becomes incarnate in culture in order to put itself within the reach of people as cultural beings...All authentic communication of the gospel is patterned on biblical communication and seeks to find a point of contact with people in their own culture. (Padilla 2005, 112)

Summary

Discipleship is not a simple, one-size-fits-all task; it takes time and has many tensions. Discipleship requires a leader who will embrace life-on-life relationships to help someone in his or her formation. In many cases it will be messy and stretch people outside of their comfort zones.

The Gospel of Matthew provides a framework of activities. The approach that Jesus used is still a model that we need to take seriously. Although Jesus' cultural context of being together in a tight community for three years is not a reality in the Canadian context, we can still embrace the highly relational and multi-faceted approach that Jesus modeled. Discipleship is far more than a bible study in someone's living room, and it is also more than serving breakfast at the homeless drop-in centre downtown. Discipleship that is approached from an integrated perspective embraces knowledge about God with experiences that deeply engage society. It shapes its scriptural vision for a grand future with the Kingdom of God as its goal.

Many people have experimented with what it takes to be formed as a disciple. They have modeled the importance of daily and weekly disciplines and have stepped out to share their faith and serve pressing societal needs and injustices. In addition, authors from the past decade have brought us new language around missional living and have challenged many of the notions of what it means to be the church. They have added greatly to the conversation and have stirred the imaginations of many from the younger generation. Many from this next generation have grown up in a local church and have appreciated the

foundational teaching they received, yet they know intuitively that there is so much more that the church is being called to do. They want to practically impact their local communities and the world beyond. Church leaders must ensure that this generation does not simply embrace acts of kindness as a standalone entity and forget the biblical truth that must accompany it. They need to recognize the spiritual needs inherent in each person. Both John Perkins and Ron Sider provide insight about the tensions that we must always embrace. They challenge us to not shy away from speaking to both sides of each of the tensions – Jesus as Saviour and Lord, sin as personal and societal, and serving others with both word and deed.

The call is for an integrated understanding of discipleship. We must admit when our theology of discipleship has been shaped to only support a middle-class lifestyle. It is imperative to recognize that the homeless, the disabled, the incarcerated, and the single teen mother, all have a voice to add to our understanding of who God is and what his kingdom is to look like “here on earth as it is in heaven.”

Pastors must understand and enter into discipleship that is integrated. They must work with the few that are ready while still maintaining relationships with the many for the day when hopefully they too will choose to be disciples. Pastors and other church leaders must develop initiatives that will assist people on this journey. Engaging Journeys has attempted to practically live this out at North Park Community Church.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This project was designed around the pedagogical framework of service learning. The analysis and conclusions were achieved using narrative research. This chapter highlights the literature that forms the foundation for each of these areas.

Service Learning

Service learning is the pedagogical foundation of this initiative. Its principles and practices validate the principals and practices of integrated discipleship previously outlined. It ensures that neither in-class teaching nor hands-on service takes precedence over the other; each is an equally important component in the learning journey as they interact with each other.

This section examines service-learning from the following elements: 1) definition; 2) key components of a service-learning experience; 3) the benefits of reflection to enhance the learning; 4) the importance of the length of the experience; 5) integration of service and learning, 6) why people are attracted to service-learning opportunities; and 7) the benefits of service-learning.

Definition of Service Learning

As the name describes, the components of service learning are two-fold: active hands-on service combined with theoretical learning. The objective is to enhance the impact of the experience as the strength of each component is

leveraged. Aderson says that service learning “involves intentionally linking service activities with the academic curriculum to address real community needs while students learn through active engagement and reflection” (Aderson 2001, 7). This combination of elements is what makes service-learning so effective. Aderson goes on to describe service-learning as three-fold: a program, a pedagogy and a philosophy. It is a program in that there are goals that one is striving to achieve. It is a pedagogy in that it is a form of education that involves hands-on experience in the area of study, not simply theory. Finally, it is a philosophy “of human growth and purpose, reciprocal between those serving and those being served” (Aderson 2001, 18).

It is important to distinguish how service-learning differs from other forms of service such as volunteering and internships. These terms should not be seen as synonyms. Andrew Furco writing with Campus Compact (a national coalition dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education) provides a synopsis comparing these opportunities in terms of who benefits. With volunteerism, the main benefactor is the organization that is being served. The volunteer will often declare that they were changed as a result of their service, and there is no doubting this; however, the focus is on helping the organization. Internships on the other hand are designed to benefit the individual who is interning versus the organization. Once again, the organization will gain some benefit with the work being accomplished; however, the focus is to train the intern in a specific area. Service-learning is specifically designed to benefit both parties as equally as possible.

(https://pol.expoplanner.com/docs/Speaker_Files/1/SL%20A%20Balanced%20Approach%20-%20Furco.pdf)

Components

Several authors highlight service-learning initiatives that outline what they must include to make them successful (Maas 1998, Giles 1994, Kingsley 1995, Stukas 1999, Aderson 2001). First, the work performed must be of value to the organization. The authors use different phrases to say the same thing: meets a need or goal (Maas 1998), must be worthwhile intrinsically (Giles 1994), meets actual community needs (Kingsley 1995), and is high quality service meeting actual needs (Aderson 2001).

My experience in speaking with various Executive Directors of non-profit organizations in London, Ontario validates this. They express frustration when at times individuals and groups want to help them. The disappointment is that the individual or group wants to dictate how they are going to help. They often end up meeting needs that do not exist while the actual needs go unmet. This type of thinking is the antithesis of service learning since the organization is not truly benefiting.

Second, building on the point above, the work must be defined by the community that is being served. It must be a collaborative effort to ensure that both parties benefit and fulfill the goal of service learning. “Collaborative between school and community” is how Kingsley (1995) describes it. Stukas (1999) describes it as attending “to the relationships of all partners/participants.”

Aderson (2001) calls it an “all partner collaboration” that allows everyone involved to grow in as equal a way as possible.

Third, the practical service performed must be directly tied to the theoretical learning taking place in the classroom; the two must be tightly interwoven. “Student work flows from and into course objectives” (Maas 2001, 5), is “integrated into curriculum” (Kingsley 1995, 22), “designed to accentuate the matching of goals and activities (Stukas 1999, 14), and an “integrated learning – service tied to academics” (Aderson 2001, 13).

Fourth, and a point that is elaborated on in the next section, is the aspect of reflection. Service-learning that leads to lasting life change includes an aspect of personal and group reflection (Kingsley 1995, Stukas 1999, Aderson 2001). “Provide structured time for reflection’ (Kingsley 1995, 45), so that the learner can “integrate experience with learning” (Aderson 2001, 15).

The literature also emphasizes the importance of the length of the experience. Each author recognizes that service learning “must cover a considerable time span and be capable of fostering development over time” (Giles 1994, 80). One must intuitively realize that to be effective, the experience must provide enough time to ensure the learning takes hold in the life of the individual.

Reflection

This idea of reflecting necessitates further exploration as it has a significant impact on any service-learning initiative. “It is the reflection component...that most differentiates service-learning from other forms of

volunteerism and community involvement. And it is the reflection component and the surrounding educational context that serves to highlight the reciprocal nature of the community service activities at the centre of service-learning programs” (Stukas 1999, 2). Stukas goes on to iterate that “perhaps as a result of reflection activities, they may be better able to connect academic concepts to new applied situations” and “reflection has been identified as an essential factor in producing service-learning benefits” (Stukas 1999, 5-6).

The life of Jesus and his approach to training his disciples parallel this. There are times when he personally pulls himself away to reflect (leading by example) and times when he pulls his disciples away for a time to reflect. Recognizing this, it is important that pastors lead by example. They need to actively participate in times of reflection in the midst of the busyness of ministry to maintain their effectiveness.

The research conducted by Astin et al., bears this out. “Both the quantitative and qualitative results suggest that providing students with an opportunity to process the service experience with each other is a powerful component of both community service and service-learning.” (Astin 2000, iv) In addition, reflection is used to connect “the service experience to the academic course material.” (Astin 2000, iv) It is also important to understand that there is flexibility in how the reflection occurs as the research indicates. “The primary forms of reflection used were discussions among students, discussions with professors, and written reflection in the form of journals and papers.” (Astin 2000,

iv) How one reflects is not as important as the idea that one simply needs to reflect.

Length of Experience

The length of any service learning initiative is important to consider. One must balance the minimum time it takes for learning to begin to influence a person's life with the maximum amount of time that someone will commit to participating in an initiative. Much of the curriculum designed for churches currently is 6-8 weeks in length. It is my opinion that this length has as much to do with maintaining someone's attention as it has to do with learning. This opinion comes from my twenty years involvement with life-on-life discipling relationships.

Several authors allude to the importance of taking time to determine an appropriate length, although none gives a suggested time span. The project "must cover a considerable time span and be capable of fostering development over time. (Giles 1994, 80) Aderson makes an interesting comment when he says that it "May do more harm than good if the experience is too short or given too little attention by participants" (Aderson 2001, 42). A shorter experience may lead to further fostering preconceived notions that are negative if there is not the opportunity to know those being served.

Stukas makes an interesting comment about the stages of development that should be considered.

"Duration and intensity of service programs are held to be key variables in determining the benefits to students. Indeed, many theorists suggest that students may move through several developmental stages as they serve others en route to receiving social, psychological and academic benefits – with longer-lasting programs more likely to provide such benefits. (Stukas 1999, 4)

The length that any particular program is set at will vary by situation, and yet it needs to be given proper consideration. For every new initiative, the designer will need to weigh the varying factors in determining the length. As more cycles of the initiative are completed, the length can be altered to determine the best fit to maximize the learning.

The Engaging Journeys experience was set at 8 months – October through May. This length was based on what it was determined people would be willing to commit to combined with an understanding of the church calendar that runs from September through June. It would be interesting to conduct further research to determine the optimum length for this type of experience. Could the same results be achieved with it being four months, or six months?

It is also important to consider the frequency of learning and serving during the chosen timeframe. Engaging Journeys included a monthly rhythm of learning and serving. How would a weekly or bi-weekly rhythm impact formation?

Integration of Learning and Serving

The significance of integrating hands-on serving with theoretical learning is at the heart of service-learning. It is essential that they be linked as tightly as possible. Roschelle states that “it helps to demonstrate for students the interconnections between theory and practices” (Roschelle 2000, 839). Further elaboration to this is from Giles when he affirms that “...for knowledge to be useable through recall and application it has to be acquired in a situation;

otherwise it is segregated from experience and is forgotten or not available for transfer to new experiences” (Giles 1994, 79).

My own experiences support this. Often I encounter well-meaning Christians believing that they need to simply acquire more information. As a result, they engage in bible study after bible study with little, if any, measurable life change. Roschelle charges that “Even when students read large amounts of research, they often process the information through the narrow lens of privilege” (Roschelle 2000, 840). We must be honest about the narrowness of our own lens. What are we missing? It is the role of church leaders to move Christians from information to transformation. The tight integration of service tied to learning will enhance this significantly.

Why People are Attracted to Service Learning

The literature comments on the kind of people who are attracted to this type of learning. This is intriguing to consider in light of the church context in which the service learning will take place since people voluntarily agree to participate. Comparatively, in a post-secondary educational context, students often do not have a choice for course selection and may be required to take part in a service-learning course. Two authors mention some aspects of this. “Volunteer activity and longevity have been shown to be influenced by the social expectations of those around the volunteer – if many others in your social network are volunteering, you are more likely to do so as well (Stukas 1999, 9). Also,

...we found that there were certain characteristics that predispose students to participation in community service. Among the

strongest predictors...are volunteering in high school, being a woman, tutoring other students in high school, expressing a commitment to participate in community action programs, attending religious services and not placing a high priority on making money. (Astin 2000, 13)

It is interesting that in this list from a non-religious research project is the aspect of attending religious services that predisposes people to become involved in service. One would think that this would bode well for introducing a service learning initiative in a church context.

Benefits of Service Learning

There are many benefits to highlight the overall impact this pedagogy can have. First, it connects people, organizations and communities in meaningful ways. The literature mentions that “this pedagogy can offer potential advantages to all members – communities, students, faculty, colleges, and universities – through the work of forming new, challenging partnerships aimed at advancing knowledge and helping to remedy the deficiencies in our common life” (Maas Weigart 1998, 4). This is imperative to grasp in the implementation of any of service learning initiative. It acts as a filter by which decisions are made, ensuring that everyone is benefiting from the experience. Included in this quote are the key aspects of “challenging partnerships,” “advancing knowledge” and fixing the “deficiencies in our common life.” All three of these, combined with mutual benefits, will ensure a worthwhile experience for everyone involved.

Second, there is the opportunity of deep life change in the lives of the participants. Roschelle makes a couple of compelling arguments:

“Although some critics of service-learning argue that community service is devoid of academic rigor, many scholars contend that it is in fact intellectually demanding and that it fosters community activism and promotes students’ moral development...it helps demonstrate for students the interconnections between theory and practice.” (Roschelle 2000, 839)

Additionally she writes that “Without interaction with impoverished people, student stereotypes are rarely challenged” (Roschelle 2000, 841). This conclusion was validated in this research project. Kingsley provides a succinct list outlining the benefits: 1) Deepens understanding of issues; 2) See another person’s perspective; 3) Higher level thinking, grapple with complex issues; and 4) Sense of membership in the community (Kingsley 1995, 18). Aderson et al. make a compelling argument when they state that “Students reported personal and interpersonal development in terms of increasing self knowledge, spiritual growth, and personal efficacy, and finding reward in helping others” (Aderson et al. 2000, 29) Although not a religious study, it is noteworthy that “spiritual growth” is included in their findings.

Third, a service-learning experience expands the understanding of learning methods. Aderson says that it “challenges the notion that students learn best in neat, 50-minute chunks divided by subject areas and followed by large doses of seatwork and pen and paper quizzes” (Aderson 2000, 30). He further argues that “learning without practical experience is not only irrelevant but also impossible” (Aderson 2000, 41).

Finally, service-learning provides benefits simply because it is so broad. “Qualitative findings suggest that service learning is effective in part because it

facilitates four types of outcomes: an increased sense of personal efficacy, an increased awareness of the world, an increased awareness of one's personal values and an increased engagement in the classroom experience (Astin 2000, iv).

Based on the above, the service learning pedagogy provided a strong framework with which to establish the Engaging Journey initiative. Its insistence on linking academic learning with hands-on serving supports my definition of integrated discipleship. The aspect of reflection to enhance learning is also a valuable component that will solidify the learning.

Narrative Research

“We might say that if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively. For us, life – as we come to it and as it comes to others – is filled with narrative fragments enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities.” (Clandinin 2000, 17)

Narrative research is a tool that allows the researcher to understand formation in individual lives. It recognizes the uniqueness of each individual including their history and current life situation. Combining the learning from several narratives will then provide the opportunity to make communal inferences. This section 1) defines narrative research, 2) provides a comparison to other research methods and 3) examines the unique role of the researcher. Additionally, it 4) reflects on how narrative helps to relate multiple influences in a person's development and 5) addresses the difficulties for the researcher. Finally,

it 6) examines the challenges of interpreting the data and connected to that, 7) the significance of interpreting the story of one individual person.

Definition

Narrative research is “by nature subjective and highly personal... that life stories, whatever their form, can only be understood in light of their social, cultural and historical context” (Maynes 2008, 127). Two other perspectives supplement this definition.

“When we listen carefully to the stories people tell, we learn how people as individuals and as groups make sense of their experiences and construct meaning and selves. We also learn about the complexities and subtleties of the social worlds they inhabit. We gain deeper understanding of the social resources (cultural, theological, historical, and so forth) that they draw on, resist and transform as they tell their stories.” (Josselson 2002, 80)

“Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus...narrative inquire is stories lived and told.” (Clandinin 2000, 20)

These definitions highlight the integration that narrative research works to achieve. It envisages an individual interacting both socially and culturally and takes into account the influences of their history. Narrative also allows the individual being researched to express in their own words their experiences – it does not force them to fit into a list of pre-set words and phrases typical of quantitative research.

In addition, it involves the researcher as well – they are not a distant bystander. Narrative recognizes that the researcher is part of the discussion. The

stories of those being researched intersect with that of the researcher as they experience the journey jointly.

Comparison to Traditional Research Methods

Narrative, due to its subjectivity, has been criticized for its apparent lack of scientific rigor. Some researchers view the results with suspicion because of the subjective nature as well as the relative short history of use. Many narrative authors feel obliged to defend it (Clandinin 2000 & 2007, Maynes 2008, Merrill 2009, Chamberlayne 2000, Josselson 2002, Webster 2007). Clandinin does not reject the importance of the numeric coding that is used in typical research. However she argues that, with quantitative research, one might “lose the nuances of experience and relationship in a particular setting that are of interest to those examining human experience” (Clandinin 2007, 15). Maynes furthers this argument: “In contrast to demographic studies and survey research, which often reduce individuals to a cluster of variables such as race, ethnicity, gender or political affiliation, effective personal narrative analysis provides evidence about individuals as whole persons” (Maynes 2008, 10).

Several authors take a defensive approach feeling the need to even promote it over other more traditional approaches (Merrill 2009, Chamberlayne 2000) However, most authors take a less retaliatory stance and simply prefer to look at the positive aspects that narrative brings to the conversation with only slight comparisons. “Narrative discourse is powerful because it integrates knowledge and subjectivity – an integration that is typically avoided in

psychological research training” (Josselson 2002, 61). Further, “What makes narrative particularly appealing to researchers (compared with other more traditional research methods) is its capacity to deal with the issues of human centredness and complexity in a holistic and sensitive manner” (Webster 2007, 24).

The Researcher’s Role

The influence of the researchers themselves cannot be ignored in examining the use of narrative as a research method. Several authors make mention of this. (Clandinin 2000, 2007, Goodley 2004, Josselson 2002, Webster 2007) They speak to the relationship that naturally exists between the researched and the researcher – ignoring it means that they will not fully appreciate the learning that is taking place. They also recognize that the relationship is influenced by the “frameworks” they see life from that will “provoke important questions and reveal something about life” (Josselson 2002, 18). The researcher’s involvement should not be seen as having a negative influence; however it is important to be aware of it. Webster goes so far as to say that “merely listening, recording and fostering participant stories, while ignoring the researcher’s stories is both impossible and unsatisfying... In telling of the researcher’s stories, the stories of the participants merge with the researcher’s to form new stories that are collaborative in nature” (Webster 2007, 88). It is as though something magical happens when both the researcher and the researched interact during the narrative process. However it is important that the researcher is aware of the

interconnectedness of the relationship. This will ensure that they realize the personal framework that they are bringing to the research, the filter through which they are seeing the story.

“Inevitably, narrative inquirers experience this tension for narrative inquiring is relational. They must become fully involved, must “fall in love” with their participants, yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscape on which they all live.” (Clandinin 2000, 81)

Interrelated Life Parts

Hearing people’s individual stories allows the researcher to understand the interconnectedness of the facets of their lives. It is important to have clarity in this as it will impact data collection and interpretation. Clandinin et al. provide a meaningful framework in which to examine the various components one needs to consider in understanding someone’s story.

“... in our thinking about narrative inquiry, our terms of personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical three dimensional narrative inquiry space with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third.” (Clandinin et al. 2000, 50)

These three aspects provide a framework for the researcher and define an approach to understand the individual being researched. It also enables the researcher to suspend judgment as they compare the various individuals being researched. It helps the researcher recognize how different these three areas are for each person.

The story of the researcher also becomes layered in as their own interaction, continuity and situation inevitably influences the research.

“Thus, in this turn toward narrative inquiry, the researcher not only understands that there is a relationship between the humans involved in the inquiry but also who the researcher is and what is researched merge in the interaction. In this view, the researched and the researcher are seen to exist in time and in a particular context. They bring with them a history and worldview. They are not static but dynamic and growth and learning are part of the research process. Both researcher and researched will learn.”
(Clandinin 2007, 14)

The intriguing aspect of all of this is not necessarily the persuasion that other social influences have had on an individual or the geographical place people have grown up in. The idea that these influences are simply part of a continuum in a person’s life is an important revelation in narrative. A person’s present state of being is simply a point in time along a life journey where changes will continue. This should fascinate the researcher as it will add significant value to the research. Clandinin et al. add that “we take for granted that people, at a point in time, are in a process of personal change and that from an educational point of view, it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process” (Clandinin et al. 2000, 30). Taking into account the idea of movement adds a layer that is not necessarily easy to incorporate. Two individuals being researched may be in a similar state at the point in time of the research and yet their life directions from that point may go in an entirely different direction based on the influences around them and their history.

Maynes et al. further this thought using the term “life trajectories.” They ask the researcher not to forget that each life has a unique trajectory while

intersecting with other individual trajectories. “They thus offer a methodologically privileged location from which to comprehend human agency” (Maynes 2008, 3).

Adding one more voice to the discussion, Merrill writes that “Lives are lived at particular historical moments shaped by specific social forces and discourses, to which people may respond in different and diverse ways” (Merrill 2009, 187). In understanding the lives that were examined in the Engaging Journeys initiative, as the researcher I must always keep in mind the complexities of each person’s life story. Their history and current state of being will influence their future decisions as the Engaging Journey’s initiative was experienced.

Difficult and Confusing for the Researcher

Since the researcher is more intimately involved in narrative as compared to traditional research methods, some confusion may result that requires self awareness. This is noted by a few authors (Maynes 2008, Josselson 2002, Clandinin 2000, 2007). These potential confusions can vary from “multiple ways of knowing and understanding human experience,” (Clandinin 2007, 25) to the idea that “personal narrative evidence is always to some extent incomplete, openended and contingent” (Maynes 2008, 2). Josselson warns that “ongoing theoretical reflection may change the course of data analysis, and revised research questions may be the result of the process” (Josselson 2002, 61). She tempers that warning and says that “by assuming a qualitative stance, educators and researchers are often bold in initial steps...But we are always prepared to be

wrong. Social research and teaching are seen as opportunities to learn” (Josselson 2002, 64).

Interpretation of the Data

The process of interpretation of the narrative data collected is important. The researcher is collecting stories of individuals, told in their own words. These individuals have been shaped by the influences around them – personal and social, time bound (past, present and future) as well as geographical place. The researcher must take this seemingly random data and provide meaningful insights and conclusions that will benefit other individuals, communities and society as a whole.

Two authors highlight the difficulty of this process. “The most challenging aspect of narrative research is the process of movement between interview data and conceptual framework” (Josselson 2002, 38). Clandinin adds that “Although in some people’s minds narrative inquiry is merely a process of telling and writing down a story with perhaps some reflective comments by researchers and participants, the process of moving from field texts to research texts is far more complex” (Clandinin 2000, 131).

Three points are examined from the literature: 1) what meaning or significance can be gleaned from the data; 2) how do the narratives fit into existing frameworks or create new frameworks from which to understand individuals and society; and 3) how can we now understand life trajectories from the narrative information (past to present to future)?

First, finding meaning or significance from the data is analogous to biblical exegesis. What does the narrative mean for the person who is telling it – what does it say about him or her? This is a necessary step prior to fitting them into an existing framework or creating a new one. It is about “providing the necessary context for understanding and interpreting their possible meaning and significance and for appreciating their storied quality” (Maynes 2008, 148).

It takes self-awareness on the part of the researcher to ensure that the information is evaluated in as pure a way as possible. The researcher must be mindful of his or her own story as well as any preconceived frameworks that will influence their interpretation of the data. This is the same way that we bring our cultural norms and biases into biblical exegesis. A benefit of narrative research, however, with the use of a smaller research group, is the opportunity to go back to the researched individual to seek clarification on what they were meaning.

Second, the researcher needs to bring order to the data by developing a conceptual framework. This will be the structure with which to describe the information. The researcher must “expect connection to be made between individual life stories and wider frameworks of understanding” (Chamberlayne 2000, 42). The better the framework is, the greater the value will be to the reader.

One of the benefits of narrative is the permission to focus on an individual story and not treat groups of people as the same. However, for the sake of understanding, it is also important to take the individual narratives and connect them to a larger meta-narrative. This is an ongoing tension. “For such a methodology to be sociological, it is necessary to demonstrate that a life

trajectory, or individual mode of being, is socially representative. It must enable us to understand, by inference or resemblance, other instances of the same kind” (Chamberlayne 2000, 45). These inferences are either made to existing frameworks, or “as contributing to the construction of a theory” (Josselson 2002, 46). While enjoying each individual narrative, the researcher must always be willing to sacrifice some parts of individuality for the sake of societal conclusions.

Finally, it is important for the researcher to take the narrative interpretation, from past to present, and make some determination of future outcomes. This not only helps to provide insight, but ensures that the researcher and the reader are aware that each life that is being narrated is on a continuum.

Clandinin et al. provide insight in understanding this:

Part of the narrative inquirer’s doubts come from understanding that they need to write about people, places and things as becoming rather than being. Their task is not so much to say that people, places and things are this way or that way but that they have a narrative history and are moving forward. The narrative research text is fundamentally a temporal text – about what has been, what is now, and what is becoming. (Clandinin et al. 2000, 145)

The Individual Story and Its Impact

The individual story can have a significant impact even while drawing inferences from a group of narratives. Narrowing in on one life and working to understand the many facets of its social structure can provide insight that a large scale, quantitative research project cannot provide. Several authors would agree

and argue this point, (Maynes 2008, Merrill 2009, Chamberlayne 2000, Josselson 2002, Clandinin 2000).

“Some historians and sociologists have always recognized how the particular can evoke and enrich our understanding of the general. There are many instances of powerful biographies speaking not simply for the person telling the story but for whole groups and cultures.” (Merrill 2009, 184)

“While it may seem from a scientific point of view that social truths are established only by abstract general propositions or laws, in fact understanding of the social world has been equally accomplished through the luminosity of single cases...It is because it is through single cases that self-reflection, decision and action in human lives can best be explored and represented that the case study is essential to human understanding.” (Chamberlayne 2000, 49)

The uniqueness of narrative research compared to traditional research methods provides a structure that will be beneficial in measuring life change in the Engaging Journeys initiative.

Every disciple of Jesus is on a unique journey while simultaneously a member of the body of Christ working to fulfill a common goal – the building of the Kingdom of God. Their development must entail both learning about being a disciple combined with engaging in acts of service; both are formative contributors to the development of the disciple. Service learning provides a framework that facilitates an integrated discipleship journey. Complimenting this pedagogy, narrative research is a valuable method in which to measure the effectiveness of any initiative embracing this form of learning. It treats each person as unique while simultaneously allowing inferences to be drawn that will benefit the church as a whole. This will help the church build a discipleship mentality into its DNA.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

Engaging Journeys Implementation

The Engaging Journeys program was an 8-month initiative that involved 24 participants plus leaders. They took part in a monthly experience that included meeting together the second Thursday evening of each month plus hands-on serving at least once each month. The participants were divided into four learning tracks; these tracks guided their hands-on serving opportunities which included homelessness, unplanned pregnancy, refugees and serving on a non-profit board of directors. The monthly rhythm of activities included five components.

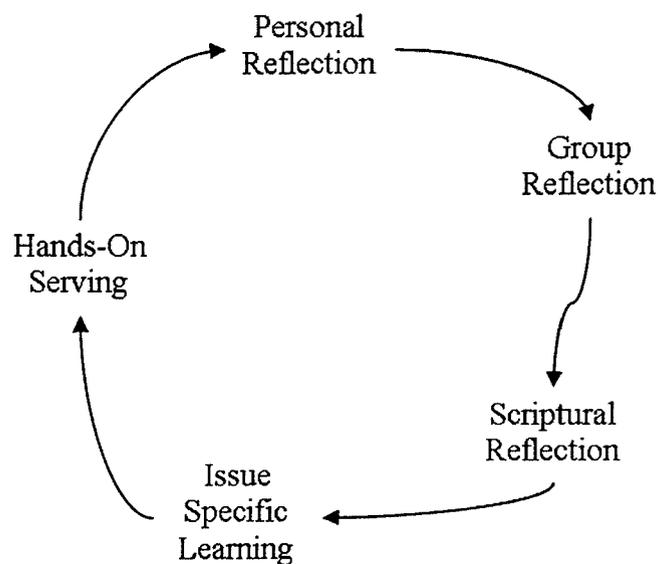


Figure 4-1

Taking into account the planning, preparation and evaluation, the overall project lasted one full year. This chapter outlines the people and processes that were used to implement the Engaging Journeys initiative. It identifies the 1) key stakeholders/participants, 2) implementation plan by month, 3) content of the

monthly meetings, 4) the communication strategy to promote the initiative and 5) data collection for the narrative research.

Stakeholders/Participants

A number of stakeholders were leveraged for the design and implementation of Engaging Journeys. Each is described below.

Track Specific Teachers/Facilitators

The choice of these individuals was vital in order to provide quality teaching for the various learning tracks. The tracks that were finally decided on were a result of the success of attracting these individuals. North Park's past involvement with different non-profit organizations provided a pool of 10 different tracks that were considered for this initiative.

The five tracks that were chosen, homelessness, refugees, unplanned pregnancy, disabilities and non-profit boards of directors, were chosen for two reasons: 1) I had a good working relationship with the individuals that would lead the track and I trusted their ability to deliver a quality experience and 2) the leader was available to meet the obligations that were set out. This included teaching once a month for 8 months as well as making their organization available to provide volunteer experiences for the participants. Appendix 2 shows a sample letter that was sent to each potential facilitator.

Non-Profit Organizations

These organizations were needed to provide hands-on service opportunities related to the different areas of study. Other than for the Board of Directors track, these organizations were all connected to the track specific facilitators. These included Mission Services of London (homelessness), Cheshire (disabilities), London Crisis Pregnancy Centre (unplanned pregnancy) and Life Resource Centre (refugees). These organizations also had existing processes to accept volunteers which would facilitate the transition to hands-on serving for all participants.

For the Board of Directors track, 4 organizations were approached that would allow participants to attend board meetings on an audit-only basis. Two of the organizations were already participating in the other tracks, Mission Services of London and Cheshire, and the other two were from current relationships with the Executive Director: Pathways (an employment counseling agency) and the Brain Tumor Foundation of Canada whose Executive Director attends North Park.

Participants

Without people registering for this initiative, it would not have taken place. Interested individuals were asked to fill out a registration form and indicate their reasons for wanting to participate. They also listed any past experience in the area of service they were choosing. These simple questions were a way to determine if a registrant may not be suitable to participate. This proved to work well as one individual's answers appeared suspect. A follow up phone

conversation confirmed this and the person was not accepted as a participant. For confidentiality, the details cannot be disclosed here.

North Park Pastors

Although the other pastors at North Park were not directly involved in the implementation of Engaging Journeys, making them aware of the initiative and providing them the information was important so that they could direct people to participate if appropriate. This was accomplished through updates at the weekly staff meeting.

Implementation Plan – Activities by month

June 2010

Catalogue Development (see appendix for actual catalogue) – This was used to advertise the opportunities and provided details of the program; it also included the registration form.

Finalize Track Specific Leaders – These leaders/teachers facilitated the monthly track specific teaching for the participants to learn about their specific area (i.e. homelessness).

Meet with Volunteer Coordinators – These were the various coordinators of each non-profit that provided serving opportunities to enhance the learning experience: for two of the tracks they were also the same as the track teacher/facilitator.

July 2010

Catalogue Development – As above.

Finalize track leaders in conjunction with volunteer coordinator opportunities –

As above.

Large Group Teaching Components – develop content for large group teaching

August 2010

Finalize Catalogue and send to print – As above.

Large Group Teaching Components – As above.

September 2010

Communicate opportunity through various channels – see communications strategy below.

Accept and process registrations

Finalize large group teaching content for October

October 2010 – April 2011

The initiative was launched with 4 tracks and 26 participants

The disabilities track only received 2 registrations so it was decided not to proceed with this. The two registrants accepted offers to join one of the other tracks.

Communication Strategy

The overall strategy was to utilize the various communication channels that North Park has established to communicate the details of the initiative.

Catalogue

This was the primary tool used to provide full disclosure of the details of the initiative. It was designed and printed in-house and was made available during the month of September and the first two weekends of October during weekend services. A pdf version was also available on North Park's website. The catalogue included the registration form. (see appendix)

Website

There was a web page dedicated to Engaging Journeys. It outlined the initiative and included a link to a pdf of the catalogue as well as an email link to ask questions.

Weekend Service Announcements

This initiative was highlighted during all services in the weeks leading up to the launch. People were directed to the gym where there was a display with copies of the catalogue available. The gym is a central place where people congregate after the service. It opens for coffee and tea service as well as other displays for the various North Park ministries.

LINK Magazine

The LINK is a monthly publication offered to North Park attendees free of charge. A full page “ad” was placed in the September and October editions.

Monthly Meetings

The group met eight times during the initiative. For consistency, the meeting was set for the second Thursday of each month – October 2010 through May 2011. Each meeting went from 6:30pm – 9:00pm and was divided into two components: large group session (6:30pm-7:30pm) and breakout groups (7:45pm-9:00pm). The 15 minutes between was used to transition between the two segments.

The large group sessions followed a similar format: welcome and introductory comments, prayer, personal reflection, group reflection, scripture reading and/or video message followed by group discussion.

The welcome, introductory comments and the prayer were always led by me. For the personal reflection time, participants were asked to spend 5-10 minutes silently gathering their thoughts around two questions: what are you learning about yourself and what are you learning about God? They were provided with paper and pens to write down their thoughts if that would help them. These papers were never collected so that participants felt freer to write down their thoughts with a sense of embarrassment or breach of trust.

The group reflection portion had participants sharing their thoughts around the table they were sitting at (up to 8 people), and on a few occasions people shared in the large group for those that were comfortable doing this.

Scripture reading involved an out loud reading of the text for the evening in the NIV and Message translations. Participants were then asked to discuss around their table what they were hearing in the scripture. Each participant was also given a copy of the scripture to follow along with and to make any notes they felt were important for the discussion.

Video sessions were all selected from the series titled “Start Becoming a Good Samaritan” by Zondervan, hosted by John Ortberg. If a video message was used, it was simply shown and then participants were asked to talk with their table colleagues as to what they were hearing in the message. With both the scripture and video, there was an intentional decision made to not “teach” but to allow the participants, with the work of the Holy Spirit, to determine what God was saying to them.

Interviews for Narrative Research

Observing life formation was the focus of this project. As discussed in chapter 3, narrative research was the method chosen to measure this. At the very first meeting that was held in October 2010, it was presented to the group that Engaging Journeys was being used as the foundation for a doctoral thesis. I asked for volunteers to be willing to be interviewed within the next month prior to our November meeting as well as at the end of the initiative in June 2011. They were

told that these interviews would be recorded but that I would not mention any names or personal situations in the final writing without prior consent. Six individuals spoke with me after that meeting and agreed to be interviewed and I was able to connect with five of them to complete the interviews. The sixth person ended up with a scheduling conflict and we were not able to connect prior to the next meeting so I did not proceed with that interview. The five participants were also interviewed in June 2011. Overall, this initiative took a full year to implement.

Analysis of Interviews

The analysis of the conversations that took place with the five participants followed a four-step process. The first step was the actual interview. Each of the ten interviews, five at the start and five at the end, were recorded. During this time, as the researcher, I took mental note of the answers that were given and began to form some initial, although high-level ideas. No written notes were taken at this time to allow me to fully participate in the interview experience.

The second step involved listening to the ten interviews after the initiative ended. Each participant's interview was listened to back-to-back to get a sense of their experience. Notes were also written including specific quotes that provided input to the learning. This process required stopping the recording at times and rewinding to ensure proper transcription.

The third step involved a second listening of the interviews while I followed the notes taken during the first round. This was to ensure proper

transcription occurred and to make any additional notes that would add value after having had listened to all of the interviews.

The fourth step involved coding. Different coloured markers were used to categorize similar comments from the participants. Coding looked at similarities within the specific questions what were asked. Once this was completed, the similarly coded quotes were brought together to ensure that that similarity held true and to get an understanding of the life change that took place across the participants.

This four-step process provided a good categorization of all of the comments collected during the interviews. It also allowed for an organized structure with which to present the findings and draw conclusions.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Five individuals who participated in the Engaging Journeys initiative were interviewed for this project. In this chapter you will come to know five people who have similar historic faith backgrounds – in many ways they represent a typically churched person who never strayed very far from God at any point in life; church was always a key aspect of their lives. Did Engaging Journeys lead to significant life change? This chapter works through the questions that were asked during the interviews and comments as the chapter progresses. Each individual was interviewed twice – at the start of the initiative (Oct/Nov 2010) and at the end of the initiative (June 2011). At the end of each section observations are made about the comments and the individuals.

Who They Were

All of the individuals who were interviewed volunteered to be part of the research process. They represented five different decades of life – one in their 20's, one in their 30's, one in their 40's, one in their 50's and one in their 60's; three were men and two were women.

All five people have grown up and lived with very similar backgrounds. I would characterize them as having solid family and church backgrounds despite the different ages. They all indicated that their parents were a big influence in their lives as it pertained to faith in God. All attended church on a regular basis and have continued this tradition into adult life. They also indicated other

influences pertaining to their faith development – these included youth group leaders, Sunday school teachers and summer camps. All of them spoke highly of their childhoods and their faith experiences – none begrudged this part of life.

They all recounted aspects of how they were influenced in their faith. Comments such as “by example more than word,” “I saw my parents serving” and “it was how the youth leaders treated us” indicated that their faith was more caught than verbally taught. One mentioned having bible stories read before going to bed each night. For some there was a sense that life very much revolved around church. “Dad was always involved in church” and “It was mostly at home or at church” validate this. In addition to these comments, when asked about what faith activities they were involved with growing up, they all indicated that they participated in church activities such as Sunday school, youth group and Christian Service Brigade.

With all of the influence of family and church, when asked what it meant to be a Christian in their growing up years the theme that was dominant was that of “doing the right thing.” This came out in different phrases:

“Doing the right things and not doing the wrong things.”

“About obeying, reading my bible and praying.”

“Denominational rules.”

“More emphasis on what you didn’t do.”

“It meant to break up with non-Christian guys.”

“Trying to bring friends to church.”

In spite of all of these rule-based thoughts I never developed the impression that they regretted their growing up years. They had respect for their parents and their church, and this was simply what life was about.

Serving Society's Marginalized Growing Up

To get a sense for what might have influenced these five people to become involved with Engaging Journeys, they were asked about how serving society's marginalized was part of their growing up years. Had this always been part of their lives? Was Engaging Journeys simply an extension of what they were taught or what was modeled for them?

Overwhelmingly, serving society's marginalized had little to no connection to their growing up years.

"I don't ever recall doing that."

"It was almost non-existent."

"Can't remember something I'd have done."

"I don't remember being purposeful at all."

"It was peripheral. I don't recall too much of an organized approach."

"I don't recall being aware of the disadvantaged."

"Disadvantaged people were those that lived in other countries."

"I remember serving in a food bank once."

From the comments they provided to the tone in their voices, it was obvious that in a way they were perhaps even embarrassed as to the little influence they had had growing up in meeting the needs of society's marginalized. This embarrassment of having become aware of this lack of concern was part of the reason they signed up for the Engaging Journeys initiative.

I would surmise that it is a painful yet beneficial part of the Christian journey to have God reveal areas of life to you that you have been missing. Each person needs to understand that it is not so much the revelation as it is the response to the revelation that is important.

Their Relationship with God at the Start of Engaging Journeys

After talking about their history the conversation moved to how they would describe their relationship with God as Engaging Journeys began. In all situations there was vibrancy to the faith of each of these individuals as they described it. None of them entered into the Engaging Journeys experience as a result of a deficient relationship with God or living in a spiritual low point. They all were truly in love with God.

“Wonderful, real, relevant.”

“It’s very real to me.”

“I crave that connection.”

“He is teaching me a lot.”

“I don’t try to perform like I used to.”

“When I go through the highs and lows I don’t get as distraught or disconnected.”

“I am more secure that I have ever been.”

“Deep down inside I feel very close to God.”

“I have no doubt about his love for me.”

“Even though I don’t get something and it doesn’t jive with what I believe, it doesn’t waiver my faith.”

Their involvement in church activities continues to be important to them as it had been growing up. Activities now include small group involvement, leading Sunday School for kids, organizing church events, a personal daily quiet time and bible reading as well as attending programs such as Alpha.

In the midst of all of this and what they described as a great relationship they had with God, there were other comments made that indicated something was missing, that all was not right. “There is more to life. I’m sick of blending into suburbia.” “My spouse and I had a long conversation one evening and we just knew it was time to change.” “I want to know where my gifts fit for service

beyond just being comfortable with a worship service.” This uneasiness was part of what caused them to sign up for the Engaging Journey’s initiative.

To be able to benchmark this experience they were asked how their thinking about society’s marginalized had changed in recent years. Overall, their awareness had increased, yet this had not changed their actions. I would conclude that this is the first step as God infiltrates the mind and allows us to see things in a different light. This new thinking will eventually lead to live a changed life in the process of spiritual formation.

“What Christ calls us to do.”

“I view it as part of the package of being a disciple. It’s part of being a witness.”

“Last 5-10 years? How about the last 5-10 weeks.”

“The first clue is that it’s been uncomfortable.”

“It’s been in my heart to help the less fortunate, but I haven’t done it.”

“I can say all these things, but I’m not doing anything.”

“I’m personally working through it.”

“Something I’ve become more sensitive to and aware of.”

“The prophets have made me struggle with this.”

“The needs have become more obvious to me.”

All of this questioning that was going on in their minds indicated that a positive transformation that was taking place. However their awareness of the marginalized today elicited many negative and guilty thoughts and feelings – there was hesitancy to step forward and help. The journey that they were all on was definitely a work in progress as their honesty attested to.

“I think negatively.”

“I’m still judging.”

“We live in a great country, those that want to work can find work.”

“I think differently of those in Canada versus the third world.”

“The need must be well understood before we help.”

“I find it difficult to think about them and remember that they are actually there, that I have any role in helping fix the problem.”

“Out of sight, out of mind.”

“I don’t like that feeling, but it’s where I’m at.”

“I often think someone else will take care of them so I walk by.”

“I find it overwhelming at times.”

“What is the government’s role? What is the local congregation’s role?”

“How do you respond with limited resources?”

“I wish it were as simply as it is made to sound.”

It was fascinating for me personally to hear such open and honest responses to this question. Five people who talked positively about their relationship with God and who were all involved proactively in church related and other faith based activities to help them grow in their relationship with God struggled with their response to society’s marginalized. These five had not truly engaged with them in any meaningful way and additionally did not have very positive things to say about them.

Despite these comments, and perhaps because of their vibrant and growing relationship with God, they all realized that they needed the opportunity that Engaging Journeys was offering them. It was the next step in their journey, and they all recognized it when they saw it. Their comments indicated as such.

“I was already down this path.”

“I’ve wanted to do something like this for a long time.”

“For me it just came at the right time.”

“I had too much time for myself that I felt I was wasting.”

“I’ve been thinking that I needed to add value with my gifts. This provided the opportunity.”

“The topic was right for me.”

“My nursing placement primed me for this.”

One individual was simply impressed that a church would actually take this type of project on that he had to get involved. This individual stated: “I was impressed that you were willing to encourage people to do something outside of the church. I think it’s risky and I commend it.”

Overall Learning

Having experienced this 8-month journey of reading and discussing key scriptures, personal and group reflecting, learning about a specific issue of concern and engaging with hands-on service, was there life change? Did this experience have an impact on their formation? This first question asked during the second interview in June was open-ended and simply asked participants to reflect on what they had learned.

In looking on the answers from the five individuals, there are four categories that their responses could be placed in: 1) regrets and unresolved tensions; 2) realization of gifting; 3) impact of scripture; and 4) personal revelations about life.

Regrets and Unresolved Tensions

This experience revealed things to the learner that he or she needed to work through. Some of these items were about his or her own response, others were about their past, and still others about how he or she was continuing to process what he or she had seen and experienced.

“It was hard for me to be led by someone in my area of service as I would have done things differently.” This comment was based on this person’s desire to make things happen in perhaps more efficient way that they were used to. The situation the person was referring to involved work with lower income Canadian and refugee children in an after school program. These children’s home situations were typically chaotic and the children were simply living this out in the after-

school program. In a subsequent conversation that I had with the program leader, the impact of the program this person participated in was significant for these children. For this participant, they realized that they needed to become used to a completely different context for service, one that was much less organized as they would have preferred yet no less relevant.

“I struggled with the tensions of homelessness, to get the right perspective. I wanted to give beggars money and yet they ticked me off that they aren’t helping themselves.” This individual fully embraced their role in the homelessness track and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. From my perspective, this comment did not appear to fit with the person’s described experience. However, despite their love for the hands-on serving they were doing and the fondness with which they spoke about the homeless individuals they came in contact with, there was still this tension that they lived with. They could not grasp why these individuals were not taking care of themselves. They commented further as they tried to resolve this tension when they stated: “I need to watch my judging attitude. It’s not my job to change them but simply to love them.”

“I struggled with the board experience as it was not hands on as the other tracks.” This individual was learning about participation on a non-profit board of directors. A component of that track was to audit the monthly board meeting of a non-profit board. As they listened to those in the other tracks share about their involvement with the homeless or refugees or teen mothers, they had a hard time relating the more hands-on experiences with their more “removed” board

experience. They wrestled with whether their role was significant or as effective compared with the more hands-on, in-the-field roles.

“I look back with regret that I didn’t have this as a focus. If I were starting again, I’d have to rethink where some of my priorities are.” This individual, more than any other, spent a portion of the interview looking back on their life and their heavy church involvement. They came to the conclusion that there had been a gap. They had missed a big piece of being a disciple of Jesus growing up. There was almost a heaviness that I as the researcher sensed and yet this individual was not much of one to necessarily dwell on the past and become depressed by missed experiences. They had chosen to move forward with a new energy and vision for their next phase of life.

Realization of Gifting

Three of the individuals made mention of their gifting and how this initiative brought that to the fore. “It is important to do or serve what you are passionate about” commented one person. “My gifting was reinforced” said another. And finally, one made the connection to their gifting through the varied discussions around the scriptures. “A lot of how you react to the text relates to how God has gifted you individually” referring to how they perceived their understanding of the scriptures compared to what others brought forward during the group discussion component each month.

Beyond these five individuals in the research group, I recall one individual during the second last monthly gathering state that they came to the realization

that they were not suited to be part of a board of directors, the track in which they had participated in. They had always thought that this would be a fit but were grateful that this opportunity had allowed them to work through their thinking on this. Interestingly, they realized that the organization that they audited was in need of fund raising assistance and they believed that this was an area that they could be excited about.

Overall, Engaging Journeys provided an opportunity for people to engage their gifts in a practical way. It allowed them to validate their assumptions about who they thought they were and how they could contribute.

Impact of Scripture

Two people made mention of scripture and the impact this had on them. “How much God through his word has to say about service” stated the one. “The frequency with which scripture talked about the less fortunate; it was a good opportunity to remember things that I hadn’t focused on recently” commented the other.

Further comments are made later in the chapter regarding the impact of the scriptures that were used during the discussion about the various components of the initiative. It is noteworthy that two individuals felt it necessary to state that the biblical text impacted them when responding to a general question that asked them what their overall learning was from this initiative.

Personal Revelations About Life

Four of the five individuals made comments that I would categorize as a personal revelation, an aspect of the initiative that caused them to pause and reflect deeply.

“My life missed serving. Now that I’ve done it, how could I not.” A simple statement and yet this individual had tears in their eyes as they recounted many of the experiences they had had. There was passion in the way they talked, an excitement in their voice. There had been a missing component to their formation and they had discovered it. They could not imagine going back to their former way of life that had been self-centred and entertainment focused.

“Will I be able to do this for the long-haul, because I know over time that I’ll be taken for granted [by those that I am serving], it’s just human nature.” This participant had had a great experience. They had been appreciated by the organization they had worked with and by the people they had served. They had engaged their family in the process and had talked excitedly with their neighbours about it. And yet something inside them, perhaps past life experience, made them wonder about their reasons for their involvement. Was it for the praise of others, which may fade away one day, or was it simply because they loved God and this was what he was calling them to do? They were afraid of not being appreciated and being taken for granted. They had not resolved this question by the end of the program.

“Without a doubt, it was more spiritual than I expected.” This comment made me excited. As the researcher I was not expecting this comment from this

individual. In an amazing way, the scriptures, reflection, group discussion and the serving combined together to provide this person with an experience that they could only describe as “spiritual.” What may have started out as a program to learn morphed into something divine.

“This journey prompted an increased sensitivity to needs versus typical church measurement of buildings and money.” Considering the person this comment came from, these words were quite meaningful. This individual had spent all of their life with “church business” yet came to an increased realization that the church exists not for itself but for people. People have needs, and it is the church’s job to care for those needs. Should the local church simply measure the easy things that can be counted or the more difficult things such as people and their life change? This individual realized that they needed to reevaluate this.

The Engaging Journeys Components

This section provides an overview of the various components of the initiative. The goal of these questions was to determine what parts of the experience were more influential or if they all had a similar level of formation for the participants.

Personal Reflection

Each monthly gathering began with 5-10 minutes where everyone was asked to sit quietly and reflect on what they had been learning. The participants were asked to think about what they were learning about themselves and what

they were learning about God as they progressed through this journey. They were provided with pen and paper to write down their thoughts if it helped them with this.

Overall, the five participants were neutral about the personal reflecting aspect of the initiative. Two of them commented that they naturally reflected anyway and as such when they came to the evening's session they already had thought about these things. "I would have been okay with or without it" one of them said.

Two were at the opposite end of the spectrum and said that they do not reflect personally in any formal way. One stated: "I found it hard to put something down on paper." The other said: "This was a new concept for me, one I've never used." These two individuals did appreciate it but wondered if they were really attaining the full benefit out of it due to their lack of experience with this type of discipline. They both did indicate that the personal reflecting helped prepare them for the group reflecting that followed.

The final individual simply stated: "I'd give it 3 out of 5."

Group Reflecting

The group was given the opportunity to share their thoughts with others once the personal reflecting was complete. This was typically done with table groups of 5-8 people; however at 2 of the gatherings it was done as an entire group. The table groupings were based on their learning track for the first few gatherings. After 4 months they were integrated with individuals from other

tracks. All of these combinations were designed to vary the group reflecting experience.

Overwhelmingly, this aspect of the experience was well received. The participants thoroughly enjoyed hearing about the variety of experiences people were having, what they were enjoying and what they were wrestling with. Some of the comments were as follows:

- “I loved that.”
- “It was comforting to hear others concur with what I was feeling.”
- “It contributed to the spiritual aspect.”
- “It forced me to think of the topic on a broader level.”
- “Opened my eyes to simple ways to serve.”
- “That was the best part.”
- “I got a sense of the body of Christ.”
- “I saw different people’s passion for different things.”
- “It encouraged me to keep going.”
- “I really like that.”
- “Cool what the other groups were learning.”
- “You got some enthusiasm for the issues you weren’t a part of.”

The reflecting confirmed what the service-learning literature indicated – learning is enhanced with reflection. Specifically with the group reflection, when this question was presented in the interview you could see the participant’s faces light up. It was well received. You had a sense that being part of a community of people who reflected together was very important. How often do we do this as church communities? This is discussed in the next chapter.

Scripture

At each monthly gathering there would be a scripture passage that was looked at. This was accomplished using a very simple format. A passage, such as Isaiah 58, would be read out loud in two translations (NIV and The Message), to

the entire group. Each person was given a printed copy of the text and was encouraged to follow along if that helped and to make notes about what stood out for them. After the two versions were read, the conversation was simply open to the group to discuss. What were they hearing from the scripture? How did it impact their lives? There was a conscious decision not to formally teach but to allow the biblical text to speak on its own.

Overall, there was a very positive reaction to this component. Interestingly, when asked what scriptures were looked at during the gatherings there was some difficulty in recalling the various texts, and yet they all stated that they did recall enjoying this part of the gatherings. The two scriptures that received the only recollection were Isaiah 58 and Luke 10:25-37 (Good Samaritan).

“I was delighted with the scriptural component.”

“I kept the Isaiah 58 print out.”

“I really like how you incorporated scripture.”

“I enjoyed this part, both translations.”

“I think the passages selected were good choices.”

“Reminded me how common these themes were.”

“Good to move from child-like story understanding to a deeper adult understanding.”

“When reading other scriptures on my own, this theme jumped out at me about helping others.”

As stated in the previous section in this chapter on overall learning, the scriptural component was a key aspect of the learning that took place. “How much God through his word has to say about service” and “The frequency with which scripture talked about the less fortunate” were two of the comments made that would corroborate this.

Videos

As part of 4 of the large group sessions, a video from the series “Becoming a Good Samaritan” from Zondervan was shown and then discussed. This was used in addition to the scriptural component. As with the scripture readings, there was no detailed recall of the content, and yet all five participants did mention that the videos were a great addition to the gatherings and that they were positively impacted by watching them.

“Great for me as a visual learner.”

“It set the stage for what we were learning.”

“I loved those, especially the man with cerebral palsy – my heart’s behind my eyes thinking about it.”

“I thought it was a refreshing way to review some of the points.”

“Nice way of changing things up just when there was a pattern.”

“I can remember thinking at times, this is good, this is relevant, I’m glad I came tonight.”

In Class Issue-Specific Training

Each participant chose a specific track of learning for this experience. These included homelessness, unplanned pregnancy, refugees to Canada, and serving on a non-profit board of directors. The second half of each monthly gatherings included a 75 minute breakout session in their area of focus that was led by an expert in that area.

The feedback on this section was brief from all five participants. I do not believe that it was because the participants did not appreciate what was learned. In many cases they gave high praise for the individuals who led their group and the knowledge that they had, yet the comments were brief. In addition, many of the comments came from the angle of what they would do to improve this aspect of

the learning, how they would change the format to some degree. This was useful information as this was the first time that this initiative was offered.

I would parallel the brief comments here to that of the comments made about the personal reflecting section. The learning from the experts was good, but it was simply a stepping stone to the actual hands-on serving that they would get to participate in. This was the same way that the personal reflecting simply prepared each person to contribute to the participatory group reflecting time.

Hands-On Serving

This is the final component of the Engaging Journeys initiative. As expected, the comments for this aspect were very positive, and I could already anticipate what was going to be said as comments about the serving had been sprinkled throughout the entire interview.

“It was an awesome placement.”

“I felt very welcome.”

“Hands on was really important.”

“I met a lot of really neat kids and needy kids.”

“I was able to contribute in a greater way than I expected to. This was good.”

“That was the part that made it for me.”

“Getting to know the staff and people’s stories was good.”

The hands-on serving was one of the key reasons why people signed up for this initiative and from their comments they were not disappointed with the serving opportunities.

Final Thoughts from the Participants

At the end of each interview, participants were allowed to add any comments that they wanted to. It was a great way to end off the formal aspect of the interview as to this point they had been asked to respond to specific questions. Being able to formally think through the experience through the interview process gave the participants a chance to come to some thoughtful concluding remarks.

There are two categories of thought that came from this final question. First, were some personal reflections, in essence reinforcing the learning they had already been talking about.

“Made me want to be a better steward of my time.”
 “It’s been a really changing experience.”
 “It’s definitely worth doing.”
 “You have to do it at the right time, being open to being uncomfortable.”
 “It made me more sensitive to the topic in general.”

The second set of comments is insight for the local church. They were encouragements that North Park had provided an opportunity that filled an important role in their formation. They wanted to continue to seek out these types of experiences.

“I think other churches should take this on.”
 “I’ve shared this with a number of people.”
 “To train someone to be effective in ministry, I think that is awesome.”
 “It connected me with North Park.”
 “The eight months allowed it to have a good, lasting impact compared to a 4-week sermon series on the topic.”
 “Right kind of approach for longer term impact.”
 “I really applaud it. You’re definitely on to something.”
 “I’d speak highly of it to anyone.”

There are two comments above that stood out for me as the researcher and a pastor. The first, “To train someone to be effective in ministry” told me that the

local church was perhaps not providing appropriate training for them. It took me back to Ephesians 4:12 where Paul is stating that the church leaders are to “equip the saints” to serve. I personally need to review how I am achieving this in the other areas I am responsible for.

The second was the comment about having a “lasting impact compared to a 4-week sermon series on the topic.” This individual was actually referring to a series that North Park had recently had on the topic of justice and the role that the church was to play. Although he had enjoyed the series, he realized that once North Park moved on to the next series of messages he would quickly forget the learning and his life change would be minimal. He appreciated the longevity of Engaging Journeys. This supports the literature on service learning.

Researcher’s Comments

The results of this research are fascinating. They support the intuitive feelings I have around the effectiveness of church programs and initiatives. This is especially true for adults, and I will explore those conclusions in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The results from the interviews with the five participants in conjunction with the literature search supports seven conclusion. Filtering them through a pastoral lens reveals implications for the local church and its leadership. These conclusions are meant to encourage local church leaders to reflect on their call to form disciples of Jesus.

Conclusion One: Life Transformation Takes Time

Although this conclusion may seem obvious, it bears stating. It is my opinion that local churches do not offer opportunities that take this into account. Typical opportunities provided are short-term seminar-style learning experiences. From these experiences leaders expect attendees to grasp the material and make the appropriate life changes that the seminar taught. We assume that they will take the necessary steps to ensure the learning is fully incorporated into their lives on an ongoing basis – this is not reality. I would add that this is not simply a church issue. My past experience in a corporate context would support a similar conclusion.

The insight for this conclusion is drawn from watching the participants' progress through Engaging Journeys and hearing their comments, the Service Learning discussion from chapter 3 and my past experience in discipling relationships.

This initiative demonstrated that time is needed for life change to occur when looking at simple aspects such as finding a place to serve at the non-profit organization and then working through several positions at the organization to find a good fit; this required the entire 8-months of the initiative for some. Interestingly, many were just beginning to get into a rhythm of service. Without finding a place of service with which to experience meaningful interaction with the marginalized, deeper life change is not going to take place. In addition, processing the scriptural as well as the issue specific information and combining this information with the hands-on learning requires time to develop into firm beliefs and commitments. Recall the comment from one of the participants who talked about the impact of the 8 months compared to simply listening to a 4-week message series and then moving on to the next topic. The 8 months was important for formation to take place.

The Service Learning literature validates this. It speaks to the importance of time necessary for learning to take place in someone's life. In addition, my own experience in participating in and leading various discipleship groups would corroborate this as well. We cannot expect life change to occur with bite-sized teaching moments, it requires an extended period in order for the change to be realized.

The implications for the local church are straightforward and yet challenging. It will require a move away expecting people to learn from constantly changing 30 minute message topics on Sundays or at evening seminars. It recognizes that time is needed for life change to take place. It is my opinion that

churches cannot continue to roll out a new teaching series every 4-6 weeks and expect those listening to be able to grasp the material and make appropriate life changes. They need to revisit what they are trying to accomplish. If the objective is life transformation, they cannot assume that present methods will accomplish this.

Conclusion Two: Reflective Interaction Increases Life Transformation

This conclusion validates the service learning literature. There is a learning benefit in having to articulate what you are being taught – it embeds the information that leads to transformation. The opportunities that Engaging Journeys provided for reflection proved to be an important part of the initiative. The reflective interaction that took place is evident on multiple levels. This includes group reflection (all 5 participants in the research group spoke highly of this), with scripture, with the individual track leaders (such as homelessness) and interaction with those that were being served. All of these interactive components were useful in the life transformation that took place.

The implications for the church are significant. Consistently churches that I am familiar with consider the weekly Sunday gathering the key component of discipleship for their congregants. Though other opportunities are offered (seminars, conferences, small groups, etc), the weekend service is the event that church leaders expect everyone to attend. Most often these services have little to no reflective interaction. Presently, congregants stand and sit in rows and passively listen to their pastor teach them. These services can be very efficient

and kept neat and tidy and in many cases they can attract large crowds with the right communicator and quality of music. However this style of learning will not lead to consistent and transformative life change. Leaders can only hope that people are engaging with the content after the service is over but can never be certain of this. My experience would indicate that this is not the case. Churches must make *reflective interaction* a primary means of their formation strategy.

Conclusion Three: Discipleship Involves Integrating Multiple Activities

Service Learning pedagogy automatically provides a second level of engagement since it includes both classroom learning as well as hands-on serving. The results from this initiative validate that the components that were integrated as part of Engaging Journeys worked together to increase formation. The interviews at the start of the initiative indicated that the participants did not have an understanding as to how the components would work together. Some stated that they were really joining to learn about their specific area of interest only – the reflecting and scriptural aspects were not deemed to be of value. However, during the final interview, several comments were made about the impact that scripture did have and how the group interaction added to their learning. The comment from one of the participants about the experience being “more spiritual” than expected was indicative of this. The multiple activities did lead to more life change than the participants were expecting.

The implications for the church imply a change in the way that it organizes itself to guide people to grow and develop as disciples of Jesus.

Churches must lead people into the numerous aspects of formation. They cannot assume that people will naturally engage in the necessary components. The discussion in chapter 2 about Jesus' way he led his disciples from the Gospel of Matthew emphasize this as well.

Conclusion Four: Do Not Underestimate the Importance of Scripture

The comments made by the participants necessitate a standalone conclusion. All participants spoke of the impact that the scripture passages had on their formation. Two participants were pleasantly surprised at the impact scripture did have for them personally. They had both grown up with significant bible teaching and did not believe that there was anything they had not heard before – they were wrong. Interacting with scripture during this experience made it come alive in exciting ways.

Our local churches continue to repeat the same topics and typical bible passages during weekend services. After years of attending church services, people become numb. Combine this with the lack of interactivity and you will realize that there will probably be minimal life change. Additionally, in looking at the many sermon topics that many pastors are choosing to speak to, I wonder if our churches are biblically based or self-help based.

The scriptural process that was used with the Engaging Journeys initiative simply allowed scripture to speak to the participants. Each passage was read aloud followed by interaction between the attendees. The comments given by the 5 interviewed participants all indicated a deep sense of connection to the passages

and how they assisted them in their formation. Additionally, the scriptures became increasingly transformative when combined with the hands-on service.

The implication for the local church is one of renewal. Scripture must be at the core of what the local church is teaching; it cannot simply be used for proof texting. The church must renew its belief in the power of scripture as an inspired text.

Conclusion Five: Every Discipleship Journey is Unique

As churches develop streamlined processes to develop disciples, they need to be mindful that each person is on a unique journey – this journey includes their personality, gifts and passions. Engaging Journeys, with its program-oriented approach, provides enough freedom and space to allow a wide range of individuals to participate and be impacted uniquely. This variety includes a range of different topical tracks to the multiple ways of learning (personal and group reflecting, scriptural dialogue, etc.). The diversity of people that participated bears this out with an age range from 20's to 60's. It also comprised men and women in equal numbers and included students, business owners, house wives and retirees. Each person was able to engage at their stage of maturity and learn from the others. This was very refreshing to both watch and participate in.

The implication for the local church is to simply recognize this. As a pastor I can easily lead people in a way that I would prefer to be led. I talk about the spiritual disciplines that I use and ask people to serve in the areas that suit my gifts and passions. I assume that they need to be learning in the areas that God has

been moving me in. We must remind ourselves that people are unique, and God is working in them individually even as God is leading the local congregation as a whole.

Conclusion Six: Moving Outside Your Comfort Zones with People Who are Different is Transformative Theologically

Rene Padilla challenges his South American friends to not blindly accept the theological writings from North America as they do not address the issues that are faced in South America (refer to Chapter 2). In this vein, we must also admit that our theology has been developed from a middle-class, white, North American mindset and does not accurately reflect insight from the homeless, disabled or the imprisoned. Participants in Engaging Journeys had scripture come alive in new ways as they reflected on it and then participated in hands-on service to society's marginalized in London, Ontario. New understanding came to light, mindsets were challenged and their theology, even though they might not have used that terminology, was stretched and altered. Many are still sorting through the implications of this and have not yet been able to articulate what their new understanding means.

The implication for the church is confession. We must be willing to step into the marginalized communities that we have often avoided and allow these experiences to shape us. We need to let the homeless men or women share their experiences so that we can understand how the bible relates to them. We need to speak to the disabled man or woman who is confined to a wheel chair and ask what scriptures are most relevant to his or her circumstances and how he or she

views God. Our theological filters must be altered so that we have a more integrated view of scripture and what it is teaching. Only then will we be able to teach our congregants from a new framework, one that does not avoid the implications of the issues of society's marginalized.

Conclusion Seven: Growth is Confusing, Messy and Uncomfortable

This conclusion validates the ideas of Frost and Hirsch from Chapter 2 with respect to people having to go through liminal space. This is the space where you are no longer living the life you once did but not yet in the new life you are moving to. Engaging Journeys brought people into that liminal space but did not move them into the new life they are still heading toward. The participants completed the journey with unanswered questions. Those that engaged with homelessness were on one hand inspired and on the other hand frustrated with many of those they served. Some participants determined that the area they served in was not an area they thought they should continue with. However the call to help society's marginalized grew strong during the initiative for all. The participants now needed to determine their next steps. As the leader of this initiative, I was both encouraged by the wrestling with the issues while at the same time concerned that I was leaving people in a place with more questions than answers.

The implications for church leaders are one of encouragement as well as serious reflection. The encouragement is to not worry when congregants are questioning and wrestling with issues of faith and wondering what their next step

is. This is probably a good thing and one where you need to simply come alongside with support and prayer. God is working in their lives and forming them. The reflection however is to determine if anyone in your congregations is actually wrestling with anything to do with their faith. If you cannot name anyone or very few, perhaps that is an even bigger issue – liminal space is part of growing in faith.

Confession from the Researcher

As I listened to the comments made during the first set of interviews I found myself making predictions as to which of them would be open to having a life-changing experience. However, as I listened to the final set of interviews I was rebuked, most specifically from the comments of two individuals. I had predetermined from the first set of interviews that they would not fully engage with the initiative as I was hoping. I did not believe that there would be much positive life transformation in either of them. Both of these individuals proved my initial predictions completely wrong. Inwardly I had to confess that I needed to simply be faithful in helping people become disciples and to not second guess what the Holy Spirit is doing in someone's heart.

It is easy for me to gravitate to those individuals that I believe are ready to learn and change and to dismiss others who I determine are not prepared to grow in their faith. I want to demonstrate that I am being successful in my job and as such I try to find those that I believe will help me demonstrate this success. How wrong it is to use my human processing abilities to cast judgment on a spiritual

experience before it is even allowed to occur. I must continually increase my sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit so that I am more aware of where I am to pour out my energy as I walk beside those under my care.

I conclude that Engaging Journeys validated the question set forth at the start: *would offering an 8-month combined service learning experience that provided a monthly routine of reflective learning and reflecting practice increase the spiritual formation that takes place in someone's life?*

The length of the initiative was doable yet challenging. The monthly rhythm of learning and serving was also doable yet challenging. All of the components provided a piece of the formation puzzle. The quality of the non-profit leaders who assisted in the learning was also well received.

Next Steps

As a result, Engaging Journeys will be offered again starting in the fall of 2011 through to the spring of 2012. Some refinements will be made, most notably each participant will receive a journal designed specifically for the program that will include space for monthly journaling as well as a printout of the scriptures. I believe that this will enhance the experience as it will assist in the reflective aspects.

Of the five tracks that were offered, four of the leadership teams have agreed to continue for 2011-2012 which in itself is a validation of the benefits of

the initiative. In addition, two new tracks will be offered, Understanding Global Partnerships and Helping those in Prison.

Additionally, I plan to take a group of grade 8 students through a version of Engaging Journeys and test out the feasibility of this initiative for that demographic. Conversations have already taken place with the youth pastor as well as the leaders of this group of youth. This will also start in October 2011.

Longer term, perhaps in the fall of 2012, I believe that this initiative should be offered to other churches in London. There has already been interest expressed from two churches. This will not only help to develop believers in other churches, but also bring churches in London together as we determine to increase our influence in the city.

Engaging Journeys is an initiative that achieved its objective of leading people into a more integrated way of discipleship that led to significant life change. I believe that it is transferable to local church contexts at least across North America, especially middle-class, suburban churches. I trust that it will continue to impact the lives of those at North Park Community Church in London, Ontario and that perhaps North Park can be used as an incubator to assist other local churches.

APPENDIX 1

Engaging Journeys Questions – October 2010 Interview

Just so you know, the interview will be recorded and I'll be transcribing it however it will be kept confidential. In my paper I'll never refer to anyone by name or in my paper make comments that will distinguish who you are unless I get your permission. In the interview I ask you to be as honest as you can. Please don't give me answers that you'd think I'd like to hear or answers you'd prefer to give to make you look a certain way. And finally, I'll be interviewing you one more time at the end of this initiative and the goal between the two interviews will be to determine what learning has taken place.

I'm going to ask you questions under three categories: First of all your history, secondly your current life situation, and then thirdly your thoughts on Engaging Journeys.

History

- 1) Growing up, who were the influences in your life as it pertains to your faith in God.

- 2) How would you say these individuals influenced you in your faith?

- 3) Growing up, what did it mean to be a Christian?

- 4) Growing up, what faith activities were you involved with?

- 5) How much was serving the less fortunate part of your growing up years?

Current Situation

- 6) How would you describe your relationship with God today?

- 7) Practically speaking, what activities are you involved with in order to develop your relationship with God?

- 8) Over the last 5-10 years, how do you see helping the less fortunate to being a disciple?

9) What practices or activities do you think are signs that people are growing in their relationship with God?

10) When you think of the less fortunate in society today, what comes to mind? Are you positively, negatively or neutrally predisposed?

Thoughts on Engaging Journeys

11) What influenced you to sign up for Engaging Journeys?

12) Engaging Journeys seeks to combine scripture, personal and group reflection, learning about and serving with a specific issue all in one package. How would you expect to see these pieces work together to mature in your faith?

13) How do you think that understanding and involving yourself practically in an issue of the City of London will help you develop as a disciple of Jesus?

APPENDIX 2

Engaging Journeys Questions – June 2011 Interview

1) Before I get into some specific questions, overall, what were some of the key things you learned during this 8-month experience?

2) I'm going to ask you to comment on the various aspects of the program each individually. How did the following aspects of the journey assist in your learning:

Personal Reflection each meeting

Group Reflection each meeting

Scripture and do you recall any of the scriptures we looked at

Video Messages and do you recall any highlights from them

Issue specific in-class training

Hands-on serving

3) Were there any specific people that had more of an influence on you?

4) In what ways do you believe that this experience will change the way you think and the way you act?

5) Any other comments you'd like to make with respect to the experience?

APPENDIX 3

Date

Name

Organization

Address

Dear Name,

As you are aware, in 2007 North Park Church began a concerted effort to reach out to the many social needs of London through an initiative called "Engage." The initiative had three areas of focus: **LEARN** about the needs of London, **GIVE** to the needs of London and **SERVE** the needs of London.

As we continue to evaluate this initiative, we have determined that a positive next step would be to provide an intentional longer-term experience that combines the ebb and flow of serving and learning.

In the fall of 2010, we want to offer the following to North Park attendees:

- 6 - 8 month Service-Learning opportunity (Oct 2010 – May 2011)
- Meeting monthly for learning combined with serving monthly
- Each of the 6 opportunities will deal with a unique issue
- Each option to be lead by a Team Leader with expertise in the area

We would love for you to be one of the Team Leaders in the area of ***"Understanding and Experiencing Non-Profit Board of Directors."*** (see attached Team Leader profile)

We would hope that 10-15 people would sign up for this option whereby they would learn what it means to be on a non-profit board and then to sit in on a regular board of directors meeting with a non-profit organization in London. We would hope to have your assistance in helping to set up these connections but we have some connections as well. We wouldn't anticipate that they would be voting members of these boards, but simply have the opportunity to participate in an observational way. We believe that through monthly learning and active participation that these individuals would have a desire to be a positive contributing member on a non-profit board in the City of London once they complete this 8-month experience.

I'd love to meet with you to discuss this opportunity and answer any questions you may have.

Regards

Matthew Eckert

**North Park Community Church
Service-Learning Opportunities**

Role of TEAM LEADER

Commitment:

- 1) Provide eight 60 minute learning sessions on your subject area
- 2) Suggest one book to be given to each participant (the book could be the structure for the learning sessions)
- 3) Attend large group teaching (see definitions below)
- 4) Assist in arranging Serving Opportunities
- 5) Be available (via email and/or phone) to coach participants

Sessions will be held the second Thursday of each month.

Dates of Sessions:

1. October 14, 2010
2. November 11, 2010
3. December 9, 2010
4. January 13, 2011
5. February 10, 2011
6. March 10, 2011
7. April 14, 2011
8. May 12, 2011

Session Agenda

Each session will follow a similar format as outlined:

6:30pm-7:30pm – Large Group teaching

7:30pm-7:50pm – Coffee Break

7:50pm-9:00pm – Small Group breakout by topic area – Team Leader to lead

Definitions:

Large Group Teaching: This will involve all group participants together in an interactive teaching time. It will be used to look at key scriptures that inform the Christian's response to issues of social justice and care. It will include guest presenters. The format will encourage interaction around the teaching. The Team will have no direct role during this time other than as a participant.

Coffee Break: An opportunity to connect with others and help to transition between activities.

Small Group Breakout: Participants will separate into their various issues for learning. Team Leaders will guide this time of learning. This is meant to be interactive. As the year progresses it is anticipated that participants will engage in peer mentoring as they share about their individual serving experiences.

APPENDIX 4



An exceptional opportunity to connect in a deeper way with a particular area of need in the City of London. Over an 8-month period (Oct 2010 – May 2011), through a monthly rhythm of classroom learning, in the field serving and personal reflecting, you will fully immerse yourself in one area of need and become acquainted with ways that you can intentionally be a change agent in London.

You will have a choice of one of the following areas:

- Serving those with Disabilities
- Assisting those with Unplanned Pregnancy
- Welcoming Refugees to London
- Serving on a Non-Profit Board of Directors
- Engaging with Homelessness in London

**5 Great
Opportunities**

The Commitment

You will participate in 8 learning sessions that will take place at North Park Community Church the second Thursday of each month starting in October.

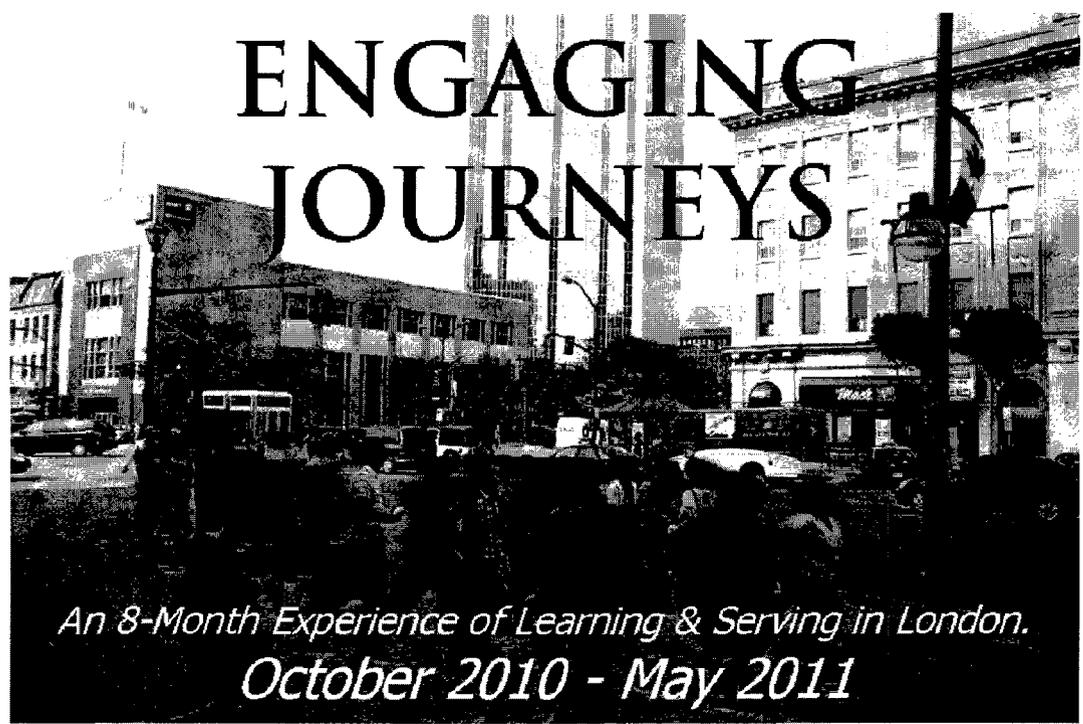
In addition to these sessions, you will also commit to serving a minimum of once per month in the area that you have selected. These opportunities will be facilitated by various non-profit organizations in London.

Interested?

Pick up the full catalogue of opportunities during the weekend services are online at www.northpark.ca.
Questions: mar.eckert@northpark.ca

APPENDIX 5

ENGAGING JOURNEYS



*An 8-Month Experience of Learning & Serving in London.
October 2010 - May 2011*

An initiative of:



Engaging Journeys

An 8-Month Experience of Learning and Serving in London

Outlined in this catalogue is an exceptional opportunity to connect in a deeper way with a particular area of need in the City of London.

Over an 8-month period (Oct 2010 – May 2011), through a monthly rhythm of classroom learning, in the field serving and personal reflecting, you will fully immerse yourself in one area of need and become acquainted with ways that you can intentionally be a change agent.

You will have a choice of one of the following areas:

- **Serving those with Disabilities**
- **Assisting those with Unplanned Pregnancy**
- **Welcoming Refugees to London**
- **Serving on a Non-Profit Board of Directors**
- **Engaging with Homelessness in London**

**5 Great
Opportunities**

The Commitment

You will participate in 8 learning sessions that will take place at North Park Community Church.

Sessions will be held the second Thursday of each month.

October 4, 2010	November 11, 2010	December 9, 2010	January 13, 2011
February 10, 2011	March 10, 2011	April 14, 2011	May 12, 2011

Each session will follow a similar format as outlined:

6:30pm-7:30pm – Large Group teaching

7:30pm-7:50pm – Coffee Break

7:50pm-9:00pm – Small Group breakout by topic area – Team Leader to lead

In addition to these sessions, you will also commit to serving a minimum of once per month in the area that you have selected. These opportunities will be facilitated by various non-profit organizations in London.

Understanding Terms:

Large Group Teaching: This will involve all group participants together in an interactive teaching time. We will look at key scriptures that inform the Christian's response to issues of social justice and care. The format will encourage interaction around the teaching.

Coffee Break: An opportunity to connect with others and help to transition between activities.

Small Group Breakout: Participants will separate into their various issues for learning. Team Leaders will guide this time. This is meant to be interactive. As the year progresses it is anticipated that participants will engage in peer mentoring as they share about their individual serving experiences.

Cost: There will be a tuition fee of \$100 per person. This money will cover the cost of materials used during the monthly teaching as well as food and beverages. Please note that there may be additional cost involved in serving in your area of interest such as transportation.

Key Aspects of the Experiences:

Scriptural Foundation

Each month we will look at a portion of scripture that calls us to impact the community around us, to enter into the issues of our day and to take action. It is our prayer that these scriptures will form a solid foundation that will continually encourage you to take action in whatever area of justice God leads you.

Hands on Serving

This initiative will move you beyond classroom learning and into the day to day action of a specific area. As you go back and forth between learning and serving each month, you will gain incredible insight into how one can make a lasting impact on this area of need.

Learning from Experts

Each group will be led by individuals who are working directly in the area you are serving. They all bring years of experience that will help guide you in your learning and reflecting on what you are experiencing.

Reflecting/Debriefing

An important aspect of this experience will be a component of reflection or debriefing. Just as Jesus often took his disciples aside and reviewed with them what they were thinking and feeling and learning, we will do the same. There has been a considerable amount of research done in the past 15-20 years that has recognized the importance of taking time to reflect and formally document what you are learning – it helps the learning to take root in significant ways and leads to real life change.

This experience will incorporate both personal and group reflecting/debriefing each month when we gather together. This will be both written as well as verbal. Please note that written reflection does not require professional writing skills. Much of it will be guided through questions that we will provide and can simply be answered using point form comments. It's not the articulation that is important but the thinking process that leads to the life change. We believe that you will really appreciate this aspect of the initiative.

Next Steps:

The following pages outline the 5 tracks that are being offered during this Engaging Journey. Each area is being led by individuals that work in the area learning on an ongoing basis and bring a wealth of knowledge.

Take a look at what area might be of interest to you personally.

Please note that there are limits as to how many people may participate in each track.

Questions: _____

For His Kingdom and the
City of London, Ontario,

Matthew Eckert
Pastor of Community Engagement

UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

Title: Assisting those with Unplanned Pregnancies

6 Spots
Available

Description:

It is important to provide meaningful alternatives to abortion for women with an unplanned pregnancy. However, because the difficulties involved in an unplanned pregnancy are usually multi-layered and complex, how can you engage with everyone involved in the decision-making process? What are ways to educate women in order to empower them to make informed decisions for themselves, based on full and complete understanding of their options, not based on fear or pressure from outside influences? You will have the opportunity to hear from those impacted and involved with the LCPC, a client, parent, volunteer, program support leader, and a board member.

Topics Covered:

- Understanding the client, pregnancy and fetal development
- Abortion education, talking with the post abortive client, alternatives to abortion, special considerations
- The role of the helper, care-giver
- Negative pregnancy tests and sexual integrity/sexually transmitted infections
- Volunteerism/servant hood
- The role of a pregnancy support centre/referrals

Team Leaders:

Lori Bethel – Lori is passionate about people! She and her husband Bill have three children and recently a son-in-law. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Religious Studies at the University of Western Ontario and through the years she has been actively involved in youth ministry and starting a young offender's group home. Connecting intentionally with young females increased Lori's passion to take a more active role in the lives of those impacted by unintentional pregnancies and the many challenges that go along with that. Lori now serves as the Executive Director of the London Crisis Pregnancy Centre. Together with her team, they provide the London and the surrounding community with options counseling, post abortion counseling and educational presentations on teen pregnancy, and sexual realities. Lori and her family have attended North Park for many years and have enjoyed the connection between North Park and LCPC.

Linda Suchard – Linda has been married 25 years to Stuart and has three daughters, Lindsey (22), Chelsey (20) and Stacey (17). Linda serves as the Client Service Director at the London Crisis Pregnancy Centre where she advocates on behalf of the client, providing practical and material support. Linda has been involved at the LCPC for the past three years. She networks with numerous outside agencies in London, providing her clients with accurate information so they can in turn better themselves and change the next generation. She is heavily involved with community plans, Child's Aid Society, Addiction Services London, Ontario Works, London Housing, custody issues, post abortive counselling, and educating girls on life skills (GRIP/STEP program). Linda feels it is a privilege and an honour to serve God in this light.

Continued...

Service Opportunities:

This experience will include hands on service at London Crisis Pregnancy Centre, including such activities as:

- Receiving maternity clothing/baby donations and organizing the care closet
- Greeting clients and getting them started with an Intake file
- Attending to any fundraising activities : counting money from baby bottles, preparing packages for baby bottle campaign, preparing for banquet
- Shadowing in the counseling room
- Participating in our Step/Grip program on Thursday evenings and engaging with clients and their families
- Assisting with day to day routines of the Centre
- Attending a "Sex. Think. Decide" sexual realities presentation at a school or youth event

DISABILITIES

Title: Serving those with Disabilities
Description:

Churches that are truly inclusive are not compelled by legislation or policy to be responsive to all people, they are motivated by God's clear call to be a community that invites, receives and embraces everyone with disabilities. They recognize that they are missing something vital – indeed, they are impoverished when people with disabilities are not participating. They also realize the contributions that people with disabilities can make in the life of a church. If you have not experienced the richness of walking alongside people with disabilities you are missing opportunities for rich and fulfilling relationships. This Engage Internship will provide for insight and hands on experience in understanding the great opportunity to engage in meaningful those individuals with disabilities.

6 Spots
Available

Topics Covered:

- Understanding disabilities
- Experiencing the impact of disabilities through experiential learning
- Reflecting on your own experiences, values and beliefs as they relate to people with disabilities
- Learning about the needs of people with disabilities in London from people with disabilities and listen deeply to their stories
- Understanding the community resources and organizations in London that support people with disabilities
- Learning about the joy and the challenges of being a mother with a child with disabilities - "It takes a village" to support a child with a disability – create one!
- Learning the 5 stages through which churches often move as they strive to become more inclusive
- Identifying areas in which North Park can strengthen responsiveness and inclusion
- Becoming more aware when to help and when helping actually does not benefit
- Understanding Disability and Development within a Global context
Becoming aware of North Park's journey with people with disabilities locally and globally

Continued...

DISABILITIES

Team Leaders:

Judi Fisher – Judi has a background in Nursing and has been in leadership positions in Health and Social Services in Ontario for the last 38 years. She has been the Executive Director of Cheshire which is a Community Support Service Agency providing services to adults with significant physical disabilities in the counties of Middlesex, Elgin, Perth, Huron, Oxford and Elgin since 1981. She is a frequent lecturer on issues that affect People with Disabilities and Community Based Health Services in general. For the last several years she has travelled internationally working with Leonard Cheshire Disability International and the Leonard Cheshire Disability Global Alliance of which Cheshire in London, Ontario is a member. There are currently 54 countries in the Alliance supporting over 250 different Cheshire organizations.

Judi has attended North Park for a number of years and has a keen interest in supporting people with disabilities at North Park. North Park has also successfully partnered with Cheshire through its Engage Program.

Matthew Arguin – Matthew is a 28 year old gentleman who moved to London to pursue his Masters of Divinity from Huron College and completed those studies this year. His goal is to become an ordained priest in the Anglican Church. Matt has cerebral palsy and is supported by Cheshire. He has a love of theology and enjoys reading, writing and volunteers at Kensington Village Retirement. He will share firsthand knowledge of living with a disability.

Chris Moss - Chris has been providing hands on care to adults with significant physical disabilities since 1994. During that time she has developed a passion for encouraging their independence and training and developing the staff that provide their care. Chris currently manages a Supportive Housing program with Cheshire where in-home care is provided 24 hours a day. She is working towards her Masters of Arts degree in Servant Leadership at Trinity Western University and strives to seek the love of Christ as a role model and apply his calling to serve others in her work. Chris has been a member of North Park since 2003 and enjoys the connection between her work and her church through the Engage initiative.

Sallie Morrison - Sallie has worked at Cheshire for 4 years as an Attendant Services Manager. Prior to this position she was the Executive Director for Adult Day Centers in Huron County. She is passionate about her work and the people she serves and enjoys teaching Adult Learners. She will guide us through an experiential learning process called "Through Other Eyes".

Carolyn Cauchi - Carolyn has attended North Park for a number of years. She is an enthusiastic and passionate teacher and mother. Her 15 year old son Devon is the joy of her life and she says that "he has a smile that can light up a room". You may have seen him being wheeled around the church in his blue stroller on Sunday morning by someone who helps Devon so that Carolyn can attend the service. Devon's constant seizures have robbed him of many things. He cannot walk or talk although he has his own way of communicating to those who take the time to learn his unique ways. Carolyn will share her first hand experience of raising a child with significant disabilities. She will share her blessings and her frustrations and is keen to assist any other parents of children with disabilities who are on the same journey.

Service Opportunities:

This experience will include service opportunities with Cheshire London as well as Friendship Club at North Park. Opportunities such as shopping for those with difficulties getting out, hosting evening events at a group home, participating in a Friendship Club evening, etc.

Title: Welcoming Refugees to London**Description:**

Every year hundreds of individuals come to London from other countries, many from refugee camps where they have lived for years. As they begin to establish themselves in Canada they have many barriers to overcome, from language to cultural mores to loneliness. How can those who are established in Canada come alongside them in meaningful ways to help them begin a new life that honours and respects them? This hands-on learning experience will take you on a journey that will challenge many of your preconceived ideas of culture and race. It will stretch you and make you see life from a whole new perspective all the while as you serve those new to Canada and as they teach you about their way of life and culture.



6 Spots Available

Topics Covered:

- The journey of the refugee
- Refugee camps
- Canada's refugee system
- First days of the refugee in Canada
- Cultural barriers to overcome
- Children and Canada's school system
- Housing issues
- Religious beliefs
- The cultural role of men and women
- Family dynamics

Team Leaders:

David Cottrill: David serves as the Director of Community Outreach at the Life Resource Centre. Before coming to London in 2004, he spent 8 years ministering as a Missions Pastor in Orange County California, helping to plant urban churches and train workers for these new congregations. The churches were started by first establishing community ministry centres that provided for the needs of the neighbourhood.

The plight of the poor and oppressed has always pressed David into action whether here or abroad. It was this passion that led him to pursue a M.A. program at Fuller Theological Seminary that concentrated on Community Development from a biblical perspective. Before entering full time ministry, David used his engineering background while working at IBM and at a Civil Engineering Consultant in California. He is married to Lynda, a nurse and fellow graduate of Fuller and they have three children.

Monette Benjamin: Monette grew up in western Canada. After a few years of study and working following high school, she completed a Discipleship Training School program with Youth With A Mission (YWAM), including an outreach trip to Asia. She continued her studies and became an English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher working both in Canada and overseas in this field for seven years before returning to YWAM to complete training in Counselling. This included sessions in Switzerland, Brazil, the Netherlands and the USA.

For the past two years Monette has been employed with the Life Resource Centre as an administrative assistant where she organizes and plans many of the weekly and yearly events and programs. She is also actively involved with some of the programs for youth, adults and kids that are new to Canada, helping them adjust well and get connected to the services they need.

Tendayi Gwaradzimba: Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Tendayi grew up in a remote village and attended boarding school and nursing college where she became a registered psychiatric nurse. She is a mother of three adult children and is a refugee who came to Canada in 2009 after fleeing her country 17 years ago. Her refugee journey took her to several African countries where she worked in community development with displaced populations and refugees.

Currently Tendayi works as a community outreach worker for the Life Resource Centre. She visits refugee families in the area to help them feel welcome and connected to their community since many refugee families aren't able to use the services the community offers because, due to various barriers, they don't know they're available.

Continued...

Service Opportunities:

During the year you will be engaging directly with a number of refugee families. The engagement will involve activities at the Life Resource Centre as well as inviting the families to your home for dinners and other family outings. Overall, you will gain first-hand experience in understanding the issues that refugees to Canada face in a very practical way.

Components

BOARDS

Title: Serving on a Non-Profit Board of Directors

Description: London is home to more than 1,000 non-profits and charitable organizations. Each of these will have a Board of Directors that provides vision and direction. What does it take to be an effective board member? How does being on a board help to influence effective work the care for people?

Topics Covered:

- What is the Role/Accountability of the Board? What is the Role/Accountability of a Board Member?
- What is the Role/Accountability of the Leader/Executive Director of the organization?
- What is the proper level of interaction between the Board and the organizations Leader/Executive Director?
- What information should the Board be reviewing on a regular basis?
- What makes a Board Meeting effective?
- What makes a Board effective?

Team Leaders:

John Hebden: – John has been involved on non-profit boards in London for the past 15 years both as a Board Member and Board Chair; including, The London Regional Children's Museum, Participation House and Pathways Skills & Development. He is currently a member of JMP Engineering's Advisory Board. For the past 12 years John has worked as a consultant associated with Fusion Consulting. His practice focuses on working with Senior Leadership Teams across Canada to: develop clear and meaningful strategic frameworks, implement key strategies, build effective and engaging working environments as well as acting as an Advisor to Senior Executives. He and his family have attended North Park for more than 20 years.

Donna Ballantine: Donna's career has been at McCormick Canada where she successfully completed an intensive employee development process through an actual board experience over a seven year period. She has also participated on the Pathways Skills Development Board for many years and was the chair of their board for three years. During this time the board transitioned from being an operational board to using Carver's model of board governance.

Service Opportunities:

This experience will include regular attendance at the meetings of a local non-profit board to observe the discussions and decisions made. You will not be a member of the board during this period, only an observer. These boards include Cheshire, Mission Services, Pathways, Pillar, and others.

8 Spots Available



HOMELINESS

Title: Engaging with Homelessness in London

Description:

The issues of homelessness are complex. Many people have various opinions on the problem and yet so few people are really engaging directly with the issue. Whether it's providing emergency shelter for an individual or family, or caring for those with mental health needs, Mission Services of London is there with a message of hope through faith. They are a Christian faith-based charitable organization committed to serving London and the surrounding area.

Topics Covered:

- Who is homeless
- How do people become homeless
- The impact of mental health on homelessness
- How not to serve the homeless
- Moving from homelessness back into a home
- Government support – what works, what doesn't
- The role of shelters

8 Spots
Available

Team Leaders:

The leadership team will include the members of the management team at Mission Services of London including:

Gordon Russell: Men's Mission

Leaurie Noordermeer: Rotholme Women's & Family Shelter

Martha Connoy: Community Mental Health

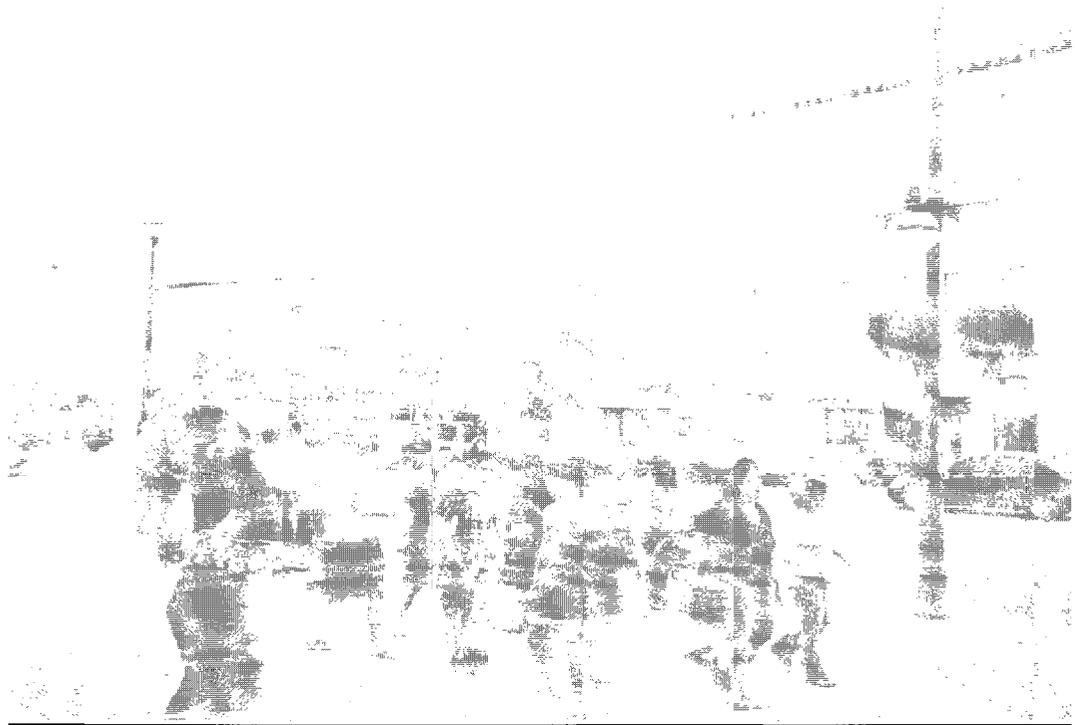
Dick Cochill: Quinton Warner House Addictions Treatment House

Each team leader will bring their expertise to the group at various times throughout the year. Their years experience on the front lines of this issue will be invaluable to your understanding and ability to engage in meaningful ways.

Service Opportunities:

This experience will include service opportunities with Mission Services of London's five branches – Men's Mission, Quinton Warner House, Rotholme Women's & Family Shelter, Community Mental Health and The Mission Store.

My Personal Notes and Questions:



Registration for Engaging Journeys



Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

There will be a \$100 tuition payable upon acceptance of registration.

Area of Interest for Involvement

- Disabilities
- Unplanned Pregnancy
- Refugees
- Board of Directors
- Homelessness

Do you have a current (< 2years) police check? YES NO

Please indicate any past or current involvement in your area of interest.

These registrations will be reviewed by the individual team leaders. Due to space limitations, all registrations may not be able to be accepted. We want to ensure that the numbers in each area are kept to a reasonable size to maximize the learning experience.

Limited scholarships will be made available for those that can not afford the \$100 tuition. Please indicate if you would like to be considered for a scholarship.

Please return the form to the church office, ENGAGE mailbox or fax to 519-457-1720





1510 Fanshawe Park Road East
London, Ontario N5X 4A3
519-457-1400
www.northpark.ca

Appendix 6 - Monthly Meeting Details

October 14, 2010

Scripture: Isaiah 58

Group Reflecting: Around tables with those in your track

November 11, 2010

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan)

Video: Session 1 “Becoming a Good Samaritan”

Group Reflecting: Around tables with those in your track

December 9, 2010

Scripture: Select verses on the phrase “Kingdom of God” (Appendix B?)

This session was held offsite at the Life Resource Centre which is operated by North Park and is the serving location for those participants in the Refugee track. This session began at 6:00pm and included a dinner catered by 3 refugee women from Ethiopia with traditional Ethiopian food.

Normal large group and breakout sessions ensued after the dinner.

January 13, 2011

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Group Reflecting: Around tables with those in your track

February 10, 2011

Scripture: Reread Isaiah 59 and Luke 10:25-37 and had people reflect on it again

Group Reflecting: Around tables with those from other tracks: people were numbered off from 1-4 to integrate people from the various tracks for sharing.

March 10, 2011

Video: Session 6 “Loving the Forsaken”

Group Reflecting: This was done as a whole group. Those willing to share did so.

April 14, 2011

Video: Session 3 “Seeking Justice and Reconciliation”

Group Reflecting: This was done as a whole group. Those willing to share did so.

May 12, 2011

This was a wrap up session which included a catered dinner. No incremental content was used.

After dinner participants were given an evaluation to fill out (see Appendix). This was followed by an opportunity for participants to share with the entire group what they had learned over the past 8 months – 10 people shared about their experiences. David Cottrill, the leader for the Refugees track and a pastor at North Park, closed the time with prayer.

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