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Transformation Happens at the Margins: Shaping Beatitudinal Character of Volunteers by Embracing Excluded, Marginalized, Inconvenient Others at Drop-In Centres

A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
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by

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Toronto, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Jesus said "you cannot serve two masters." Yet, in the Western, Middle-Class Church (marked by syncretism) the world's ways (which exclude "inconvenient others") conflict with Jesus' ways (of embracing them). Consequentially, many Christians do not demonstrate Beatitudinal Character, the attributes of Matthew 5:3-10. Using Action Research, 11 drop-in centre volunteers, over 3 sites, were interviewed and surveyed. Auto-ethnographic analysis revealed that engaging those inconvenient to us could help in overcoming obstacles of comfort, self-reflection and incongruent orthodoxy, orthokardia and orthopraxy; in this way a disciple's character can be aligned with Christ's, helping the Church to regain an authentic mission.

Key words: exclusion; embrace; discipleship; orthodoxy; orthokardia; orthopraxy; the inconvenient other; Beatitudes; Beatitudinal Character; change; syncretism; Matthew 5:3-10

DEDICATION

To my teachers at *nightlight* and from across the spectrum of life: at home, work, school and play, I thank God for the ways in which He continues to shape me through each of you. Indeed, together, we have experienced and participated in the *Missio Dei*.

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Today, while editing of the penultimate draft of this document, I celebrated 10 years of ministry with *nightlight.* I am grateful to God for teaching me more about Himself and His radical redemption in and through the embrace of others at *nightlight's* four drop-in centres—in four cities, over two continents. Thank you, God, for sustaining and saving me.

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In closing, as Karl Barth says,

> The clarity and the certitude, the very greatness and majesty of our Father appear in the fact that we find ourselves before him without power, without merit, without proper faith, and empty-handed. Yet in Christ we are the children of God. The reality of this sonship would not be more certain if there could be added to it anything whatsoever coming from us. (Barth 2002, 24)

With this in mind, I pray that this thesis would serve only to point to the Lordship of Jesus and how we, as His Church, can be better disciples and more Beatitudinal in character.

Ben Platz

Kingston, Ontario

November 8th, 2014

Song for Someone
U2

You got a face not spoiled by beauty
I have some scars from where I've been
You've got eyes that can see right through me
You're not afraid of anything they've seen

I was told that I would feel
Nothing the first time
I don't know how these cuts heal
But in you I found a rhyme

If there is a light you can't always see
And there is a world we can't always be
If there is a dark that we shouldn't doubt
And there is a light, don't let it go out

And this is a song, song for someone
This is a song, song for someone

You let me in to a conversation
A conversation only we could make
You break and enter my imagination
Whatever's in there it's yours to take

I was told that I would feel
Nothing the first time
You were slow to heal
But this could be the night

If there is a light you can't always see
And there is a world we can't always be
If there is a dark within and without
And there is a light, don't let it go out

And this is a song, song for someone
This is a song, song for someone

And I'm a long, long way from your hill of Calvary
And I'm a long way from where I was and where I need to be
If there is a light you can't always see
And there is a world we can't always be
If there is a kiss I stole from your mouth
And there is a light, don't let it go out

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King James Version (KJV) Bible. Public Domain.

New International Version (NIV) Bible. 1984. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

New Living Translation (NLT) Bible. 1996. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This thesis attempts to discern how God may transform the character of contemporary Western, Middle-Class Christians to be more Christ-like, as described in the Beatitudes, through their volunteer experiences at a drop-in centre (*nightlight*) where they were encouraged to engage individuals at the margins of society. The research was conducted by the Executive Director of *nightlight Canada* who started and since served in the ministry for the past 11 years. The project was completed under the methodological framework of action research. Volunteers were interviewed using a form of Appreciative Inquiry. Auto-ethnography informed data analysis, finding that many Western, Middle-Class Christians have adopted worldly values (of individualism, humanism and materialism), creating barriers to *nightlight's* goal of building meaningful relationships with those at the margins. A third set of volunteers at another *nightlight* were surveyed prior to having the findings conveyed to them. They were then given the findings of the first cycle of research and again surveyed to determine if what they had learned made any difference to how they embraced guests. It was determined, as a remedy, that volunteers should follow the model of Christ and surrender their own comfort and reflect on their experiences to better

align their beliefs, practices and motivations to be more authentic disciples of Jesus.

Context

On November 8, 2004 *nightlight* opened its doors in the downtown of Guelph, Ontario as a multi-denominational, Christian-based drop-in centre for adults. Under the umbrella of *Ray of Hope* in Kitchener, *nightlight* began to embrace people at the margins of society by offering a safe place to build meaningful relationships. Now fostering relationships in Kingston and Belleville (as its own incorporated entity and registered charity), *nightlight* uniquely seeks to address a three-fold, interrelated mandate to: 1) rally the local Church to engage local issues of poverty, 2) disciple Christian volunteers involved in the ministry by engaging their experiences with those at the margins as character-formation opportunities, and 3) bear an authentic witness throughout the communities in which it operates through compelling stories of incredible, meaningful relationships.

In Kingston, for example, *nightlight* is open three evenings a week, offering refreshments, snacks, and welcoming Christian volunteers who strive to meet the mandate set before them. With seemingly insurmountable challenges before every community in the areas of mental health, homelessness, hunger, and hopelessness (for a documented example of this, see Social Planning Council of Kingston and Area 2011), the *nightlight* community seeks to care for and embrace those who have been excluded.

nightlight's motivation in this mandate is rooted in the understanding that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who was sent to reconcile the world to Himself through sacrificial relationship. As Karl Barth responded when asked, "who is God?" paraphrasing Romans 8:31, "God is the one, in Jesus Christ, who is *for us*." Subsequently, God requires His followers to be for others as well. Christians are to love God with their whole being and love their neighbour as themselves (Mark 12:29-31).

The *nightlight* Model

nightlight Canada is a multi-denominational Christian ministry that operates drop-in centres in inner-city locations that serve those at the margins. *nightlight* believes that one of the most devastating and under-addressed forms of poverty is relational poverty, and seeks to address this through creating safe places for marginalized adults to build meaningful relationships. The drop-in centre invites in anyone, including those who would normally be excluded within mainstream society, to enjoy refreshments, a conversation with volunteers or other guests, and a feeling of safety and familiarity as the volunteers strive to build relationships with the guests and be a consistent part of their often volatile lives.

nightlight typically accepts Christian volunteers from any denomination without bias, so long as their expressed intention is to lovingly serve their community. Practically speaking, the volunteers also must fill out an application form describing their faith, their reason for volunteering, and providing a police check. Even beyond Christian communities, *nightlight* has accepted volunteers

from other faith communities such as Islam as well as non-faith communities, although they are required to sign its Christian *Statement of Faith. nightlight* is a ministry not only for the guests but also for the volunteers, and as leadership believes that those who attend are a part of God's work, no matter which group they belong to. In fact, the mission of *nightlight* is to diminish boundaries between so-called "groups", and rather create a community of equality and embrace.

Source: Peter Law

Figure 1: A volunteer and guest building a relationship by spending time with one another.

The *nightlight* leadership is unified, despite some theological differences, in the belief that just as Jesus has His being in the Father (John 10:30) and acts through the leading and power of the Holy Spirit, so should Christians as His followers. Bruce Ware says it like this:

> Can you imagine that the similarity in language between Acts 10:38 ("God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power") and Acts 1:8 ("You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you") is accidental or merely coincidental? I highly doubt it. It seems rather that [the] point would be this: the very power by which Jesus lived his life and carried out his mission (Acts 10:38) is now ours since the Holy Spirit who was on him is given to us, his followers (Acts 1:8). What incredible new-covenant reality is now ours in Christ, by the indwelling Spirit! The long-awaited internalization of the spirit (Ezek. 36:27) is granted only as that Spirit first dwelt in Jesus, empowering his life and obedience, only then to be granted to Jesus's followers. This side of the empty tomb and Pentecost, we, too, may live lives marked by that same supernatural Spirit-wrought empowerment for obedience and faithfulness. The very resource of Holy Spirit empowerment granted to Jesus for his life of obedience and faithfulness to the Father is now granted to Jesus's disciples as they carry forward the message of Christ, living lives of obedience to Christ, all in the power of the Spirit. (Ware 2013, 38-39)

Thus, *nightlight* leadership seeks to reflect Jesus by employing a methodology of hearing God (Lord 1988, 14) and knowing His will through a "community hermeneutic" (Cavey 2008). This means that the leadership, when faced with both seemingly simple, straight-forward problems, or complex ones, seeks to discern the direction and leading of the Holy Spirit through communal forms of inquiry which allow the unity of the group to remain intact while also feeling affirmed in its course.

Typical Night at *nightlight*

The *nightlight* drop-in centres are open in inner-city areas and are open to any adults who wish to come. The centre offers free beverages and snacks and has places where people can chat, play games, work on puzzles or otherwise, as long as it is consistent with keeping *nightlight* a safe place.

Source: Peter Law

Figure 2: An example of the safe place created so that meaningful relationships can be formed.

As volunteers spend time with those they would otherwise not have the opportunity to, they often are touched by the issues that people in their own community face. Many have said that they themselves have been touched by the community of guests who come through the doors. The relationships between guests and volunteers often extend outside the *nightlight* doors, and in the streets of the city. Divisions between the marginalized populations and the middle-class Christians who attend *nightlight* begin to cease, as they embrace each other as friends rather than strangers; going for coffee, helping each other move homes, and doing other activities that friends normally engage in.

Source: Peter Law

Figure 3: Volunteers seek to create an environment of hospitality

Volunteers typically assemble at the drop-in centre about thirty minutes before it opens. They put on coffee and take care of any last minute tasks that help to create an environment of hospitality. One of the team leaders will read out shift reports from the last few days to make sure team members are up on any important developments. Before opening the doors, the volunteer team prays together.

Guests are often waiting outside when the doors open. Many of them come to the counter for a coffee and then find a table where they play a game or a chair where they can relax. The volunteer team seeks to foster a safe environment, where all feel welcome and free to sit on their own and relax if they wish or to engage in conversation with the volunteers. Guests come and go throughout the night, but there is usually a core group whose social life revolves around

nightlight. Some will be in every night as soon as the doors open and will not leave until the doors are locked; others come less frequently, as they feel the need.

Source: Peter Law

Figure 4: Conversations are had between people that would not typically find themselves in the same room

After closing, any cleaning that has not been taken care of during the night will get done. The team has a debriefing time where volunteers share important developments, prayer requests and significant items worth noting. There may have been some news from a guest that he or she is moving and needs some furniture as well as help. The team will then make others aware of the need and how they can fill it. Other times, volunteers will bring up something they learned from a guest during their conversation, and how it touched them. It may just be hearing a different perspective on life or seeing how God works in people's lives, including their own. Coming consistently gives everyone the opportunity to see

both the growth in others' lives as they interact with others in the *nightlight* community and the growth in themselves as they learn more and more of their need to let God work through them when they do not have answers to tough situations. The team prays again together at the conclusion of the evening.

In terms of its approach to its mandate, *nightlight* does not think in terms of "us and them," but rather just "us." This is important as exclusion often is rooted in stereotypes, labelling, and the belief that one is better than another. Entering into solidarity with "others"—especially with those whom society has deemed "inconvenient" (King 2012, 2) to its worldly pursuits and goals—is critical. It is critical not only for those pushed aside and forgotten, known by some as the "have nots," but also, as this thesis will demonstrate, for the "haves." In fact, "the exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemingly useless people, from a Christian community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ" (Bonhoeffer 1954, 38).

This culture of exclusion, a culture that could exclude Christ, permeates the church as a result of syncretism—the blending of the world's ways and Christ's way. It is an enterprise that Jesus said was irreconcilable: "one cannot serve both God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Indeed, the problem of syncretism erodes character within the Church, rendering it irrelevant to the nations it is called to make disciples of (Matthew 28). Accepting the world's principles robs Christians and non-Christians "of truthful speech forged through the worship of God." (Hauerwas 2000, 24). The seeming coming together of the world and the Church, a dangerous mix, caused St. Augustine to "[refuse]

anything resembling a "church-state" context" (Hauerwas 2000, 12). The mix seems to have happened across history nevertheless. In the words of David Platt, commenting on contemporary Christianity in the USA: "Christ followers in American churches have embraced values and ideas that are not only unbiblical but that actually contradict the gospel we claim to believe" (Platt 2010, 3).

The roots of this melange (and others) in today's Western context can be traced to influences of the Enlightenment (if not times before as alluded to above). Many in the Orthodox tradition, for example, see the Enlightenment "as the source of all evils that influenced south-east European Orthodox societies" (Kitromilides 2013, 274). Essentially, "the Enlightenment was a movement of intellectuals who [advocated] *reason* as the application of the scientific method to understanding of all life [with the promise] of [freeing] themselves" (Duiker and Spielvvogel 2005, 363); a paradigm which some scholars have boiled down to "the objective evaluation, prediction, manipulation, and, above all, control of phenomena" (McGaughey 2013, 51). In the West where "[the culture] is seen as representing the Enlightenment...the Enlightenment is seen, not unreasonably, as a threat to all faith and tradition" (Fleishchacker 2007, 352).

But what is it about the Enlightenment that misleads faith? What is it about the onset of rationalism and a system of reason that jeopardizes the Church today? The answer, while complex can be synthesized to three ideologies—or "isms"—that are the roots of the syncretism mentioned above. They are the interrelated ideologies of humanism, individualism and consumerism. Concerning these "isms", one can look to the popular work of John Locke who purported

"that every *individual* [emphasis added] was born with a blank mind" (Duiker and Spielvvogel 2005, 363). His influential argument creates space, maybe even the need, for rationality and it is not collective in consideration as it is focused on persons singular. Rationalism was also applied to religious thought during the Enlightenment as religious believers of that day "offered rational basis for morality" (British Humanist Association 2015). Understanding the things of God and, perhaps, God Himself is a human enterprise, rooted in humanism.

The intersection of humanism and individualism that pollinated theology arguably in turn fertilized the last ism of the Enlightenment: consumerism. In other words, the "rational pursuit of theology allowed for the development of individual rights and freedoms that [were the] basis [for] Capitalism to grow" (Stark 2005, xiii). Adam Smith famously "believed that individuals should be left free to pursue their own economic self-interest" (Duiker and Spielvvogel 2005, 364). In Smith's perspective collectivity is circumvented for individuality and in this context individuality is wed with economic pursuit. Sadly, the "Church has not escaped the attitude of "you made your bed now lie in it." Often, rather than having compassion on those whom this capitalist system has not worked in favor of, Western Christians truly believe that their condition is of their own, poor choices" (Stark 2005, 25). Perhaps this is why Platt, in the modern West, pushes back against the "redefinition of Christianity [that takes] Jesus of the Bible and twist[s] him into a version of Jesus...who doesn't mind materialism and who wouldn't call us to give away everything we have" (Platt 2010, 13).

To clarify, some of the inherent problems that have come from these three "isms" are, respectively: a false sense of human capacity to know (chiefly through science) all things (including things about God, apart from God), a diminishing of the collective/community in favor of one's own capacity and self-sufficiency, and an entitlement to have all that the world has to offer (without any sense of self-restraint or how this may harm themselves and/or others). While there has arguably been some benefit from the scientific age (medicine, technology, communication, etc.), the examples listed above entail consequences of disproportionate measure that they should not be ignored. It could even be said that the Enlightenment is essentially self-destructive as self-sufficiency (humanism), the individual (individualism), and the entitlement of possession (consumerism) have led society as a whole to suffer.

The suffering is salient for Christian witness where much emphasis of the Western Church has been placed on orthodoxy—the right way to think about God. Paraphrasing Francis Armstrong, Christians often have theories about God but their theories need to intersect with their experience (Armstrong 2015, sermon). As the roots of the Enlightenment feed the Western Church, it is often assumed that those lower on the socioeconomic scale, who are typically less educated, have not been blessed by God, nor do they understand or know God. Thus, those on the lower socioeconomic scale are, for many, the Western Church's "other." Recall the mix of humanism, individualism and consumerism: here syncretism skews the Western Church's perspective on the poor and "the other." Yet, the poor, uneducated "other"—marked as " inconvenient" in the

pursuit of Enlightenment goals—might have a much better grasp of who God is than the middle-class Christian.

As a gap is thus apparent between the poor, uneducated, "inconvenient other" and those of higher socioeconomic status, likewise, a division is made between believers and not-yet believers. This was the context and has since become within the tradition of those who follow the work and thought of Karl Barth (and, in this way, Bonhoeffer, Volf, Hunsinger, among others; looked at more fully in Chapter 2). Each considered what it means to live within the "inner" and "outer" circles; to be excluded and not embraced; to be a believer in relation to those who are not-yet-believers. Ironically, the interaction between the inner and outer circle, as is seen at *nightlight*, is often more eye-opening and salvific for the inner circle than it is for the outer circle. The inner circle begins to realize the insanity of the Western, "enlightened" culture which has permeated the Church when interacting with the outer circle: predominant theological paradigms are often flipped on their head.

Such reorientation of how God is at work is seen too in *nightlight's* leadership structure. While some members of the *nightlight* communities are "volunteers" and others "guests," the model of an inverted pyramid structure of servant leadership asks Christians to voluntarily take a step down in position and stature in order to foster a safe place of equality, where meaningful relationships can be formed. As for staff, they too, are asked to take a further step down in their leadership roles. Volunteers and staff are encouraged to display this kind of hospitality while they operate the centre, night in and night out:

> Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. (Nouwen 1975, 71)

From a mission perspective, *nightlight* seeks to make the teachings of Jesus relevant and applicable to the needs of its immediate surrounding community—a community that can now be considered post-Christian (Vahanian 1961, xxi) and, as Karl Rahner noted, where the Church struggles to effectively assert influence (O'Donnel Sr. 2004, 78). It does this by modeling the teachings of Jesus without necessarily having the opportunity to talk about the teaching; by being a source of encouragement to all that attend. By doing so, *nightlight* seeks to demonstrate the Gospel that, in Jesus Christ, God is for us.

Practically speaking, God is for our cities, our people, and our well-being in that He (normatively)—identifies, calls, equips, sends, and works through—individuals and teams as the means to the problems that surround us. He uses people who have been refined in their character for the specific mission of God. For example, as the provision for the Israelites living in slavery in Egypt, God chooses and calls Moses as His means to freeing them. But, before Moses was ready, his character needed to be formed into Christ-likeness. This occurred, in the desert, over 40 years before he was deemed ready by God to confront Pharaoh, flee an army, begin the long journey into the desert, address the complaints of the people around their circumstances, bring structure, and disciple the next generation of leaders (Exodus). In the same way, God elected Christ to be the Messiah—the one who would reconcile the world to Himself (Barth 1957 CD II/2, 94). In the same, normative process, God shaped His own Son to be able

to withstand the common, cleaver temptations of Satan so that He, too, could fulfill the mission before Him—a mission that required that He lay down His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). All of this was done in the company of others so that they, too, may be shaped as disciples of Christ, able to carry on His mission of spreading the good news and discipling others into the Kingdom of God (Matthew 28:18-20).

It is clear that character-formation has always been critical to the work of God, and, by extension, to the Church. Recent notable Christian leaders of character include Martin Luther King Jr. and Mother Teresa, both of whom played significant roles in helping many see how God, in Christ, is for us. It can be said they were examples and catalysts of embracing others in their settings. Their character suggests that they were able to put off worldly influence, lessening syncretism in their expression of faith, and put on Christ to be an authentic witness.

The character of Jesus, the character He calls his followers to, is succinctly detailed in the Beatitudes (the eight, core character traits that every disciple of Christ must have sanctified and developed in order for them to be able to carry out the specific mission that comes as a reward) and then expressed and lived out in exemplary form. The crucifixion of Christ is His crowning achievement, His glory; it is the fulfillment of the Sermon on the Mount, of His life work and mission. Just as He says that anyone who wants to be a follower must "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24), so does one need to take seriously the path of character-formation that God leads

one through. While this path is to be expected in the Christian experience, it should never be prescriptive in what it looks like, only ever descriptive.

Thus, with the character of Jesus considered and the realities of a syncretistic Church in mind, taking a Christocentric interpretation of Matthew 5:3-10, this thesis will attempt to reveal what obstacles are hindering middle-class, Western Christians from developing "Beatitudinal Character," allowing the Church to regain an authentic mission of disciple-making: to break from the "enlightened"—humanistic, individualistic, and consumeristic—church. To do so, this thesis suggests that embracing the "inconvenient other" is necessary to shape the kind of character that God uses to change individuals and communities and foster discipleship. To test this hypothesis, a form of Appreciative Inquiry under the framework of Action Research was used to interview seven participants (*nightlight* volunteers) from two iterations of *nightlight* about their volunteer experience. Auto-ethnographic reflections of both the researcher and participant provided key insights about Beatitudinal Character in participants—namely, that issues of comfort and incongruence between orthodoxy, orthokardia and orthopraxy need to be addressed in disciple-making. These findings were then transmitted to a second set of participants to gauge their relevance elsewhere. It was found that building relationships with people at the margins of society can be highly impactful in shaping Beatitudinal Character in disciples of Jesus.

Opportunity for Project

nightlight recruits dozens of local Christians a year to volunteer at its drop-in centers. The task of the volunteer is to help establish a safe place where

they can build relationships with people who live at the margins of society. Many of these volunteers come from churches that have adopted a culture of syncretism in relation to the ideologies Enlightenment. This church teaches the "right" (i. e. rational) way to think and articulate the things of Scripture (orthodoxy), but in its practice it is wrong as it conforms to the culture of the world around it (orthopraxy), in individualism and consumerism. During the process of building meaningful relationships with *nightlight* guests (those that might be viewed as "inconvenient others") God leads most volunteers to recognize inconsistencies in what they believe (orthodoxy) and how they express such beliefs (orthokardia and orthopraxy), especially in ways that relate to those living in poverty. Jesus referred to this inconsistency as hypocritical in Matthew 23. This is a problem for the Church at large as well as for the ministry of *nightlight.* As *nightlight* seeks to grow and expand, shaping character becomes increasingly critical. *nightlight*, as well as those living in poverty and the communities in which they live, depend on Christians to become people who have the character Jesus describes in the Beatitudes; who can respond to the demands of the ministry by responding to the demands of its guests, city, and the culture in which they are found. These inconsistencies between beliefs and expression of beliefs need to be reconciled. Every day, says David Platt, "I see more disconnects between the Christ of Scripture and the Christianity that characterizes my life and the church" (Platt 2010, 19).

The response? Jesus overcomes the syncretistic Western Church by transforming His disciples to be more Beatitudinal in Character through engagement with the "inconvenient other."

Definition of Key Terms

Action Research – is a "cyclical act" (Saldaña 2009, 21) that "provides a flexible and practical set of procedures that are…solutions oriented and participatory" (Stringer 2007, x) as "a process of learning from…a dialectical interplay between practices, reflection and learning" (McNiff 2009, 15) to link "theory to our everyday practice" (Koch and Kralik 2008, 5).

Appreciative Inquiry – a methodology that uses interviews based on positive, open-ended questions and group engagement strategies with the hopes of crowding out what does not work with what does. The first two criteria of this methodology were used for this thesis while the group component was not.

Auto-ethnography – the process of data analysis whereby the researcher reads their own experience into the studied situation to provide insights and context that an outsider observer would otherwise be unable to discern.

Beatitudes, The – the characteristic of disciples of Christ described by Jesus in Matthew 5:1-11.

Beatitudinal Character – congruence across a disciple's orthodoxy, orthokardia and orthopraxy; a multifaceted perspective on the goal of discipleship; the process of consistently embodying Christ-likeness (*homoousios*), in word,

motivation and deed (articulated in one's attitudes, beliefs and values), according to the traits described by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-10); poor in spirit, mourning, meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemaking, persecuted.

Beatitudinal Process – the general way by which God transforms Disciples of Jesus through the emptying out of themselves and the subsequent filling with the compassion of Christ: from being poor in spirit to being persecuted the 8 marks in the Beatitudes move the believer towards *homoousios* (that is, having the same character as Christ).

Believer – a person who professes faith in Jesus as the Son of God, identifies as a Christian or Disciple of Christ.

Character – the totality of one's attitudes, beliefs and values that shapes and exposes, respectfully, their words, motivation and deeds.

Christocentric – the concept articulated by Barth that holds, in the words of Hunsinger, "if Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of all things, and if He is indeed the center of the universe, then He is also the center of Holy Scripture" (Hunsinger 2001, 1); that "in light of Christ" we exegete Scripture and the context in which it applies.

Church – the living Body of Christ that exists in but not of the world by the power of God's Spirit. Its disciples of Jesus are those who have been and are having their character transformed by Him, prepare to wed with their

groom and remain ultimately loyal to Him in their values, attitudes and beliefs.

Comfort – the least appearing Beatitude in the thesis; mutually exclusive of mourning (which is needed to develop Beatitudinal Character and embrace the excluded); a characteristic promoted by the world; a construct in the syncretistic, consumeristic church (Hirsch); a reality provided by the Holy Spirit; an area of weakness for community members considered to have strong character; an area needing to be addressed by the church to see disciples better participate with God in His mission and impact the lives of those excluded, the local church and the disciple; what Jesus left in Heaven (to come to the earth).

Discipleship – the act of following Jesus; the submission of one's life to the Spirt of God; the Christian application of behaviour and character change; the purpose of the Church (Matthew 28); the process of assimilating the Gospel over a whole lifetime, into the whole of one's life; (Hirsch 2014); the process of teaching transcendent principles through specific behaviours (Cavey 2014).

Drop-in Centre – a safe place where "the emphasis is often upon…egalitarian forms of interaction" (Conradson 2003, 510) and fostering meaningful relationship, particularly between those of lower (marginalized) and higher socio-economic status. In the words of Hall and Chesterton (2002), "the main characteristic [of drop-in centres is] that they aim to offer social support, particularly for more isolated people" (31).

Embrace – offering a safe place to build meaningful relationships; learning to live with others; opening one's self to the other; a necessary means of developing Beatitudinal Character; that which leads to salvific life of the Christian or Church; welcoming as Christ has welcomed (Romans 15:7); a theological response to the problem of exclusion (Volf 1996).

Exclusion – among the most intractable problems in the world today; rooted in the foundational problem of sin; a barrier to developing Beatitudinal Character; often rooted in stereotypes, labelling and the belief that one is better than another; happens along with the negation of their injustices; leads to self-inflicted death of the Christian or Church; the primary sin, skewing perceptions of reality and causing people to react out of fear and anger to all those who are not within their (ever-narrowing) circle (Volf 1996); product of impenetrable barriers that prevent a creative encounter with the other (Volf 1996).

Hypocrisy – the difference between one's orthodoxy and orthopraxy or orthopraxy and orthokardia; incongruence across the facets of Beatitudinal Character; not practising what one preaches (Matthew 23:3).

Inconvenient Other – someone or something marginalized and derogatorily deemed outside one's self or culture due to their inability to participate or help in achieving the goals set by Enlightenment "isms"; an individual or entity beyond a preferred race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation or nationality; undesirable transcendence or transgression of social norms; used almost exclusively in a pejorative sense.

nightlight – an organization of adult drop-in centres that seek to provide safe places to build meaningful relationships among and between, typically, marginalized individuals and Christians.

Orthodoxy – right belief (articulated in one's attitudes); a facet of Beatitudinal Character; the most emphasized component of discipleship in Western Christianity.

Orthokardia – right motivation (articulated in one's beliefs); a facet of Beatitudinal Character; an under-emphasized component of discipleship in Western Christianity.

Orthopraxy – right action (articulated in one's values); a facet of Beatitudinal Character; the least emphasized component of discipleship in Western Christianity.

Poor, the – having little or no wealth and few or no possessions; lacking in a specific resource or quality; not adequate in quality; a lack of value or quantity; a lack of fertility; undernourished; humble; eliciting or deserving pity; separation from God.

Syncretism - the coming together of two otherwise unlike things; the blending of the world's ways and Christ's ways that in the Western context gives space for ideologies of humanism, individualism, consumerism and exclusion to go unchallenged, rendering Christians irrelevant to the society they are called to serve as the proliferation of self-indulgent consumer religion (Hull 2007) erodes character within the Church, thwarting its ability to address worldly practices, confusing its identity and

mission and making it lukewarm; the teaching of a "right" way to think and articulate the things of Scripture (orthodoxy) while conforming to the culture of the world in practice (orthopraxy); resolved by discipleship (Hull 2007).

Willingness – coding for the 6th Beatitude; the Beatitude with the greatest range in the thesis; desire to serve others with the right motivations; potentially a provocative witness for the world to see that in Christ God is for us (Romans 8:31b); what Christians are intellectually to be, but not practically instructed to do; the necessary disposition of disciples to become more Christ-like and to break for their Master's sake; needed to embrace the excluded, make peace, etc.; exemplified by Jesus completely; how Jesus takes disciples through the Beatitudinal process.

CHAPTER 2:

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

This chapter explores the theological underpinnings of engaging the inconvenient other, the Beatitudes and the Christian's character transformation. The text draws primarily from the work of Karl Barth to suggest that—always, in light of Christ—disciples of Jesus becomes more Christ-like through a process of being emptied and filled by the Spirit as demonstrated in (the order of) the verses of Matthew 5:3-10. Augmented by Mirsolav Volf, who articulates the poignant proliferation of exclusion, the Apostle Paul, George Hunsinger, Henri Nouwen and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are offered as supplemental voices to underscore the importance of Christo-centric suffering and hospitality for and from Christ, for and from the Church. Chapter 2 also describes the Beatitudinal language employed within this thesis: it situates the reader in the "translation" between sociological and theological terminology that gives context for the methodological exploration and analysis which begins in Chapter 3.

The practical theology of Karl Barth (1886-1968) is the theological foundation of this thesis. Barth was a significant Swiss-German theologian who was excommunicated from Germany due to his call for the German Church to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, over and against that of Hitler and National Socialism. This is most clearly stated in the co-authored Barmen Declaration

(1934). Barth refused to be complicit with most German churches who endorsed Hitler in the 1930s: he believed that the Church's allegiance was to the one true God, made known in the person of Jesus Christ, and not any worldly structure or government. In so doing, Barth stood with the persecuted Jewish community—a profound example of embracing the inconvenient other, given his context. His example inspired other, now notable, theologians such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) who surrender his life to Christ to the point of death, in solidarity with Christ and the marginalized communities of his day.

The lives and works of Bonhoeffer and Barth led to a scholastic linage which encouraged faithfulness to Christ and not to other ideologies (which were ultimately rooted in Enlightenment philosophies). The texts of Jürgen Moltmann, who is most well-known for developing a Theology of Hope are concepts that challenged contemporary theologian Miroslaf Volf (1956-present) who has attempted to articulate how these theories move into reality. A significant field of study is how said theologies come to bare in post-war Yugoslavia in the 1990s where Serbs and Croats (inconvenient others to one another), within a Christian worldview, are encouraged to be reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:11-21).

In the aftermath of 9/11, George Hunsinger (2006) followed this theological lineage, a path of what could be rightfully described as "Barth applied," by asking the United States government to cease the use of torture. For him, even so-called terrorists (again inconvenient others to Americans and others) are made in the image of God and are worthy of basic dignities.

The Problem as it is Experienced

When authentic Christian character meaningfully intersects with the disturbing realities that life today presents, the impact is undeniable: Civil Rights Movements are initiated and untouchables cease to die alone. But, on the other hand, when these same realities present themselves and there is a lack of character to stand for people, the impact is equally undeniable, like the silence of a national church when a race is decimated or the Crusades. In this case, the Church fails to be the Church, as it has failed to prepare people as disciples of Beatitudinal Character that become living examples worth emulating.

While these disturbing realities can widely vary and range in the degree of hopelessness associated with them, within the *nightlight* context it is "otherness," most identified in excluded individuals, that has come to be defined as one of the prevailing evils in Western culture. Theologian, Miroslav Volf, for example, contends that if the healing word of the gospel is to be heard today, the Christian Church must find ways of speaking and acting that address the hatred of the other (Volf 1996, 38). *nightlight* has long-ago identified that what is needed to address the poverty that comes from this kind of evil is for Christians to be able to engage the excluded—those at the margins—in meaningful, relational ways that lead to creative acts of kindness and service. In today's Western Church—a Church marked as syncretistic!—this requires a miracle to occur in the life of the believer as active disciple-making has long been neglected, leaving few with the character needed to respond to the call of God to be His agent in the midst of the proverbial storm.

In the *nightlight* context—a context similar to other ministries such as *Restore* (based in Markham, ON), *Community Night* (run by Toronto Alliance Church), *Ray of Hope* (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON) and many others—disciples strive to embrace "the inconvenient other." In every way the believer must be transformed from one who knows only how to exclude, into someone who is empowered to "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow [Christ]" (Matthew 16:24) in the Kingdom-Mission of embracing the other. Again, the believer must become a person of character, a disciple, a sanctified vessel that can engage and effectively communicate the weighty, redemptive message and corresponding acts to the situation of hopelessness.

While the Western Church seems to struggle with its identity and mission (again, due to syncretism), organizations like *nightlight* tend to present an opportunity for the Church to rediscover this identity and regain a sense of mission as it begins to interact with and embrace people who are inconveniently "other" than itself. By doing so, it has been the experience of *nightlight* leadership, that, increasingly, individual Christian volunteers begin to realize their own short-comings and, in response, their need to be transformed.

When Jesus presented the character-trait process that took place in His own life through His articulation of the Beatitudes, He was already pointing to what He was sent to do as His unique mission within the *Missio Dei*. While the gospels do not give specific details into Jesus' own character formation, the reader is able to see the effects of such process in Chapter 4 of Matthew's gospel in the temptation by Satan in the desert. It should be noted here, that while many

Christian traditions have a long exegetical history, from the earliest centuries through Augustine and Aquinas to present day, some Anabaptist traditions have understood the Beatitudes as developmental, within this exegetical framework. For instance, the Brethren in Christ in Canada and the United States often look to the Beatitudes in this, developmental way, as something to be imitated within the discipleship mandate (Day 2012). In this way, in this account, Jesus is understood to deny Himself of the three basic temptations that causes every human to fall. In a corresponding way, becoming poor in spirt (Matthew 5:3) is directly related to resisting the stone that Satan offered as a possession to cling to; becoming one who mourns (Matthew 5:4) is directly related to resisting finding comfort in the temple; and becoming meek (Matthew 5:5) is directly related to resisting temporal and false power.

Delineating the Beatitudinal process which leads Christians to demonstrate Beatitudinal Character is the main concern of this thesis. The goal of all discipleship efforts, one might argue, is that one's character might become *homoousios* (of the same substance) with that of Christ's character so that he or she might become used by God for God's mission.

Following Volf's idea of embrace further, within Karl Barth's Christocentric understanding of revelation as reconciliation, there is a profound theological response to the problem of exclusion. It is increasingly evident that exclusion has become the primary sin of Western culture, skewing perceptions of reality and causing people to react out of fear and anger to all those who are not within their (ever-narrowing) circle (Volf 1996, 20). In light of Jesus Christ, a

Christocentric reading of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10) suggests that a Christian's character must be developed in such a way that demonstrates that salvation comes, not only as one is reconciled to God, and not only as one learns to live with others, but as one takes the dangerous and costly step of opening themselves to the other, of enfolding him or her in the same embrace with which all have been enfolded by God. Volf writes: "it may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference. The issue is urgent. The ghettos and battlefields throughout the world in the living rooms, in inner cities, or on the mountain ranges testify indisputably to its importance" (Volf 1996, 20). Exclusion happens, Volf argues, wherever impenetrable barriers are set up that prevent a creative encounter with the other. Such barriers could include beliefs that allow for Christians to judge who can and cannot enter into salvation based on certain behaviours; prostitution, alcoholism, divorce, homosexuality, and political affiliation are a few examples of barriers that have been used for exclusion.

Although scripture compels its followers not to oppress those who are alien from them (Exodus 22:21), xenophobia, fear of the other, has become the disease that not only starts wars abroad but also penetrates within the Western Church. Again, this is the problem that *nightlight* seeks to address through its ministry. Many proposed solutions to the problem of exclusion have focused on social arrangements, asking questions like "what kind of society ought we to create in order to accommodate individual or communal difference?" (UNESCO 2001). But perhaps the focus should rather be, beginning with the Church and

extending to all of the world, on what kind of character people need to develop in order to live at peace with others. In addressing the topic, Volf stresses—and great theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (Aquinas 2015) reinforce—the social implications of divine self-giving or self-donation. The Christian scriptures attest that God does not abandon the godless to their evil, but gives of Himself to bring them into communion (Romans 5:10). God's followers are called to do likewise; giving of themselves to bring others into communion, whether friend or enemies. The divine mandate to embrace as God has embraced is found throughout Scripture and is summarized in Paul's injunction to the Romans: "welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you" (Romans 15:7).

Theological Prolegomena: The Problem that Is within Us

This thesis argues that exclusion is a barrier to developing Beatitudinal Character, which is both a catalyst to solve and prevent this kind of heinous sin. To continue building this argument, it is necessary to assess the problem of exclusion further. For Karl Barth, the problem of exclusion is rooted in the foundational problem of sin. In the Fall, humanity desired to gain the knowledge of God and become his or her own independent god. As a result, the Fall distanced humans from God only to leave them amongst others whom they would subsequently try to become independent of. Such individualism, for Barth, lives well within a Church influenced by modernity. For example, within his doctrine of *Revelation and the Knowledge of God*, Barth contests that within the modern/enlightened Church, "many things can be meant by the word 'God'. For this reason there are many kinds of theologies. There is no man who does not

have his own god or gods as the object of his highest desire and trust, or as the basis of his deepest loyalty and commitment" (Barth 1979, 3). The desire to elevate oneself as god translates into one's interactions with others. By excluding God, humans have not gained independence, clearly, but rather have been left with other humans whose difference constantly threatens their notion of independence. Consistent within this thinking, for Ludwig Feuerbach, "theology has become anthropology" (Feuerbach 1881, x.) in that it tends to be less often about God and more often about the human. This becomes a serious problem when one claims to be speaking about God—leading themselves and others astray—when, in fact, they are only speaking of their projection of God, based on their own character and ideals. In this way, God becomes what he or she desires or needs Him to be, rather than who He has revealed Himself to be in the person of Jesus Christ. By doing so, their witness has not allowed for God to transform them or others, but rather for God to be used, as a tool or a puppet, to affirm the individual's needs or agenda. This selfish ambition inhibits growth towards Christ-like character.

Similarly, as people exclude humans that are other than themselves, yet still bear the image of God, they do not allow for that interaction to transform them to be more Christ-like. Following this thinking, this thesis, influenced by Barth's theology, seeks to work decisively against modern theology—a theology that begins with the "I" over the "Thou." As Barth scolded Schleiermacher, the father of this same modern theology, speaking of God is more than "speaking of man in a loud voice!" (Barth 1957, 196).

The solution to this fundamental problem that Barth saw in his day, and which is evident today, is to "begin with Christ anew" (Barth 1957, 22-24) and, by doing so, to re-sharpen the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7, KJV). To truly live as followers of Christ, believers must be willing to become more Christ-like. "We are a generation that has to learn again, sometimes even by name, what are the presuppositions that a Thomas, an Augustine before him, and a Calvin after him could quietly take for granted" (Barth 1990, 3-5). In other words, Barth is saying that discipleship today has a new challenge before it that previous generations did not have. The Western Church, to one degree or another, must learn what discipleship is and then engage Christians in ways that produce followers of Christ that exhibit Beatitudinal Character. Followers of Christ must begin, again, with the person of Jesus Christ and ask the question: in light of Jesus Christ, how are believers to speak about and act towards those being excluded? What is preventing believers from becoming true disciples, marked by character, willing to follow Christ wherever He leads?

It is not Natural theology that will provide answers to these questions, as modern theologians attest. Rather, "the beginning of our knowledge of God…is not a beginning which we make with Him. It can be only the beginning which He has made with us" (Barth 1957 CD II/1, 190). What this means is that God is His own presupposition, which He offers by grace, so that people can have knowledge of Him through revelation. "The capacity [for humans] to know God is [given] and taken away from [them] by revelation" (Barth 1957 CD II/1, 184). Jesus

Christ's life itself is one form of this revelation; it demonstrates how He wants His followers to speak about and act towards those being excluded. Just as He took His disciples to Samaria (John 4), to demonstrate His embrace of all people, so must we follow Christ in this way as we not only accept people as they come to us, but as we go to them and offer hospitality (Nouwen 1975, 71). The need for believers to become authentic disciples that become ones that display Beatitudinal Character is critical for the world and for the Church.

Scripture that Bears Witness to Jesus Christ

Scripture attests to the work of the crucified and risen Lord. Jesus Christ, the Lord, "is the one Word of God that we must hear, that we must trust and obey, both in life and in death" (Barth 1956, 346). Just as in Matthias Grünewald's *Crucifixion* is seen the witnessing hand of John the Baptist, so is it the confessing Church's mission to point to Christ. The promise of Christ that He will be with us "to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20), is an ongoing event which takes place in and through the living Messiah. Because Christ is for us, and, because He is with us always, believers today can have hope in the midst of a world obsessed with itself at the expense and exclusion of some. Just as Mother Teresa was able to express and offer hope in leaving her home in Albania and going to Calcutta to find tens of thousands dying in the streets, so can believers find hope, anew, in the revelation of Jesus Christ as He reveals answers to the problems of exclusion in today's communities.

The Beatitudes: A Christocentric reading of Matthew 5:3-10

It is now necessary to look at those ways in which Jesus revealed himself, and what that meant for disciples of Christ. The Beatitudes, when read in a Christocentric way, offer insights to what it takes to become the kind of disciple that Jesus wanted from His followers. Disciples that have, at the core, the kind of character that allows them to be effectively called into all kinds of areas of mission. This kind of character—Beatitudinal Character—is what is needed to address otherness as evil; to overcome exclusion with embrace.

George Hunsinger, in a forthcoming book on the Beatitudes, desires to re-read the challenging Sermon "in light of Christ"; in light of all that He accomplished since addressing the disciples and crowds as recorded in Matthew 5:3-10 (Hunsinger 2014). In an essay published online which hints at his future, more extensive work on the matter, Hunsinger states that:

> I want to try to read the Beatitudes in a strongly Christocentric manner. If Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of all things, and if he is indeed the center of the universe, then he is also the center of Holy Scripture, even if that center may often be hidden. All of Scripture somehow begins and ends in him, and he himself is directly or indirectly, and sometimes only remotely, the center in relation to which any particular biblical passage must finally be interpreted in and for the church. The kind of ecclesial, Christocentric reading that I am going to undertake does not rule out other, more standard forms of exegesis and interpretation. Indeed it presupposes them. Any biblical text needs to be read first of all in its own immediate context and in its own particular terms, whatever they may be. Only on that basis, after preliminary standard exegesis has been carried out, can a Christological interpretation also be ventured." (Hunsinger 2011, 1)

Following this logic, Hunsinger moves to interpret the eight Beatitudes in two groups of four. It seems that the first four focus on one's own poverty or inability to do something for him or herself, while the latter four demonstrate what

happens to one for whom the first four restraints are lifted or overcome. The Beatitudes, then, become the process of salvation in the believer's life for the benefit of the community and glory of God.

The Beatitudes: Process as Character Formation as Discipleship

In order to identify the existence of this process in the volunteers at *nightlight,* it is necessary to outline what this journey should look like. While following Christ is a work of the Spirit, not of the self, there are steps in this journey which one can expect the Spirit to carry the believer through. This is a journey which begins with poverty of spirit and ends with persecution. This is a downward journey to the place of a servant. The cost of embarking on this journey is great, but the reward is so far superior that the two are not even worthy to be compared (Romans 8:18). As has been well-stated, the path which the followers of Christ walk is mapped out in the Beatitudes:

> Blessed are the poor in spirit,
> for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
> Blessed are those who mourn,
> for they shall be comforted.
> Blessed are the meek,
> for they shall inherit the earth.
> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
> for they shall be satisfied.
> Blessed are the merciful,
> for they shall receive mercy.
> Blessed are the pure in heart,
> for they shall see God.
> Blessed are the peacemakers,
> for they shall be called sons of God.
> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake,
> for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3-10, ESV)

The first step in this journey is poverty of spirit; a breaking of our false sense of self-sufficiency. This first step initiates a three stage process whereby believers are increasingly emptied of self. First, they mourn over the sinfulness they have found both within themselves and in the world they inhabit. Second, they are made meek in the knowledge that they can do nothing in and of themselves to remedy the devastating realities to which their eyes have been opened. Third, having been emptied of their false sense of self-sufficiency, severed from the pursuit of worldly gain, and carried by the Spirit to the lowly place of servanthood, the believer hungers and thirsts for righteousness to be both wrought within them and made manifest in the world around them. It is from this place of emptiness and desperate hunger that fullness and satisfaction flow; for the followers of Christ serve a God who blesses the barren with children (Isaiah 54), and brings forth floods of water in the desert (Isaiah 35).

Having been increasingly emptied of self, the believer—by the sure mercies of God—is filled with Christ. Through this filling, the believer is ever-increasingly freed by being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18). Christ is formed in the believer in such a way that they become merciful, pure in heart, and dedicated to peacemaking. The result of this conformity to the image of Christ is that the believer is often put into positions where he or she is persecuted (Matthew 5:11-12, Mark 13:9-13, 2 Timothy 3:12). Through this process, the believer is freed to be persecuted because Christ is living in them to such an extent that they become tangible, incarnate, counter-

cultural living examples that are responded to and treated with the same reviling as Jesus was treated when He walked the earth (John 15:8).

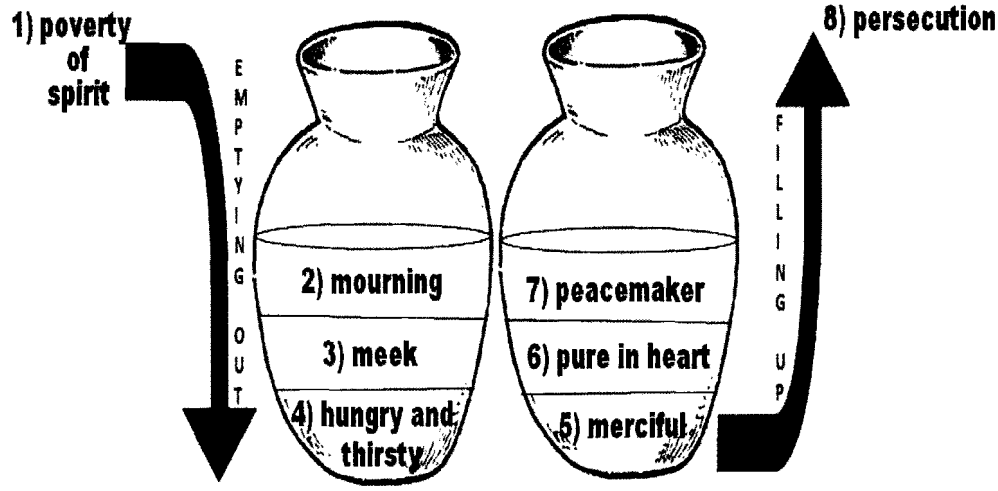


Figure 5: The Beatitudinal Process

This image demonstrates the process of Beatitudinal Character, the first four qualities having to do with emptying oneself, and the latter to do with filling oneself with the compassion of Christ. Freedom to be persecuted may seem to be an anti-climactic goal at best and an utterly undesirable outcome at worst. This is where the truly contrary call to take on the same character of Christ, *homoousios*, over and against the character of the world comes to a head. While the latter promotes comfort, success, and praise (disguised as freedom), Christ promises that following Him will result in true freedom through suffering, calamity, and scorn. This necessarily leads one to ask why one would embark on such a journey. Perhaps the answer comes to us most clearly in the following parable: "the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44, ESV).

Part of the beauty of this parable is that it works in a two-fold manner. Through a Christocentric reading, from one angle, the man who finds the treasure can be seen to represent Christ, who, forsook the glory of heaven, emptied Himself and made Himself nothing (Philippians 2:6-8), in order to lay down His life for His bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:25). Conversely, the man who finds the treasure can be seen to represent the believer, who, acting out of a character that has been infused within him or her by sanctification through Christ, forsakes all worldly gain and selfish ambition that they might know Christ and be found in Him. It is in this vein which Paul declares: "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8, ESV). The word here translated as "rubbish" in Greek means: waste, garbage, dung—that which is good-for-nothing except to be discarded (Henry 2014). The answer to why someone would forsake all worldly gain and selfish ambition only to find themselves hated, persecuted, and scorned, is simply that the world, and all that is in it, is as garbage in comparison to Christ. A person who has been won over to Christ and has gone through the process of genuine, Beatitudinal Character formation understands this well and hopes for, pleads with, and dedicates themselves to others in firm steadfastness that they, too, will deny themselves for Christ's sake. While the paths of other character-shaping formulations promise to lead to life, they lead to destruction. While the Way of Christ promises loss and suffering, it is the only path which leads to life: "through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22,

ESV). However risky the journey, one thing is certain: the destination will be infinitely worthy, because not only is Christ the *Way* to eternal life—to freedom from self—He is also the *Destination*:

> You make known to me the path of life;
> in your presence there is fullness of joy;
> at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
> (Psalm 16:11, ESV)

It is an unwavering, unrelenting, all-consuming love for Christ and passion for His glory which frees the believer by the Spirit to flee all worldly gain and selfish ambition for His name's sake, resulting in the kind of disciple that can effectively be used by God as a provision to the excluded *and* those who exclude (Platz and Aalders 2013, 12-13).

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3, ESV). As with all the Beatitudinal statements, it is first and foremost Jesus who defines what it means to be "poor in spirit." Hunsinger gives insight into Jesus' example of poverty in spirit:

> He assumed into His very being a place of unparalleled personal impoverishment. He took his place amidst the lowliest of the low, the neediest of the needy, and the most humiliated among those who are shamed. He abased Himself in obedience to God for the sake of the world. He showed the world His greatness by His self-humiliation. He became as one who had nothing, was nothing, and could do nothing, and had need of all things. He surrendered Himself wholly to God for the good of others, for the good of all the needy in their own special forms of neediness, and he did so in absolute trust and dependence upon God. (Hunsinger 2011, 2)

To become poor in spirit meant, for Jesus, to consider Himself, the Almighty God, nothing, for the sake of others. While Western Christians might tend to think of poverty as only financial or economic—and it is true "often the richer we are in

things, the poorer we are in our hearts" (Graham 2004)—the poverty referred to hear is much more, including monetary but not simply that. One sees that the disciples, whom Christ surrendered Himself for, were just as needy as the prostitute, tax collector, the one that betrayed Him, and Pontius Pilate. That said, for Hunsinger, there are two groups that Christ died for: those in the inner circle and those in the outer circle. Hunsinger explains the dichotomy that has been created between those in the "inner circle," who call themselves followers of Christ, and those in the "outer circle," who do not yet know Him.

In this, the Church today tends to see these two groups as severely separated by their salvific fate, but Hunsinger notes: "has not the Crucified entered into solidarity with them all, the poor in spirit who know Him, and the poor in spirit who do not yet know Him?" (Hunsinger 2011, 3). The solidarity expressed here, if taken seriously, should serve to overcome the exclusion of some in favor of the embrace of others. Too often, possessions are used by the "haves" as a means to distinguish or separate them from the "have-nots." This tendency has not evaded the Church. Similarly, those on the "inner circle" keep themselves from truly embracing those on the "outer circle" by holding tightly to their possessions; while Jesus' example was to give up everything to embrace all. It is for this reason, that "possessions" was used in this thesis as the coding word to indicate this Beatitudinal Character trait. "Possessions" was the key word to identify one's level of "holding tightly" or "loosely," and therefore of being poor in spirit.

Blessed Are Those who Mourn

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4, ESV). Jesus is supremely the one who mourns. He is the one who chiefly mourns for a blinded world that does not know how to mourn for itself (as Calvin states in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; Calvin 1536, 358). Although the flesh desires to be comforted through any and all forms of distraction, a disciple of Beatitudinal Character will "learn through their union with Him to mourn for their own sins, for the sins of the world, and for the misery of the world. Learning to mourn properly with Jesus is a mark of true discipleship" (Hunsinger 2011, 4). One cannot mourn for the misery of the world while being at a distance from the suffering. Seeking comfort and mourning for others are mutually exclusive character traits. For this reason, the embrace of the excluded is needed in order to produce this Beatitudinal Character. "Comfort," then, became the code word throughout this thesis to identify this Beatitudinal Character trait in participants. How one talks about comfort is used to identify their willingness to mourn with others. The great Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is the one that Jesus sends to comfort those who suffer, whether in the inner or outer circle. As disciples of Jesus, Christians are meant to bring this comfort to those who suffer. Therefore, the need to isolate oneself from the pain of the world is both irrational and unfaithful. One can be set free by Jesus to embrace those who have been excluded, and through such experiences, have suffered immeasurably.

Blessed Are the Meek

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5, ESV). πραεῖς, the Greek for meek, was typically only ever used in reference to horses. But Jesus redefines what it means for Himself, along with His disciples, to be meek as those who are powerful, yet willingly broken for their master's sake. "Jesus shows us His meekness through His humility and humiliation" (Hunsinger 2011, 5). All those in the inner circle, who have understood how Christ is both humble and humiliated, are called to conform to Him in the same way. Those who submit as Jesus submitted will exemplify a Beatitudinal Character that counts others as better than themselves (Philippians 2:3), will refrain from insisting on their own rights (1 Corinthians 5:9), and, too, will take the form of a servant, to the glory of Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. They will not only take this stance towards others who are like them, or who are easy to love, but also with those whom the world has rejected, neglected, and sacrificed at its own selfish gain (Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Peter 2:4). This considered, the coding for this Beatitudinal Character trait will use the theme of "Power" in participants' interviews to identify their strength or weakness in the area of being meek. Just as the distinction between those in either circle is measured at a fraction of a hair's width from those in the outer, so should the distinction be made between the loveable and unlovable—the convenient and the inconvenient.

Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6, ESV). "It is Jesus, above all, who hungers and thirsts

for righteousness. Righteousness represents not only His deepest desire but also His supreme achievement. In Him we can see most clearly that righteousness has two basic aspects—the one vertical and the other horizontal" (Hunsinger 2011, 5). Righteousness cannot be received or expressed in relation to God unless it is also pursued in relation to one's neighbours. The righteousness of God is therefore inseparable from the struggle for social justice (Micah 6:8; Keller 2010, 10). Those who enjoy God's righteousness in Christ while remaining indifferent to social forms of injustice are unprofitable servants; inconsistent in their orthodoxy, orthokardia, and orthopraxy. Because *nightlight* provides a space where those in the inner circle witness the undeniable social injustices of their neighbours in the outer circle, it is this environment which reveals the hypocrisy gap in this character trait. What keeps Christians from pursuing this justice is, in fact, themselves. The character Moat, in the film, *Avatar*, profoundly says, "it is hard to fill a cup that is already full" (Avatar 2009) which points to, perhaps, the reason why it is so difficult for disciples today to be reduced in their lives to the point of joining with Christ in His hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Therefore, it is this theme of "Denying Oneself" that was used in the interview coding process to identify this Beatitudinal Character in participants. To deny oneself, is a necessary precursor to the pursuit of righteousness for others. Instead, exclusion of others happens along with the negation of their injustices.

Blessed Are the Merciful

A turning in Christ's Beatitudinal process seems to occur with "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matthew 5:7, ESV). For the

second group of four Beatitudes, the "blessed" are primarily identified as the faithful, that is, the ones who have allowed the holy work of the Spirit to turn them away from an all-consuming allure to possessions, comfort and power in favour of a total depravity summed up as a hunger and thirst for righteousness. The first four Beatitudes demonstrate the downward, emptying process in Beatitudinal Character formation, while "blessed are the merciful" shows an upward, filling process which begins only after one has been completely emptied. Those who are now in allegiance to Jesus are said to be merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and objects of persecution for righteousness' sake. Each of these attributes continue to be understood as embodied and exemplified in Jesus, who gives them their essential definition (Hunsinger 2011, 6).

The merciful, then, are those who were once like the Dead Sea, where water flows in but not out, but now have been broken open. Without the miracle-working of the Spirit, life-giving water would continue to flow into the disciple, but without an outlet it would pool, become stagnant and die. Life could only find a home when water continues to flow in *and* out, thus showing the need for a disciple in Christ to be broken so that mercy can flow anew, as it had not been able before. In this way, there is a new element introduced when it comes to the exclusion over the embrace of others. The exclusion of others actually leads to self-inflicted death of the Christian or Church, whereas the embrace of others, profoundly, leads to salvific life of the Christian or Church. One needs mercy to flow through them, perhaps, equally or more so than others need to receive it. This theme of the "Dead Sea" was used in the coding process as an indicator of

participants' alignment with this Beatitudinal Character trait. *nightlight* provides the sea to which followers of Christ can choose to break open their dam, allowing mercy to flow through them and into those excluded members of community.

Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8, ESV). Philip Yancey, in his book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, reflects on the Beatitudes in terms of what they have meant to him over his lifetime. In one section on the merciful and pure of heart, Yancey recounts a visit he made to Toronto to visit Henri Nouwen. Nouwen, a priest who had taught at Harvard University, had left his post to join a community called *Daybreak*:

> Nouwen now ministers not to intellectuals but to a young man who is considered by many a useless person who should have been aborted. I had to admit I had a fleeting doubt as to whether this was the best use of his time. I have heard Henri Nouwen speak, and have read many of his books. He has much to offer. Could someone else not take over the menial task of caring for Adam? When I cautiously broached the subject with Nouwen himself, he informed me that I had completely misinterpreted what was going on. 'I am not giving up anything,' he insisted. 'It is I, not Adam, who gets the main benefit from our friendship.'" (Yancey 1996, 119-120)

The purity of heart—of Christ's heart—which was what Nouwen was able to reflect in his life and words, humbled Yancey. And, through the simple recounting of this story, countless others have gained insight into the character of Christ and the Beatitudinal Character of Nouwen. For people like Nouwen, as they proceed through the Beatitudinal process which leads to Beatitudinal Character, those around them are dumbfounded to know why they do what they do. Others are inspired to inquire further, as Yancey was. "I left Daybreak convicted of my own spiritual poverty, I who so carefully arrange my writer's life

to make it efficient and single-focused. The merciful [meek, pure in heart, etc.] are indeed blessed, I learned, for they will be shown mercy" (Yancey 1996, 121). The heart of the church, if aligned with Beatitudinal Character, should be purely to serve, without expectation for reward. It is for this reason, that "Willingness" is used as the theme in the coding process of interviews for this research. As willingness to serve for the right motivations is identified, it marks the Beatitude of being Pure in Heart. This is unlike modern culture, and if lived out fully, should provoke the world to ask why it is they acted as such. It begs one to wonder if this would help the Church to fulfill the Great Commission, to "go and make disciples?" (Matthew 28:19a, NIV). It seems as though it would be a win-win-win for all involved. The excluded would be embraced, the church would be filled with disciples (not just converts), the world would clearly see the positive effects of Christ as God "for us" (Romans 8:31b) and some would repent and turn to Him.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9, ESV). One simply needs to look at the news to learn of the latest conflicts that are stealing the headlines. The world is in constant conflict with God, with others, and within itself. This, it has been revealed, is the result of sin and this is why Jesus left the comforts of Heaven to come to Earth, to bring the Gospel, the message of peace. Just as was said above, that "righteousness represents not only His [Jesus'] deepest desire but also His supreme achievement" (Hunsinger 2011, 5), it should be noted that as the supreme Peacemaker, Jesus

was able, and continues to be able, to make peace and not just dream of it. Jesus was willing to do whatever it takes, not stopping short of achieving peace because of obstacles. For this reason, the theme of "Doing Whatever it Takes" is used in the coding process to identify the Beatitudinal Character of peacemaking. As participants speak of their willingness to push through obstacles to advocate for justice, for example, this Beatitudinal Character trait shines through. Those who follow Jesus and allow themselves to be undone by the Spirit through the Beatitudinal process, through which He takes every willing disciple, are able to make peace in situations where it has long been deemed otherwise.

For the mature Christian, conflict becomes an "opportunity to solve problems that honour God" (Sande 2004, 22), bring hope where it has been lacking, and bear witness to Christ as the promised Messiah. Becoming a peacemaker after Christ is the goal of every disciple. The desire to "make peace" will overtake and eventually consume the mature Christian the more devoted he or she is to allowing the Spirit to refine him or her through the Beatitudinal process. What peace-making looks like can only be described and never prescribed as it truly is the work of the Spirit in the character of the believer doing the work. Surely, though, it requires the willingness to do whatever it takes to achieve peace. This was true for Christ as He responded to the *Missio Dei* and so we should expect the same, however it is called and however it is applied.

Blessed Are the Persecuted

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10, ESV). As in the first four Beatitudes so

also in the second four, Jesus himself stands out as the promise and the blessing in one. He is both the process which needs to be followed and goal that needs to be achieved. He makes the Way in which we follow (the Beatitudinal process) as well as the goal (the Beatitudinal Character), identical to His own as He both in an instant and increasingly lives within us. "He alone is the source and the content of the rewards promised in the second four Beatitudes. If there are any who receive the gift of mercy, any who come to see God, any who are called God's children, and any who are in the heavenly kingdom, then surely it is only in and through Christ, the unifying center of all God's promises and blessings" (Hunsinger 2011, 6).

In John 15:18-20, Jesus warns His disciples, those who had gone through and were going through the Beatitudinal process after Christ and were being, increasingly marked and recognized as having Beatitudinal Character, that they would be persecuted for such commitment and association:

> If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. (NIV)

Here it is seen why, perhaps, Jesus issued such a warning. Through the Christocentric reading of this passage, and, in keeping with the main thesis of the theological rationale put forth so far, it is seen that the disciples will be persecuted because Christ embraces those whom have been excluded from Himself through choices of their own, while the selfish, excluding nature of the human heart is to want to be the centre of their own circle and not merely a part of another's. For

this reason, a gospel message which calls for a repentance of self-centring, is both scandalous and offensive to the natural laws at work inside our flesh. Those who take these counter-cultural steps towards the way of Jesus will be seen as living examples of His way. For this reason, "a Living Example" is used as the coding theme for identifying one's alignment with this Beatitude.

The Mature Community

Returning to a Barth-influenced analysis of the situation at hand, one can learn from what he had to say regarding what a mature community of faith would look like. Thus, what the effects are of believers going through the Beatitudinal process so that they might develop a Beatitudinal Character, ready to receive the call that God has for them and the context in which they are called.

The predominant idea that was developed out of the Enlightenment was that people will emerge out of their immaturity; that they would come of age and achieve their highest potential. As stated above, for Barth, this was not only the greatest bankruptcy the world has ever known, but it was disturbing to see the Church just as infected, if not more, than those around it due to such ailing thoughts. "There is already too much talk about the world which is supposed to have come of age in relation to God....My own concern is rather with the man who ought to come of age in relation to God and the world, i. e., the mature Christian and mature Christianity" (Barth 1969, ix-x). In view of the demand for maturity, one needs to consider to what extent the gospel itself enables maturity. For Barth, "what the free God in His omnipotence wills and fashions in Jesus Christ in the work of the Holy Ghost is the free man who determines himself

under this predetermination by God" (Barth 1961, 35). Just as was said of the Beatitudinal process above, the freeing process re-orients and re-positions the believer to become that which can be used to free others. Barth uses the description of "us" as "God's partners," affirming our maturity, but also meaning that "our" freedom is not the impulsive freedom of isolated individuals, but it is a maturity only in partnership, freedom in specific relationships, in fellowship with God and with others (Barth 1969, 163). The maturity that rests upon the grace of God means, therefore, that "man is now free....to live in contact, solidarity and fellowship not only with God but also....with his fellows....as companions in the partnership of reconciliation [peace-making]" (Barth 1961, 248). What this mature community looks like can vary greatly and it should not be prescribed to be one way and not another. This said, it can only ever be described as the events in which it takes place.

One historical, documented example of what the Mature Community looks like is told in the documentary, *Weapons of the Spirit* (1987). The film reflects on how 5000 Christians showed extraordinary, exemplar Beatitudinal Character as they embraced 5000 Jews (the "inconvenient other" in the eyes of many Europeans during that time) in the midst of Nazi occupation (Weapons of the Spirit 1987). Likewise, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a man of this same period has been deemed to have displayed "radical integrity" (Van Dyke 2012, 2). In his well-known work he articulates what it really costs one to become a disciple of Christ.

The Cost of Discipleship: The Beatitudes as the First Bookend to the Second—Jesus' Crucifixion

In his great work, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer treats the Beatitudes as the first bookend to the second, found in the Passion narratives that are to come. What is spoken and detailed in the giving of the Beatitudes can only be fully understood, in light of Christ and His work on the Cross (Bonhoeffer 1937, 106).

Having reached the end of the Beatitudes, one naturally asks if there is any place on this earth for the community which they describe.

> Clearly, there is one place, and only one, and that is where the poorest, meekest, and most sorely tried of all men is to be found—on the cross at Golgotha. The fellowship of the Beatitudes is the fellowship of the Crucified. With Him it has lost all, and with Him it has found all. From the cross there comes the call "blessed, blessed." The last Beatitude is addressed directly to the disciples, for only they can understand it, "blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." "For my sake" the disciples are reproached, but because it is for His sake, the reproach falls on Him. It is He who bears the guilt. The curse, the deadly persecution and evil slander confirm the blessed state of the disciples in their fellowship with Jesus. It could not be otherwise, for these meek strangers are bound to provoke the world to insult, violence and slander. Too menacing, too loud are the voices of these poor meek men, too patient and too silent their suffering. Too powerful are the testimonies of their poverty and their endurance of the wrongs of the world. This is fatal, and so, while Jesus calls them blessed, the world cries: "away with them, away with them!" Yes, but whither? To the kingdom of heaven. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." There shall the poor be seen in the halls of joy. With his own hand God wipes away the tears from the eyes of those who had mourned upon earth. He feeds the hungry at his Banquet. There stand the scarred bodies of the martyrs, now glorified and clothed in the white robes of eternal righteousness instead of the rags of sin and repentance. The echoes of this joy reach the little flock below as it stands beneath the cross, and they hear Jesus saying: "Blessed are ye." (Bonhoeffer 1937, 113-114)

Where then, can one find the cross today? It is the belief behind this research that it is amongst the excluded, those that Jesus entered into solidarity with, that Christian disciples can go to enter into solidarity with Jesus. It is amongst those that one can give up all to serve, that one can experience the need for Jesus in their life to empower them to do so. The need for Him to form the character needed in oneself to truly embrace the other with Christ-like love. It is for this reason, that *nightlight* offers an environment through which we can observe Beatitudinal Character transformation. As it provides the opportunity for disciples to engage with the other, it also exposes the areas in which they have difficulty doing so; those areas in which their character must be increasingly aligned with that of the Beatitudes, of Christ.

CHAPTER 3:

PRECEDENT SOCIAL SCIENCE LITERATURE AND CASES

The bodies of work that examine character, character change, marginalization, drop-in centres and discipleship are relevant to this thesis as it seeks to investigate the ways in which transformation occurs within volunteers who engage otherwise excluded individuals. This section specifically seeks to examine these themes in regards to how they have been conceived by academics and how they relate to one another (in their shared complexities). The text draws primarily from current and historical psychological paradigms—though not exclusively, nor expansively—to gain an understanding of character and character change. Next, this section looks at what has been said about marginal communities, and by whom, in the context of drop-in centres. Finally, the third section concludes with an exposition on discipleship: an attempt to wed the three other themes into a comprehensive argument for the ways in which transformation (e. g. character change) may occur in Christian volunteers (e. g. disciples) who spend time with those deemed "inconvenient" (e. g. those at the margins) at places like drop-in centres (e. g. *nightlight*).

Character

A brief etymological exploration of "character" helps situate an understanding of what the word may mean. At an individual level, character can

be defined as "moral and mental qualities strongly developed or strikingly display[ed]." Said differently, character distinguishes a personality (OED, 2014) and individuals from others. Since personality largely consists of certain behaviours (Ryckman 2008, 3), character then refers to certain configurations of behavioural traits (Stolorow 2012). Purportedly, concepts of character, personality and behaviour are intimately related.

"Personality theories have chiefly been concerned with the factors that determine and explain different individuals' personalities as they are, and the factors which have brought about the given personality" (Gendlin 1964). Sigmund Freud, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Albert Bandura all attempt to "generate a particular definition of personality, along with working assumptions regarding how personality originates, develops and operates" (Ryckman 2008, 3). For the purpose of this paper, character is defined as "the totality of one's attitudes, beliefs and values that shapes and exposes, respectfully, their words, motivation and deeds."

Some theories of personality and/or character origin suggest that personality is formed in childhood. Robert Kaplan states, for example, that "character is formed in response to the value placed on a child" (Kaplan 1990, 461). Clarke agrees, though sees potential for transformation away from "the crippling bonds forged by early trauma." These bonds, he says, "need not define a person's existence" (Clarke 2009, 262); citing the conversion of Dickens' *Ebenezer Scrooge* as fictional evidence that "that which is most buried in the

unconscious may also contain the answers that people both crave and fear" (Clarke 2009, 249).

Of course, discourse on personality, character and behaviour pre-date modern Western psychology or early modern European literature. Indeed, Aristotle opined on these realities thousands of years ago. He wondered about the interplay between knowledge and character, action and character, and the ability of one to change character. William Bondenson recapitulates Aristotle's articulations on character as such:

> [if] men know that actions of certain kinds lead to corresponding states of character, then that knowledge makes them responsible for the states of character which they have acquired. But this is possible only if it is possible to act contrary to an established character. That some states of character are changeable is clear but there is [not] explicit [evidence]...that all states of character are changeable nor is [sic] there any criteria for distinguishing between changeable and non-changeable states of character. (Bondenson 1974, 64-65)

Although Bondenson admits the limits of knowledge on which aspects of character are changeable, the following section will outline precedent social science arguments for the changeability of character and behaviour. Such an argument agrees with the Christian tradition that change is not only possible, it is mandated by God in and through the call for all people to repent (1 King 8:47-48, Psalm 7:12, Isaiah 1:27, Matthew 4:17, Acts 17:30, Revelation 3:3). Repenting simply means to change one's direction (in combined terms of attitudes, beliefs and values which this paper explores in depth in Chapter 4).

Character Change

This section outlines some of the prominent theories on character change, or the alignment of values (action) with attitudes and beliefs. Research from environmental psychologists is used as a parallel to the purpose of this thesis, as they seek to account for the gap between knowledge and awareness of environmental degradation, and pro-environmental action. Such research is very relevant to this thesis, which reveals the gap between Christian knowledge and action, and hypothesizes models of change or discipleship for Christians.

Fishbein and Ajzen's *Reasoned Theory* "assume[s] that behaviour follows from intentions" (Fishbein and Ajzen 2011, 69). It is not attitudes that determine behaviour directly, but instead influence behavioural intentions, which in turn shape one's actions (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002, 242). In order for intention to change, persuasion must happen. It has been shown that incremental persuasion is the most effective way to influence behaviour change. In research by Evans and McCoy, it is discovered that people adapt much better to small amounts of change than large amounts of variation (Matthew 2005, 1637). Small acts of persuasion initiate change, but ultimately, behaviour change is a result of gradual but increasing consciousness of the importance of that change (Matthew 2005, 1637). The most important aspect of incremental persuasion is that there are only suggestions and not obligations (Matthew 2005, 1637). Therefore, it is only when one truly accepts the importance of the change that they will be able to change their intentions accordingly, and thus also change their behaviour.

This view of behaviour change would fall into the traditionalist view, which Aristotle belonged to. Aristotle claimed that developing moral virtues happens through practice and repetition: "to sum it up in a single account: a state [of character] results from [the repetition of] similar activities (1103b)." In other words, "we become generous by performing generous actions, courageous by performing courageous actions, rash by performing rash actions" (Dougherty 2007, 294). This affirms the belief of this thesis, which is that experience is a necessary part of developing character. However, developing a virtuous character will not simply result from repeating the same actions over and over. As humans stumble along the path of progress, they will build a character of virtue by "attempting to act generously, or justly, or courageously, and sometimes getting it right, but other times failing" (Dougherty 2007, 295).

Although this thesis affirms the traditional view in that the habituation required to produce virtuous character takes place over time, it also agrees with others like Dougherty (2007) who claim that it is possible for character to be untaught, whether positive or negative (297). She uses two examples (that of Euripides and Scrooge), to show both an example of good character being corrupted and bad character being transformed into good. These are similar to the example given later in this thesis of Oscar Schindler's rapid transformation. Her argument is that because these stories are readily accepted, the "traditionalist view" that states of character can develop only over time, must not be the only view. She suggests that rapid character change is possible, if there is an experience that changes one's understanding of the world (Dougherty 2007, 305).

It is not only experience devoid of conceptual understanding that amounts to practical wisdom, but conceptual understanding can change rapidly, culminating in character change (Ibid.). Similarly, this thesis asserts that it is not only an experience of engaging with people at the margins that will produce character change, but that it does have a powerful influence on changing behaviours and is currently lacking in Christian discipleship. Surely, engaging with someone whom one normally excludes from their daily life might be an experience that alters one's perception of the world. As volunteers spend time with people who have a much different daily experience than they do, even in the same city, it alters their daily experience, and forces them to behave differently if they wish to remain in line with their beliefs.

Furthermore, as this thesis attempts to reveal how a certain experience (interaction with those at the margins) will initiate character change, it is beneficial to draw on parallels in environmental action. Environmental psychologists have studied at length, the gap between environmental knowledge/awareness and environmental action.

Similarly to Christian education, the linear model of analyzing pro-environmental behavior was based on a progression of environmental knowledge, leading to awareness and concern (environmental attitudes), which then supposedly led to pro-environmental behavior (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002, 241). Research has shown that in most cases, increase in knowledge did not lead to pro-environmental behavior (Ibid.). And yet, most environmental non-governmental organizations still base their communication campaigns on this

assumption, just as churches continue to base their discipleship models on the same assumption, that is, an emphasis on orthodoxy.

Another model put forth to explain the gap in environmental knowledge and action is the model of Responsible Environmental Behaviour (Hines et al.), which stated among other things that people with a greater sense of personal responsibility are more likely to engage in environmentally responsible behavior (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002, 243). Other models such as the Altruism, Empathy and Prosocial Behavior models, hold that "individuals must focus beyond themselves and be concerned about the community at large" in order to act environmentally (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002, 245). The sociological models claim that a willingness to act is inhibited by a belief that the power to have impact is unevenly distributed, therefore individuals lose their hope in the power of individual action (Redclift and Benton 1994, 7-8 in Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002, 247). Furthermore, Blake identifies three barriers to action: individuality, responsibility and practicality (1999). This means that beyond knowledge, people must be willing to act to benefit others, must feel the responsibility to do so, and have a realistic opportunity to act. Taking this into account, this thesis suggests that drop-in centres provide the opportunity for individuals to engage in relationships with those at the margins, which will arguably change their attitudes towards what it means to serve others. This, in turn, will allow for Christians to move beyond themselves and act for others, following the progression of the Beatitudes. This belief is affirmed by Rajecki (1982), who states that the gap between attitude and behavior is more influenced

by direct experiences than indirect (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002, 242). Indirect would be learning about an environmental problem as opposed to directly experiencing it (Ibid.). The experience of engaging with those at the margins and witnessing the effects of the exclusion of the Church in contrast to the way Christians know Jesus to have lived, creates such a tension within that action is necessary. As volunteers give more and more of their time and energy to guests, their behaviours begin to change and ultimately their character becomes one that encompasses an aligned orthodoxy, orthokardia and orthopraxy.

Another environmental psychologist, Chawla did a study on the experiences of professional environmentalists, and found several key factors that influenced people's willingness to act pro-environmentally: childhood experiences in nature; experiences of pro-environmental destruction; pro-environmental values held by the family; pro-environmental organizations; role models; and education (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002, 251). In parallel, this thesis acknowledges the role that education, experience and the culture one belongs to has to play in discipleship of Beatitudinal Character. Kollmuss and Agyeman's (2005) review of models that explain the gap omits a discussion on the role that desires for comfort play on resistance to act, but admit that it is an important factor in determining behaviours (256). This thesis expands more on this area of comfort, suggesting that the experience of giving up comforts as one engages with those at the margins is an important factor in behavioural and character change.

Yet some scholars, such as Kaplan (1990), believe "that behavioural change by itself is often not enough [to transform one's sphere of influence]. Instead, some type of change in character or identity is also required" (462). In other words, there is a difference between character and behaviour, at least to Kaplan, where change in the former leads to greater transformation than a change in the latter. Accordingly, this thesis will make distinctions between character and behaviour. Aristotle also was aware of the importance, not merely of actions, but of corresponding motivation, in producing character. For "genuinely virtuous action is partly determined by the internal state of the agent" (1105a26-30). This reflects the desire of this thesis to see character as the alignment of one's attitudes, beliefs and values that shapes their words, motivation and deeds.

From a theological perspective, this research will see character change result as an alignment of orthokardia, one's motivations; orthodoxy, one's attitudes or beliefs and; orthopraxy, one's values as expressed in action (behaviour). This distinction, is, perhaps, best seen in the example of the Pharisees within the four gospels. Jesus, it appears, engages them as "hypocrites" (Matthew 23) because of their inconsistent character. They often say one thing but do another (Matthew 23:13) or are consistent in what they say and do but have the wrong motivation for doing so (Matthew 6:2): "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others." Here, in this verse, Jesus is demonstrating how the Pharisees' orthodoxy and orthopraxy are ill-aligned with their orthokardia (motivations for giving to the poor). In every instance,

Jesus made plain to both the Pharisees and every individual that He encountered that they needed character transformation. Only when all three aspects of a trait are aligned with what the Spirit of God is calling one to do we see a glimpse of what a disciple of Christ looks like. Discipleship, therefore, is primarily concerned with persuading converts of Christ to become disciples of Christ. In this way, character is the focus.

Beyond the gospels, but within the New Testament, the Apostle Paul agrees that change can take place when he reminds his readers that, "some of you were once [slanders, swindlers, sexually immoral]. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Through Christ, Paul sees the potential for character change. Christ made disciples based on His mandate (Matthew 28:18-20) as He sanctifies one's character to Beatitudinally reflect His, touching each trait's doxy, kardia, and praxy. Again, character, personality and behaviour are intimately related.

Schindler's List as Case Study

Perhaps a case study of the 1993 movie *Schindler's List* illustrates the kind of character change made possible by Christ through an engagement with the "inconvenient other". The story, based on the life of Oskar Schindler, tells of a man, living in Nazi Germany, who seeks to capitalize on the war by exploiting the inconvenient other—in this case, the Jews. The movie opens with Schindler setting before himself the goal of becoming wealthy, comfortable, and powerful. After cashing in everything he has to give those around him the sense that he is

someone important and significant, and after spending all of this wealth one evening, wining and dining and convincing powerful people to partner with his factory in the common war effort, there is but one challenge left for him—as he does not know how to run a factory, nor a business, he is in great need for someone who does. Itzhak Stern, it turns out, is the right person for the task, and so Schindler, without compassion, makes him a deal he cannot refuse—either go work in the death camp, or work for him.

Schindler, speaking to himself, states:

> They won't soon forget the name "Oskar Schindler" around here. "Oskar Schindler," they'll say, "everybody remembers him. He did something extraordinary. He did what no one else did. He came with nothing, a suitcase, and built a bankrupt company into a major manufactory. And left with a steamer trunk—two steamer trunks!—of money. All the riches of the world. (*Schindler's List* 1993)

Stern agrees and begins to give Schindler lists of Jews in the camps that are "necessary" for him to reach his goals. In turn, Schindler takes on the task of recruiting those on the list by further bribing Nazi officials. All seems well for Herr Schindler until one day it is brought to his attention that each of the people that he has been bringing out of the death camps and into his factory are people that are seen by the Nazis as unfit to work at the camps and thus slated for extermination. He realizes what Stern has been up to and confronts him, angrily. It is in this encounter that Schindler sees in Stern a kind of character that is willing to do whatever it takes to help those most vulnerable. Schindler, angered that he has been duped, seems to have something spark within him that begins an incredible journey of change. Schindler, now very wealthy, comfortable, and influential, begins to use these things for the advantage of others. In fact, he

begins to partner with Stern and seek even more workers than are necessary for the factory, putting himself in financial harm, jeopardizing his comforts, and risking what he had built (as the Nazi officials become suspicious as to why he is suddenly asking for the most "useless" people—one-armed men, children, etc.). Not lost on those whom he is now saving, the Jewish workers collaborate in making Schindler a golden ring and present it to him as a token of their impossible gratitude, seen below (photo taken from the movie).

Schindler's List, Director Steven Spielberg

Figure 6: A ring is offered as a token of gratitude

Schindler is deeply humbled at the token and further dedicates himself to the antithesis of his once-held goals. Eventually the war comes to an end and it is time for Schindler to flee as it is uncertain as to how those involved in the war will be dealt with.

> The unconditional surrender of Germany has just been announced. At midnight tonight, the war is over. Tomorrow you'll begin the process of

> looking for survivors of your families. In most cases...you won't find them. After six long years of murder, victims are being mourned throughout the world. We've survived. Many of you have come up to me and thanked me. Thank yourselves. Thank your fearless Stern, and others among you who worried about you and faced death at every moment. I am a member of the Nazi Party. I'm a munitions manufacturer. I'm a profiteer of slave labor. I am... a criminal. At midnight, you'll be free and I'll be hunted. I shall remain with you until five minutes after midnight, after which time—and I hope you'll forgive me—I have to flee. (Schindler's List 1993)

As he is leaving, the Jews present him with a letter, signed by the hundreds of Jews he had a hand in helping to save, stating that, should he be caught and tried as a war criminal, that he should be spared for what he really did—stemming from who he became. Realizing, in perhaps the most profound way yet, just what had happened and how he was a part of it all, he touches the ring that his once-slaves-now-friends had given him and begins to weep.

> Oskar Schindler: I could have got more. I could have got more, I don't know. If I just...I could have got more.
>
> Itzhak Stern: Oskar, there are 1,100 people who are alive because of you. Look at them.
>
> Oskar Schindler: If I had made more money. I threw away so much money. [laughs, then gets teary-eyed] You have no idea. If I just...
>
> Itzhak Stern: There will be generations because of you.
>
> Oskar Schindler: I didn't do enough.
>
> Itzhak Stern: You did so much.
>
> Oskar Schindler: This car. Goeth would have bought this car. Why did I keep the car? Ten people right there. Ten people. Ten more people. This pin (seen below. Photo taken from the movie)...two people. This is gold. Two people. He would have given me two more, at least one. One more person. A person, Stern, for this. [starts crying] I could have got one more person, and I didn't! I—I—I—I didn't! (Schindler's List 1993)

Schindler's List, Director Steven Spielberg

Figure 7: Schindler is moved by remorse that he could have done more for those most vulnerable

While there is no mention or connection made by the director of the movie to the influence of God on Schindler, the Christian tradition recognizes that God does use various means and methods to bring about character change for His purposes. One such understanding of what changed Schindler, which echoes the claims made by Martin Luther King Jr, Greg Paul, Shane Claiborne and others, as will be seen, is through the engagement of "the other." In Schindler's case, "the other" was first in Stern and then in various ways through the Jewish people that he began to see and engage.

Certainly, there are many avenues through which behaviour can change; one is through control. Conradson, points to this in the work of Michael Foucault who observed

> how regimes of power worked, in subtle and less subtle ways, to control people at the level of the everyday, directing their behaviour in certain directions and not others. This influence might take the form of materially

> constraining an individual's use of time and space…through the implementation of structured timetables and the designation of prohibited areas within a building. It might equally be achieved, however, by inducing the subject to internalize certain social and moral norms and, through their embodied allegiance to these, to effectively govern themselves. (Conradson 2003, 510)

Jesus, however, did not use power to coerce people to change their behaviour. Although (as all-powerful God) He could have (Matthew 26:53), He instead came to man's level and influenced people by his example. As Paul states, "for you know the condescending goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ—how for your sakes He became poor, though He was rich, in order that you through His poverty might grow rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9, WNT). Similarly, *nightlight* staff and volunteers do not consider themselves above the guests, but on equal grounds. Conradson points out that drop-in centres offer this environment as "the emphasis is often upon more egalitarian forms of interaction" (Conradson 2003, 510). In saying this, he "does not imply that power is unimportant in such environs" but that it is only "part of the picture" (Conradson 2003, 510).

Margins

In fact, individuals' character changes because of the socio-economic composition of the space. As the Reverend James Lawson (the greatest strategist for peace within the Civil Rights Movement) is known to have said: "formation happens on the front line" of marginalized communities (McKenna 2014).

The belief that change happens at the margins is put forward likewise by Shane Claiborne in *The Irresistible Revolution*. The author tells many stories of transformation that occurred through people approaching and engaging at the front lines. He recounts reading a newspaper which detailed a group of

inconvenient squatters being evicted from an abandoned Catholic Church that led him and a group of friends to go to the church to see the situation for themselves. They found a sign that read "How can you worship a homeless man on Sunday and ignore one on Monday?" (Claiborne 2006, 55-56). It was through that experience, he writes, that solidarity with those at the margins began. He and many who have read his work or heard him speak have since taken deep, meaningful action to consider their own lives in light of Christ and His willingness to engage the poor.

The personal development or growth—or *formation*—that often occurs in people when they engage at the "front lines" can be undeniable, according the Lawson. The reading of Ghandi and his visit to India, Martin Luther King Jr. notes, were pivotal in changing him. King, aware of how the trip to India would certainly change him, told a group of reporters gathered at the airport, "To other countries I may go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim" (The Martin Luther King Jr Papers Project). But, sadly, King's reason for going to and engaging at the front lines or at the margins is often overlooked by so many others. At *nightlight*, for example, it seems as though the reason why so many Christians volunteer their time has something to do with a sense that they should give something back—that engaging the poor is the right thing to do—but rarely does one ever express it as something that one needs to do in order to change something about him or herself. Even after significant time engaging at the margins, it is found that most are still only able to articulate what may or may not be changing in others. Very few, it seems, are ever able to recognize the change

that is occurring in themselves through this process; through the relationships with people whom they had been told are inconvenient and in their particular situation out of their own poor choices.

Greg Paul, in his book, *God in the Alley* (2004), recalls a moment in his time with "Neil" when his eyes were opened to this reality; when he was so transformed by the experience at the front line that it would change his life in a dramatic and new way. "For the first time during our whole relationship, I saw Jesus in Neil. I had been seeing him as someone upon whom I could practice my own imitation of Christ, and had missed the Presence right before me. *I recognized that Neil was, at that moment, a physical representation to me of a vulnerable and dying Christ*" (Paul 2004, 18). Perhaps God gives, in His own, strange ways, the Church the *gift of the inconvenient other*. Not that the other is a pawn, but rather that God works through the injustices of the world in order to save it. Perhaps the middle class, Western syncretistic church is blind to is the provision of the inconvenient other as a method and means to saving it—a Church that is lukewarm, deserving nothing more than "to be spit out" (Revelation 3:16). It is becoming evident that Christians are so infected by the surrounding culture that they, too, see the poor as inconvenient rather than as the provision of God to rescue us from the insanity that is rooted within our "enlightened" selves. For example, according to *Restore Canada*, a ministry that also embraces the excluded, one family they worked with felt that the Church had little use for them: when in crisis, they were denied by 25 of the churches in their area for help (Alton 2014).

Discipleship

It is to the front lines that Jesus took and developed His disciples who in turn made disciples. Discipleship is examined here as the Christian application of behaviour and character change. Dallas Willard says "one thing is sure: you are somebody's disciple. You learned how to live from somebody else. There are no exceptions to this rule, for human beings are just the kind of creatures that have to learn and keep learning from others how to live" (Willard 1997, 271). Ultimately, every church and every Christian has a common mandate from God—to make disciples that will follow *Him* (Matthew 28: 19a). Dietrich Bonhoeffer warns: "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ" (Bonhoeffer 1937, 59). C. S. Lewis sums all of these sentiments:

> The Church exists for nothing else but to draw people to Christ, to make them little Christ's [the meaning of "Christian"]. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose. (Lewis 1956, 106)

Lewis makes clear that the purpose of the church is discipleship. As humans will inevitably learn from others how to live, it is the responsibility of the church to guide people towards Christ's way of living.

In the Greek New Testament, *mathetes/matheteuo* are translated, respectively, as "a disciple" and "to make disciples." A disciple in Jesus' day was a follower, a learner, a pupil, and an apprentice of someone else with the goal of becoming someone who would repeat the process of having followers, learners, and apprentices whom they taught. John the Baptist had disciples (Matthew 9:14), as did the Pharisees (Matthew 22:16), as did Moses (John 9:28). Each of these

cases, solidified by Jesus' own example with His disciples, implies a training relationship. In fact, followers of Jesus were only ever known as disciples of Christ because they followed what He taught and because of the on-going relationship they had with Him through the indwelling of the Spirit. When the Church was founded in Antioch (Acts 11:26), the language shifted from "disciple" to what has commonly since been known as "Christian".

The Process of Discipleship

Discipleship is contextualized in authentic communities of followers because it is fundamentally about the choice to follow Jesus as a way of life, for all of life. Alan Hirsch states that "discipleship is the process of assimilating the gospel, done over a whole lifetime, into the whole of our lives" (Hirsch 2014, ch. 6). Bruxy Cavey (2014) stresses that "discipleship must always be a process of teaching transcendent principles through specific behaviours" (page number). This mirrors the above mentioned theory of incremental change. In order to assimilate the gospel into the whole of one's life, one needs to align one's actions and intent with their belief in that gospel, one behaviour at a time.

For Cavey, discipleship has the daunting task of constantly working at this precision without ever succumbing to worldly pressures. This is particularly difficult in many churches within Western culture as the values and ways of "the world" have led Christians to become synchronistic with both their culture and Christ:

> We have proliferated self-indulgent consumer religion, the what-can-the-church-do-for-me syndrome. We are too easily satisfied with conventional success, bodies, bucks, and buildings. The average Christian resides in the

> comfort zone of "I am the consumer and the [church] is the retailer." (Hull 2007, 18)

Thus, Hull suggests that Christians want a consumable set of rules which they can follow to be proper Christians, and the Church responds accordingly. Hirsch offers a response to the prevailing situation by stating, "when we say 'Jesus is Lord' we are rejecting the other dominant lords in our culture" (Cavey 2014). To resolve this problem of syncretism, Hirsch states that the Church needs "more discipleship" (Hirsch 2014, ch. 2).

Stanley Hauerwas, in his book, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, draws the connection between discipleship, character, and engaging society in a way that is faithful to Christ. Hauerwas argues that a Christian's character is intrinsic to the Church becoming the kind of community it should be, a place that welcomes the stranger (Matthew 25) that can, in turn, disciple others into the kind of character needed to fulfill the *Missio Dei* throughout the ends of the earth. For Hauerwas, simply, a disciple of character is someone who possesses the virtue of integrity. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus places "demands on the disciple" (McKnight 2013, 54) to follow Him at all costs, just as it will cost Him His life to do the will of the Father. This kind of "integrity denotes the courage to march to a different drummer" (Hauerwas 1981, 116). Character for Hauerwas is denoted as "having certain intentions rather than others" (Hauerwas 1981, 271), leading one to, in turn, take a "step back" from engagements which are deemed to be un-Christian and turn to engagements that are centrally Christian. The Beatitudes, as discussed in Section

2, detail eight essential traits that must be sanctified by Christ so that, when combined, detail a disciple's true character. It is out of this character that discipleship takes place as it is always a process of teaching transcendent principles through specific behaviours (Cavey 2014), rooted in a life well-lived.

Discipleship today depends on Christ transforming the disciple into a person of character that can, in turn, be used by Christ to help shape other disciples in a process that seeks to replicate and multiply itself. The contemporary Church, which is a Church that has reduced itself to emphasizing orthodoxy over orthopraxy, "struggles to find a practical way to move beyond mere Christian education to a dynamic model of disciple-making (Cavey 2014). The inability to help the believer address not only their speech about God, but their actions and motivations as well (respectively, their orthopraxy and orthokardia), has resulted in "non-discipleship" which is "the elephant in the church" that everyone sees, but no one wants to talk about (Willard 1997, 301). As previously mentioned, the margins are a place conducive to change. Perhaps, then, what the Church needs is to look to other environments for the purpose of discipleship.

Drop-in Centres

Churches may be able to find ways of supplementing their orthodox-focused methods and approach to discipleship, but they may find that they need to look beyond themselves to para-church or mission organizations as a means of addressing the greater need for the disciple and as a means for disciple-making. As Gary Tyra found, after years of research across hundreds of churches, "the one ministry dynamic that nearly all successful contemporary disciple-making

ministries employ is a smaller interactive group experience that encourages and enables congregants to process and apply to their lives the teachings they are receiving in plenary worship services" (Tyra 2009, 213). Typically, this has been practiced by the church in settings such as small groups, Bible studies, and core groups. These have been places where orthodoxy can be discussed, and applied to life. However, in these discussion settings, there often is not room to actually practice one's belief. Discipleship, in this context, stays within the realm of discourse, preventing change in orthopraxy. This is where external organizations, that offer an environment where Christians can engage with those at the margins, can play a role in holistic discipleship.

In the same way as it is difficult to simply describe character/character change, drop-in centres are an "extremely varied service…the main characteristic that they have in common is that they aim to offer social support, particularly for more isolated people" (Hall and Cheston 2002, 31). Precisely because drop-ins are a place where Christians can interact with those on the margins, they offer an environment where character change can happen.

Indeed, ministries like *nightlight* have shown themselves to supplement the Church in the discipleship-making effort. There seems to be an important relationship between the traditional, common Church and the para-church, which can lead to effective character-formation and, thus, discipleship-making. After all, "the way to assess the true strength of a church is not to ask 'how many people are present?' but 'what are these people like?'. The answer should be, 'are they making the difference in the world for Christ that he expects?'" (Hull 2007, 19).

This sets the stage for an exploration of how far and in what ways God may use *nightlight* to transform the character of Christian volunteers who engage with marginalized individuals to be more Beatitudinal in nature. In order to examine such transformations, a number of methods have been used. The next section outlines the methods used and justifies both their use and application.

CHAPTER 4:

METHODOLOGY AND PROJECT

This thesis was completed in five main phases. The phases are as follows: preliminary research and consultation (a hybrid of "Context Needs and Research Assessment" and "Development of the Innovation" to borrow language from the Tyndale D. Min. Handbook 2014 v1); research and consultation ("Planning" and "Implementation"); analysis; research and consultation II; analysis II ("Report Writing"). These phases are evidently cyclical as this thesis is methodologically influenced by Action Research, an approach which promotes dynamic research processes based on observation, reflection, and application, "so that ideas that are tentatively articulated in reflection can be examined systematically in phases of active experimentation" (Britannica 2014). With this model in mind, ultimately, this thesis seeks to find the subjective and applied realities that move volunteers in the *nightlight* ministerial context to become more like the blessed characters Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount. Simply, it seeks to better understand how God may use participants' experiences engaging individuals at the margins to shape Beatitudinal Character. The hypothesis is that as volunteers interact with *nightlight's* guests—individuals who typically live at the margins of society as per low socio-economic status, mental illness, addiction, or otherwise—they come to resemble the blessed character described by Jesus in the Sermon on the

Mount. This idea is explored through malleable interviews, personal analysis, and direct application.

Phase I included a brief examination of the literature on Action Research and related methodologies (e. g. Appreciative Inquiry and Auto-Ethnography) and discussion with students of the Tyndale Doctorate of Ministry program and the thesis supervisor concerning methodological utilization. During this phase the theological rationale for the research was outlined and the proposal for the thesis was written. In summation, Phase I lasted for approximately one year: the most extensive phase covering the basics of nearly all the secondary research needed moving forward.

Phase II included the hiring of three research assistants and the compilation of certain chapters of the thesis: Theological Rationale, Precedent Social Science Literature and Cases, Proposed Project, Methodology and Methods. Phase II also included the development, writing and approval of interview questions, ethical considerations, clearance and the first set of participant interviews (with *nightlight* volunteers—past and present).

As an intermediary stage, to analyze the data that was gathered in Phase II, the duration of Phase III spanned three months. The research assistants at this time transcribed and helped code the data to understand volunteers' attitudes, beliefs and values within the wider framework of the Beatitudes. To be sure, the methods used are phenomenological in that there are not rigid requirements pertaining to such discernment. Indeed, Auto-ethnography gives credence to justify the discernment process based on the researcher's internal understandings

of both *nightlight* as an organization and *nightlight* volunteers/participants as disciples. The scope of Phase III was limited but the significance profound as it influences the remainder of the thesis and in turn my understanding of what shapes "peace-making, meekness, hunger and thirst" in volunteers in the *nightlight* ministerial context.

In Phase IV, a second set of participants (volunteers from *nightlight* in Belleville) were engaged in the process. They were introduced to the insights from the analysis gained in Phase III and asked to reflect and write about the ways in which God may have changed their character, testing the hypothesis that engagement with the inconvenient other is necessary for character transformation.

Phase V includes "Outcomes, Findings and Interpretation" and the "Conclusion and Implications" chapters. Indeed, building on the two phases of research and consultation, guided by both the primary source interviews and secondary source literature, a discussion was formed on how far and in what ways the evidenced essential elements make *nightlight* volunteers more Beatitudinal; a broad scope that situates the findings methodologically, theologically and practically. Phase V lasted circa two months.

Field

This thesis has been constructed, carried out, and completed in Eastern Ontario and Southern Ontario, Canada. Phase II to Phase V spanned from February 2014 to November 2014. The secondary research components of this thesis (namely the literature review, theological framework, methodology, and supporting documentation) were completed in Toronto, Ontario and Kingston,

Ontario. These phases have been aided by research assistants in correspondence with and under the approval of the thesis advisor.

Primary research (i. e. interviews) was conducted in conjunction with and relation to *nightlight* volunteers, who are referred to as research participants, at three different *nightlight* iterations—in Guelph, Kingston, and Belleville, Ontario—during April 2014 and November 2014. The former interviews (in April, in Guelph and Kingston) were for the purposes of ascertaining participants' experience(s) that moved or continue to move them towards Beatitudinal Character. The latter engagements (through September to November 2014 in Belleville) were purposed to evaluate whether the attitudes, beliefs and values, and the findings described by the volunteers in Guelph and Kingston could be utilized by the other volunteers at *nightlight* Belleville in a way that would spur concurrent and/or consecutive character transformation.

Subjects were selected by way of the Auto-ethnographic insights of the researcher who sought to interview and survey exemplar volunteers. In other words, the researcher drew on his contextual experience and observation of the character of volunteers. Those selected were those whom the researcher believed God was transforming or had already transformed to more fully embody the Beatitudes and embrace the other.

Six men and five women ultimately participated. This is indicative of the *nightlight* experience where 50% of volunteers are male and 50% female. More specifically, three women were interviewed and two surveyed (leaving four men interviewed and two men surveyed). Additionally, six over the age of 40

participated, while five under the age of 40 participated. This is representative for the ministry.

Gender and age aside, it is important to note that all volunteers selected are (self-) identified "middle class" in so far as they seek to help the marginalized. Said differently, *nightlight* volunteers (those selected and otherwise) are not counted as marginalized because the ministry's guests are largely those of lower socio-economic status whom the volunteers wish to embrace as other. Simply stated, if the guests/"others" are the poor, the volunteers who seek to serve them are not. Concerning the subjects' "Westerness," all interviewed and surveyed were Caucasian and have lived in Canada for at least all or most of their life; thus a cultural congruence, even heterogeneity and hegemony, was presumed.

Scope

The scope of this thesis is multifold, but can arguably be distilled to three primary paradigms: methods, relationships and language. This thesis interviewed seven *nightlight* volunteers to understand how far and in what ways the development of Beatitudinal Character is reflected in their attitudes, beliefs and values, and how these systems relate to the outworking of the teachings of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

This research is influenced by Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry and Auto-ethnography and has been analyzed with Value- and Thematic-Coding. These frameworks spur a preference for and use of subjective and applied research techniques. These were used so that volunteers could be chosen and the content of their comments discerned apart from rigid externalized or quantitative

academic constructs. Simply, conclusions were drawn based on the researcher's relationship with the participants and understanding of how their attitudes, beliefs and values relate to the Beatitudinal characteristics in their lives. Of course, the findings are influenced by the methods and coding used, but while these methodologies are influential they are not used to their full extent. For example, Appreciative Inquiry calls for interviews with and by participants. However, due to the constraints of time, this thesis interviewed only participants. The underlying foundations, though, of the methodologies like maintaining a relation and equitable space between researcher and researched and acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity as an academic, were followed.

Another challenge posed by the subjective and applied frameworks of Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry, and Auto-ethnography, is that the researcher's interaction with both the material and the experiences of participants will taint how certain realities are interpreted by both the participants and the researcher. While this is not necessarily problematic, it must be noted that the Beatitudinal Character and attitudes, beliefs and values reported on have been influenced not only by the researcher's conceptualizations thereof but the subjectivity of the research assistants.

The desire to work in these parameters was not measured scholastically per se, but rested in the belief that the methods employed were mostly consistent with the researcher's faith, though strict compliance with these methodologies are not exclusively godly. As is explored elsewhere, this thesis adheres to the aims of the methodologies in so far as they promote the "opportunity for people to be free

in community" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 57) and "evoke storytelling about peak experiences" (Norum 2008). Through this storytelling and reflection, change is often initiated in participants where they might otherwise have remained unaffected by their experiences with the other. "The principle of simultaneity states [that] inquiry and change are not separate moments, but are simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 50). Although it is the event of engaging with the other that forms the foundation for change, it is the reflection upon those events that often ignites a persuasion that the change is indeed important. This is the key, as earlier stated, to producing behavioural change. As one reflects on their attitudes and beliefs (orthodoxy and orthokardia), one can then work to align one's values (orthopraxy) with the former.

Regarding relationships, the researcher had established relationships with all of the volunteers who agreed to participate in the research. Some volunteers currently volunteer at *nightlight* (either in Kingston, Ontario and/or Belleville, Ontario) and others do not (mainly those from the Guelph, Ontario iteration). Current volunteers have volunteered (in Kingston and/or Belleville) for at least six months during the last two years. Those who do not currently volunteer (e. g. those from the Guelph iteration) have not volunteered at *nightlight* for more than eight years, and did not volunteer for more than two years at that time.

Such intergenerational research could limit the transferability of the findings; and thus potentially, the efficacy of the thesis. The researcher cannot control that time-passed and time-present may distort one's perception of

attitudes, beliefs and values. For instance, if someone cites a "value" it may be a value from the past that is not directly related to themselves. It may be difficult to due to time discern whether and how *nightlight* was, or continues to be, attributable for the value stated. This potential complication rests in the possibility that volunteers may unintentionally and/or inaccurately attribute such growth to experiences that were not, in fact, responsible for the perceived change. Simply, the elapsed time may crystalize or confuse reflection on the catalyst of personal transformation when drawing on recent or removed recollections.

Regarding language, it is important not only in fostering equity between researcher and researched but in effectively transmitting knowledge. Indeed, one of the potential barriers to explicating the attitudes, beliefs and values of Beatitudinal Character may be the language used to describe it in that way. Maybe, for instance, a participant could talk about a certain moment or event that made them feel at peace or close with a *nightlight* guest or drew them closer to God. This may or may not speak of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5, verse 9: "blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Whether or not their description is indeed indicative of that verse is subjective as it is very unlikely that they will use those verses directly in their description of a given reality.

The barriers in language have been overcome, to the best of the researcher's ability, by claiming the appropriate methodological lens (a form of Auto-ethnography); this clarifies this subjective reality as natural, even desirable. Simply, while it is true that there may be moments of classifying some statements

as one Beatitude, when in the mind of someone else it may be another, is not of concern as the interpretation is indeed subjective. Moreover, as a Christian, the researcher believe barriers in language have been overcome through prayerfully and mindfully sensing the meaning behind the responses of participants, as communication by key phrases, body language, and the notes and memories of the conversation. Of course, these insights were not available to the research assistants. They have coded and edited by text alone. Nevertheless, while essentially unquantifiable, this thesis has used a series of advanced coding procedures to provide a degree of standardization to the coding. Similarly, the research assistants' coding is based on coding theory which should lessen methodological inconsistencies.

It is not likely that interviews, regardless of relational or methodological scope, have clarified whether the ministerial setting or its constituent parts are in and of themselves the conduit for character development. Perhaps the relationships, practices and activities undertaken at *nightlight*, and the attitudes, beliefs and values described by participants as transformative, would have been equally impactful if embodied elsewhere. Perhaps some combination of the various pieces is needed. Due to the subjective and applied nature of this thesis' methodologies, its central tenets are not verifiable. Ironically, however, such ambiguity is a sign of adherence to the phenomenological, protean paradigms promoted by Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry, and Auto-Ethnography and echoed in coding theory, as articulated below.

Practically speaking, there are many other things out the control of the

researcher: from when and where volunteers were able to meet to conduct interviews to approval of the thesis. Yet these details are the most verifiable of all the thesis' realities. Not only can they be documented with ease, the lack of their fulfillment can often be explained.

Methodologies

There is significant similarity across the approaches of Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry and Auto-ethnography: all are thematically structured on subjective, applied, equitizing, and life-giving manners of research. As a Christian researcher who believes in the nuanced, embodied, equalizing, rebirthing power of the triune God (realities seemingly parallel to the aforementioned methodological themes) the intentions were to accentuate and utilize these similarities by using these methodologies. Certain theological qualifications have been made in so doing however, commenting on the methodologies underlying humanism and exclusivity, for example. Certain variances across the mentioned methodologies are employed, as their different durations, situational conceptualizations, and communitarian/individualized standards are not always compatable for this research. Simply stated, when one methodology was chosen over another (in instances of difference) it was done due to the limitations of this thesis, not the shortcomings of the omitted methodologies. Likewise, when the research strays from a "pure" utilization of a given methodology, it is to suit the research needs. Ultimately, this section outlines the considerations on how Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry and Auto-ethnography inform this thesis in theory and in practice and how they relate to one another. Additional considerations are

given to coding methods and their philosophical and practical confines. It will be seen that similar sentiments of subjectivity flow fluidly across approaches used to gather, commodify and analyze, discerning Beatitudinal Character in *nightlight* volunteers.

Action Research

Action Research is the penultimate methodology for the thesis' primary research, second only to the mysterious movements of the Spirit of God. As "any systemic inquiry" (Milton-Brkich, Shumbera and Beran 2010, 47), Action Research is about looking, thinking and acting in "a continually recycling set of activities" (Stringer 2007, 9); it is "a process of learning from…a dialectical interplay between practices, reflection and learning" (McNiff 2009, 15). This methodology "informs practice and practice informs research synergistically" (Avison et al. 1999, 94) to link "theory to our everyday practice" (Koch and Kralik 2008, 5). Indeed, Action Research "provides a flexible and practical set of procedures that are systematic, cyclical, solutions oriented and participatory" (Stringer 2007, x). In some ways Action Research is therefore "less a methodology" and more an amorphous perspective that helps make sense of "*how* things are happening, rather than…merely [commenting on]…*what* is happening" (Stringer 2007, 36). Action Research is most effective for this thesis because it is:

> phenomenological (focusing on people's actual lived experience or reality), interpretative (focusing on their own interpretation of acts and activities), and hermeneutic (focusing on how people make meaning of events in their lives). It provides the means by which stakeholders explore their experience, gain greater clarity and understanding of events and activities, and use those extended understandings to construct effective solutions to the problem(s) on which the study was focused. (Stringer 2007, 37)

This thesis incorporates such subjectivity (phenomenological, interpretative, and hermeneutic) and application (practical, acting, constructing) by selecting and interviewing participants about their experience(s), which seemed to propel them to be those whom "hunger and thirst for righteousness." This data was then coded to see whether and how participants' attitudes, beliefs and values overlap. Analysis on said coding was derived by asking questions which the data elicits. A second set of participants were then asked to reflect on the analysis to help discern the degree to which they see God shaping them accordingly and Beatitudinally. Therefore, to be sure, this process is subjective as participants were chosen based on a sense of who had already been or were being transformed as such and what insights they may have to offer towards transformation.

Likewise, the process is applied as the stories articulated by the first set of participants were cycled through to the second set of participants, so that they had the chance to reflect and relate to the stories about how and in what ways their attitudes, beliefs and values have begun to align with Beatitudinal Character since volunteering at *nightlight*. Essentially Action Research, this process is given credence to by other professionals, particularly in education and health care (Koshy, Koshy and Waterman, 2011). Ernst Stringer for example, who "as a young classroom teacher" instructed aboriginal children in Australia, records that despite his best efforts, his lessons were "seemingly pointless…ineffective....inarticulate….[and monotonous]" (Stringer 2007, 4). He found that certain environments spurred vitality and communication amongst his students. In the end, he learned "to explore and understand the situation [with] an

attitude of inquiry" that enables further engagement, examination, exploration, and responses "to deal more effectively with each context...and the diverse experiences and perspectives of the people within it" (Stringer 2007, 3-4). His process was, as is that of this thesis, a dynamic method of "simultaneously conducting action and inquiry" (Tobert 2004, 1). Therefore, changes towards Beatitudinal Character continue to happen during the interview process, as the participant reflects on his or her own experience.

Auto-Ethnography

The methodological themes of subjectivity and application put forward in Action Research are also present in Auto-ethnography. Certain ethnographic research tries..."to get close to its subjects in order to capitalize upon their familiarity with the topic of study" (Maso 2001, 144); whereas Auto-ethnography is "the reflexive accounting of the narrator's subjective experience and subjectivity" (Maréchal 2009) that represents "a commitment to the first-hand... exploration of a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation" (Aitkinson 2001, 4). To summarize, this methodology is a "careful, critical analysis of life experiences" (Warren 2009, 68).

With this framework, coupled with the early anthropological and ethnographic traditions where "research describes and interprets the shared and learned patters of values, behaviours [and] beliefs" (Harris 1968, cited in Creswell 2013, 90) the participant interview selection is justified, not by quantitative or ostensibly objective parameters, but as per the researcher's

(aforementioned) "sense" of who has been or is being Beatitudinally transformed. Indeed, Auto-ethnography is "a method and a text. That is, a textual record of people and places, and a way of doing qualitative research" (Besio 2009, 240). In other words, the researcher draws upon his time in the ministry to discern transformation in the lives of volunteers vis-à-vis *nightlight* culture.

In the interviews, the researcher has attempted to further extrapolate how, from the account of the volunteers in question, "[a] singular story builds an understanding of how [reality can be] understood on a larger cultural level" (Warren 2009, 69). "In the interviews…the interviewees [are] to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their worlds" (Sherman 2001, 369). In other words, to understand how participants' *nightlight* narrative (read "a singular story") can be applied with, for and through other volunteers (read "larger cultural level") as a channel of transformation. Hence, the interviews are both applied and the ground work for future application.

Ethnography, like Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry, deconstructs traditional roles of researcher and participant in two ways. Firstly, and specifically, in "ethnographic interviewing…researchers have established respectful, ongoing relationships with the interviewees" (Heyl 2001, 3). In this vein, personal and professional barriers that in previous research paradigms may have created at least an illusion of objectivity and a disconnect between the scholar and participants have been removed; instead replaced by an increasingly shared reality that makes it more difficult to suggest that the participants' perspectives are not in some ways the researchers. This is particularly pertinent

for this thesis as the researcher has known the participants for many years and is already familiar with the setting in a way that may help or hinder the ability to discover the Beatitudinal Character in question.

Secondly, the methodologies in question contend generally that researchers "rarely can represent the interests of everyone in a group or community, and their work is often a representation of 'key informants'...which has the potential to rescript...the researcher-researched dynamic" (Besio 2009, 242). This acknowledgement leads some to hold that "findings are literally created by the inquiry process" (Stringer 2007, 37). Thus whether or not it is the so called researchers' lived experience that is being projected to the greater totality of the research setting, or the participants', Auto-ethnography is applied in so far as individuals' vantage points move from private reality to broader application. The hope is that in *nightlight,* this will serve to spur action towards Beatitudinal Character.

Appreciative Inquiry

The interviews were informed by the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. "Centred around processes of changes in and across" (Reed 2007, 1) "centres of human relatedness" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 28), Appreciative Inquiry is "a deliberative search for the positive core of an individual or collective system" (Norum 2008, 1). This positive core may be understood in the *nightlight* ministry as those things which move volunteers to Beatitudinal Character.

Yet, while Appreciative Inquiry informs this thesis' interview method, the interviews are not strictly Appreciative Inquiry. In fact, unlike the map sketched

out by Appreciative Inquiry pioneers which promotes prolonged participant interviews of and by those under study, participants in this study are not given a chance to interview each other, nor do they follow the "latter phases of [Appreciative Inquiry]: dream, design, and destiny" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 37). Nonetheless, a truncated process does not mitigate the ethos of the methodological movements herein ascribed. Indeed, in the relational environ with lesser barriers between researcher and participant as articulated above, a positive focus has been set "that starts in strengths [and sets] a precedent for the emergence of new, life-affirming, results oriented practices" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, viii). In the language of Appreciative Inquiry, it is the intent of this research for volunteers to speak of "affirmative topics [that]... they feel give life to" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 21) their time at *nightlight* and their corresponding personal transformation towards Beatitudinal Character. Questions were asked that would draw upon positive reflections of the participants' attitudes, beliefs and values regarding each Beatitudinal Character trait. It is for this reason that, when coding the data, the qualitative statements of participants are made quantitative so that patterns can be identified. If the number of statements made about Comfort, for example, are high relative to that of Possessions, this indicates a strength in the area of becoming "those who mourn". By drawing upon such a positivistic paradigm, dialogue is fostered "to create not just new worlds but better worlds" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 28). Translated to this thesis, better worlds would be created in part when participants are more aligned with the blessed character of Matthew 5.

Positive story-telling is a central manifestation of Appreciative Inquiry's positivistic paradigm. For instance, Cooperrider and Whitney talk about Appreciative Inquiry undertaken with organizations where they "set a goal of creating a narrative-rich culture with a ratio of five stories of positive to every negative one as a way of building a vibrant, high-performing, customer-focused culture" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 4). To these ends, Cooperrider and Whitney promote "opportunities for good news stories and open ended questions" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 5). The interviews followed the general ethos of Appreciative Inquiry in that they were positive in approach and disposition. However, the researcher does not fully prescribe to the underlying philosophy of the methodology. Examining Cooperrider and Whitney again, "appreciative Inquiry…takes the idea of social construction of reality to its positive extreme…with its emphasis on metaphor and narrative, relational ways of knowing, on language and on its potential as a source of generative theory" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 7). Said differently, these theorists seem to believe that human word and action can alone generate an organizational health: a contention put aside from a Christian research perspective, which holds God as the ultimate "generative theory."

Methodological Promises

In fact, Appreciative Inquiry is held in such high esteem that it is said to be the "*single most important action* a group can take to *liberate the human spirit*" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 9. Emphasis added). This claim is lofty

and problematic; yet similar sentiments permeate the other methodologies mentioned.

As stated, equity and life are commonalities of all the methodological frameworks herein employed. Equity, for example, as explored in the ethnographic literature, can be nurtured in reconceptualising the role of the researcher. It can be found too, purportedly, in Action Research. To borrow heavily from Stringer, the methodology provides "the means to devise sustainable improvements in practice that enhance the well-being of all-participants" (Stringer 2007, x). It is a means where "empowerment, democracy, equity, liberation, freedom from oppression, and life enhancement are central" (Stringer 2007, xii) to bolstering "the strength and resilience of even the most marginalized peoples" (Stringer 2007, xvi); and, again, "the lives and well-being of all participants" (Stringer 2007, 5). Simply stated, at least in the view of Stringer, Action Research is inherently equitizing and life-giving. This poses a problem for a Christian researcher who believes that "Jesus is the Life" (John 14:6), not the methodology in and of itself.

To be sure, the methodologies sometimes make space for "spirituality" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 46), though they remain atheistic in regard to what or who creates equity and life. For instance, while positively positivistic and even possibly the strongest methodology for my studies, Appreciative Inquiry is not intrinsically—contrary to the claims of Cooperrider and Whitney—"a precedent for the emergence of new, life-affirming results" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, viii). Rather, it is assumed that God is the one from whom new life

will emerge. Appreciative Inquiry may well be a conduit for God's life-giving work, but to imply, if only unintentionally, that the methodology can fulfill such a task in and of itself is atheistic.

Moreover, said professionals do not clearly create space for the Spirit of God to inspire and work through other methodologies of personal and structural examination and change. Recall the Appreciative Inquiry's is referenced to be the "*single most important action* [emphasis added] a group can take to *liberate the human spirit* [emphasis added]" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 9). Like the atheistic assumptions of the methodologies, the apparent arrogance put forward in such a sentence is likely unintentional. Nevertheless, as before, the Christian researcher must proclaim the Biblical truth that the Lord of Heaven and Earth has, can, and, on his own volition, will harness whatever means He wishes to help liberate the human spirit: an act ultimately accomplished by those who have faith in His Son Jesus who came, died, rose and ascended. This truth also humbles endeavours to discern the sought after story of transformation, as transformation will not come unless the Spirit moves.

To reiterate, in contrast to the problems of atheism and arrogance alluded to above, the assumption is that regardless the methodology, if anyone or anything is to be truly (and in some cases fully) equitized or given life to, the methodology would only be a channel for the Spirit of God to do such work. The Spirit of God is the life-giver, the revitalizer, and "single most important action" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 9) over against any one methodology of inquiry, however exemplary and efficacious it may be. Accordingly, participants were

asked about how God worked in their life through *nightlight* to make to make them more like Christ: more Beatitudinal.

Methodological Differences

Despite fundamentally different assumptions concerning the origin of equity and new life, this thesis is influenced by the subjective and applied methodologies of Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry, and Auto-ethnography. This thesis is intended to facilitate a study that is as much about *knowing*, as it is *doing*, what volunteers claim to move them towards Beatitudinal Character. The hope is to ascertain "contextually relevant procedures…to enrich professional practice [and] also enhance the lives of those involved" (Stringer 2007, 3); to get at "what creates the space for people to be their best…and for personal transformation" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 55).

Appreciative Inquiry also moves towards a communitarian methodological embodiment as "small groups are gathered to share stories/ and best practices, to envision their collective future" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 37-38). Appreciative Inquiry authors ask "what effect is [this] having on our lives *together* [emphasis added]?" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 51). While such a (or similar) question(s) may be implicit in this thesis, the intent is not to explore these elements from a group perspective. Notwithstanding this caveat, Appreciative Inquiry remains an integral methodological influence. In addition to the value of subjectivity and application it champions, this thesis holds to the belief that as individual characters transform so does organizational vivacity;

particularly those focused on relationships, like *nightlight*. Taking from Cooperrider and Whitney once more, organizations are

> living spiritual-social systems—mysteries of creation to be nurtured and affirmed, not mechanistic or scientific operations with problems to be solved. They must be able to work in the energetically positive, continually seeking to discover what gives life to the organization and its members when they are at their best. (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 46)

An individualistic lens may fit better with Auto-ethnography: a "mode of scholarship that answers the unique questions that deal with...qualities of an individual's life...to open one's experiences" (Warren 2009, 68). In other words, Auto-ethnography is a "consideration of a group to which one belongs as a native, member or participant" (Maréchal 2009, 45). The differences here are not deep. Rather they are but shades that will colour various components of this research. During participant selection, this thesis has employed Auto-ethnography; throughout the interviews it has used the ideas of Appreciative Inquiry; and during application of the findings, it has been guided by Action Research.

Similarly, nuances between both this work and the frameworks in question appear when discussing the reasons or situation in which a particular methodology is utilized. From the perspective of the researcher, Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry and Auto-ethnography are effective for their subjective and applied principles and their effort to promote positivity, equity and new life (albeit to an unfortunate atheistic and arrogant end). Yet it would appear that proponents of Action Research see it as a constructor not a catalyst: "action research, in its most effective forms...provides the means by which...to construct effective solutions to the *problem*(s) [emphasis added] on which the study was

focused." (Stringer 2007, 37). But there is not a particular problem in this research; rather a reality which it seeks to describe and help work towards in so far as human efforts will allow. Evidently, the difference between my use of the methodology and what it purely proscribes is slight.

Ethnography does not explain its processes in relation to problems but in the observation or investigation "culture-sharing" groups (Creswell 2012, 90). Appreciative Inquiry speaks of the need to "nurture and affirm" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 46), not problematize, organizations in its methodological situational conceptualization. This is more in tune with this thesis' aim in the context of *nightlight* and volunteers' Beatitudinal Character. Thus situational conceptualizations are, analogous to questions of individual versus collective constructs, varied in the literature and in the use thereof, but not so significantly that it distorts the influence the methodologies have on this research.

The final difference between this thesis and the methodologies, (and this one is slight too) is the duration thereof. The latter recommends longevity and the former requires brevity. Ethnographic texts in particular speak to the need for "extended observations" (Creswell 2007, 68); "ongoing relationships" (Heyl in Atkinson 2001, 369); and "protracted investigation" (Atkinson 2001, 5). Action Research is built on the premise of investigation in cycles over time.

A more robust research process on Beatitudinal Character would take years; though in some way the research began before the researcher officially undertook this thesis: watching *nightlight* volunteers grow to be poor in spirit as

they gave their time to the ministry. Considered that way, the researcher may legitimately claim congruence with theorists who look for longevity.

In reality, Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry and Auto-ethnography are alike in so far as they put forward themes of subjectivity, application, equity, and life. While the researcher does not proscribe to the intrinsic claims of these methodologies, which seem to be at least to a degree atheistic and arrogant, they make space for an exploration of that which move *nightlight* volunteers towards Beatitudinal Character as expressed in attitudes, beliefs and values. It is interesting to note further the fluidity between the emergent philosophies in the methodologies mentioned above and those of the more practical coding techniques described below.

Coding

"Coding is the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis," according to Johnny Saldaña (Saldaña 2009, 5). Like Action Research, it is a "cyclical act" (Saldaña 2009, 21). In this context, it employed to discern patterns and categories of research participants' values from a series of seven interviews exploring character transformation in drop-in centre volunteers. The researcher asked how far and in what ways do volunteers, typically middle class Christians, become more like the characteristics of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount when they interact with, typically, individuals at the margins of society (i. e. those living in poverty, with addictions, etc.). The theory and practice of coding and value coding should be problematized however in so

far as the methods ultimately give credence to the need for Auto-ethnographic interpretation employed by the research in question.

To start, the subjectivity of all coding is apparent in the view of coding theory: it is a "heuristic… an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas to follow" (Saldaña 2009, 21). Not only is "all coding a judgement" the given characteristics of both the researcher and the researched influence the filtering and perception of the document and how, in turn, the data is coded (Saldaña 2009, 20). Thus, coding is in many ways a qualitative discipline that requires the methodological sensitivities of Auto-ethnography which champions the role of the subjective self in understanding research.

These subjective sentiments are expressed in values coding, not necessarily from the researchers perspective, but from the perspective of the participant whom expresses certain values, attitudes and/or beliefs. A value is, to borrow again from Saldaña, "the importance we attribute to oneself, another person, thing or idea…The greater the personal meaning…the greater the personal payoff" (Saldaña 2009, 89). Contrast this to an attitude, which is purportedly "the way we think and feel about oneself, another person, thing or idea" and a belief which is noted as "a part of a system that includes our values and attitudes, plus…other interpretative perceptions" (Saldaña 2009, 90). The author notes that there is a "complex interplay, influence, and affect between and amount all three constructs…but Values Coding does not necessarily have to code for all three or differentiate between them unless the study's goals include

determining participant motivation, agency, causality, or ideology" (Saldaña 2009, 90).

As the research on Beatitudinal Character looks to explore that which moved volunteers to become more like the blessed characters in Matthew 5, the above qualifications are likely salient. That is to say, it is important for the researcher to understand motivation, agency, causality, and ideology in so far as the research hopes to know what and why certain experiences (i. e. motivation or causality) helped transform the volunteers (i. e. agency and ideology). For this reason, the researcher is advised to follow the steps laid out by Saldaña in order to help understand what actually is meant by the participants' statements, especially because "what a participant states are his values [motivation, etc.] may not always be truthful or harmonize with his observed action [causality and agency] and interactions" (Saldaña 2009, 111). To this end, Saldaña recommends using three letters" V: (value), A: (attitude), and B: (belief)" to sort the transcribed interview text. This "can sometimes [be a] slippery task" as it is hard to demarcate thematically in this way. To be sure, "a category [is] a word or phrase describing some segment of your data that is *explicit*, whereas a theme is a *phrase or sentence* describing more *subtle and tacit* processes" (Saldaña 2009, 26).

"After the research has [been] coded [A, B, V], the next step is to categorize them and reflect on their collective meaning" (Saldaña 2009, 91). It is then incumbent upon the researcher to carefully "weave the three constructs' most salient codes together" (Saldaña 2009, 92). The researcher should be mindful that the researched (the interviewee subject) may not be direct in stating their A, B, V.

but imply them. In these cases, Auto-ethnography is an appropriate methodology to justify the given coding as it attends to, and in fact honours, the ways in which the researcher can and does project their sense on to the larger cultural setting.

This plays directly into the fact that "Values Coding requires a paradigm, perspective, and positionality" (Saldaña 2009, 93). Said differently, "the researcher is challenged to code [a] statement any number of ways depending on the *researcher's own* system of values, attitudes, and beliefs" (Saldaña 2009, 93). While such subjectivity is intrinsic in the mentioned methodologies there may be problems in consistent analysis if the researcher employs research assistants, as has been done for this thesis. In other words, due to the phenomenological perspectives proposed if different people analysis A, B, V, they would likely uncover different textual meanings, if only subtly. This may prove problematic for understanding Beatitudinal Character transformation as the primary investigator has—again, fitting the tradition of Auto-Ethnographic Research—established relationships with the participants that would colour and perhaps deepen and sharpen his understanding of what is being said. More, recall, earlier it was said that the research associate(s) coding for VAB do not have the nuance of body language or intonation to base their findings. VAB is discerned on a strictly textual basis in this thesis. Indeed, regardless of the veracity of one's discernment it will be different than others and the end goal of compiling the spirit of values, attitudes and beliefs will be muddled accordingly.

Theming the Data

Similar limitations can be thought of when outlining how data will be themed as a qualitative method. The theming choice is selective in scope, drawing largely, though not entirely, from the literature review by Johnny Saldaña in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2009). After defining broadly and exposing the subjectivity of themes, this section will touch on the method's applicability in relation to Values Coding and Beatitudinal Scheme as a means of data analysis for this thesis.

A theme is basically "a *phrase* or *sentence* that identifies what a unit of data is *about* and/or what it *means*" (Saldaña 2009, 139). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary nuances this definition, noting a theme as—to underscore but two of many meanings—"the main subject being discussed or described [and/or] a particular subject or issue that is discussed often or repeatedly" (Merriam-Webster 2014). Both the lexicographical (or better, etymological) and theoretical understandings of theming cited push toward exploring essences. In other words, a theme ought to winnow a phenomenon, be it a word, statement, or otherwise, down to what is "essential" opposed to that which is "incidental" (van Mann, in Saldaña 2009, 140).

The point of essentializing is to make sense of and give shape to the data (van Mann in Saldaña 2009, 140). Yet by doing so the researcher intrinsically layers his or her conceptualizations on the reality in question, if only unintentionally. Simply stated, theming, like coding, and other forms of qualitative analysis articulated above, is subjective and Auto-ethnographic.

Concerning subjectivity, one researcher may look "at the [data's] manifest

level [and theme on the] directly observable information" while another researcher (or perhaps the same researcher during a different time) may theme the data on "the latent level…underlying the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, cited in Saldaña 2009, 140). Both manifest and latent level theming are subjective: one explicitly the other implicitly. Explicitly, the researcher chooses which (often re)occurring words and statements are counted as themes. Implicitly the researcher constructs themes as they perceive them in and through (re)occurring words, statements, etc. Because the researcher's choice influences both methods, theming is always subjective.

The subjectivity of theming is not confined to the utilization of manifest or latent level analysis styled above. In fact, it is likely that most researchers oscillate between explicit and implicit means of theming, perhaps even unconsciously. In the implicit or latent case however, this subjectivity deepens as one "names" themes (recall: the themes are not (re)occurring words, statements, etc. in this context; thus they must be named). Researchers look for emerging themes and name accordingly (Ezzy, cited in Saldaña 2009, 141). The method is subjective and, more specifically, Auto-ethnographic in so far as it requires the researcher to read a certain level of their own experience into the participant's reality, such that they are able to interpret what has been said or described in a thematic sense. It should also be noted that such naming may become distorted, from the ideal of emergence, to the reality of habit. That is to say, once the researcher has become accustomed to patterns in the research he or she may supplant a more organic process with their expectations from previous interviews

and analytical iterations.

Nevertheless, it is the auto-ethnographic flavour of theming which intersects the practice with coding. This is particularly relevant to this project-thesis, as data has been coded under the framework of Values Coding whereby the research associate extracted sentences from (partial) interview transcripts that seemed to represent Attitudes, Beliefs and Values.

The sentences were coded A, B, V as per the literatures definition of the codes: "thoughts or feelings of"; "a combination of V and A plus other experiences" and "attributed significance to", respectively. From time to time coding the data as described proved challenging as a single sentence, statement, etc. could contain multiple A, B, V's and the research assistant would either need to break the segment to smaller pieces to codify accordingly or choose what he believed to be the most prominent code of the present options.

After the research assistant had coded the sentences, he attempted to extract the essence of the given value, attitude or belief. He named the essence in one word—one theme. This process was more challenging than coding because theming obscures the depth of values, attitudes and beliefs. For instance, a participant spoke to a situation where they did not know what the future held for his family. In turn, the research assistant recorded the comments as an attitude (code) of uncertainty (theme). While this act may appear to "[capture and unify] the nature of the experience into a meaningful whole" (DeSantis and Ugarriza, cited in in Saldaña 2009, 140), a deeper interpretation may reveal the situation to be a belief (code) in family (theme). Additionally, sometimes the theme was more

prescriptive than descriptive; hinting at the tension and previously pronounced fluctuation between implicit and explicit theming.

As an aside, there was an initial selection bias in the coding and theming because the research assistant was only given segments of the interview transcripts. That is to say, there was a pre-pruning of the interview recorded, presumably around what the transcriber believed to be less than relevant information. A full reading of the interviews would have likely altered both coding and theming, as the missing data could situate the quotations meaningfully, thereby changing the interpretation.

The potential limitations on data analysis aforementioned are lessened by the use of qualitative methodologies in this thesis. Namely, after transcription, coding and theming the themed codes are corresponded with a Beatitudinal Scheme. As guided by Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, the various attitudes, beliefs and values and their respective themes are matched to a larger, earlier identified, conceptual framework (sometimes called *thematizing*; Kvale, cited in Saldaña 2009, 140). This endeavour requires a review of the pre-pruned and already complete analysis, leaving an opportunity for revision as appropriate and re-codification/re-thematization if needed. Additionally, in the Auto-ethnographic tradition of coding and theming, because I am aware of the context from which the analyzed quotations arise, I was able to more fully discern their disposition (as attitudes, beliefs and values) and thematic realities. And lastly, the schematic layer should help lessen the research team's temptation to use themes as the final analysis mechanism; instead Beatitudinal Schema places the themes in

the rightful position as "foci…around which the phenomenological description is facilitated" (van Mann in Saldaña 2009, 140). Jesus' words guide, while the research team must merely pray for wisdom to understand and act.

In summation, theming is closely related to coding. In fact, Saldaña contends themes are "outcomes" of coding" (Saldaña 2009, 139) thus susceptible to similar shortcomings and strengthens as a subjective, Auto-ethnographic qualitative method—shortcomings which are accounted for and strengths which were built upon by the data analysis of my project-thesis vis-à-vis the thematization of a Beatitudinal Scheme.

Ethics

"Ethics and morality are inscribed as essential features of human inquiry; not simply as standards to be met in the interest of humanity, but as standards that determine the very nature of study outcomes. Values cannot be separated from the core of an inquiry by the simple expedient claiming of objectivity, for findings are literally created by the inquiry process" (Stringer 2007, xii) states Ernst Stringer, Action Research authority. This thesis is created under the same understanding, and contends for a new, more equitable, dynamic between researcher and participant. This dynamic has been outlined above, however, it is important to again note that this research seeks to inculcate a lessening of traditional research roles that our conversation may "help create not just new worlds, but better worlds" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 28).

A primary means by which one can create these better worlds is in and through the use of language. In word and deed, I attempt to remain accessible and

open with interviewees. For instance, I spoke with clarity by using the first person and by constructing colloquial sentences. Recall that interviewees are unlikely to explicitly employ the Beatitudinal terminology I have set forth; thus I had to be careful of how I talked in the interviews so as not to infer one trait or another.

Ultimately, the research and the research criteria should be "grounded and informed by [the researcher's] values" to be "a living out of [the researcher's] values" (McNiff 2013, 122). As a means of incentivizing cognisance of the need to embody my values as a researcher, I use a video recorder as a means of data collection. Not only does this technique promise to increase my discernment on character transformation as I analyze interviews, it is a method of accountability for me to reflect upon my behaviour during interviews to spur appropriate openness and equity and to correct in the future, if need be.

To maintain the highest ethical standards in the research involving human subjects, in addition to the basic principle of respect for human dignity and concern for the welfare of all involved, the research was guided by the following principles and actions:

- Obtain and preserve free and informed consent on the part of research subjects;
- Protect the rights and interests of vulnerable people (including children, the elderly and institutionalized individuals);
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of research subjects;
- Ensure justice and inclusiveness in research;

- Minimize harm to research subjects by avoiding, preventing or minimizing harm to others;
- Maximize benefits to research subjects; and
- Balance potential harms and benefits to research subjects (i.e., ensure that foreseeable harms do not outweigh anticipated benefits).

To ensure each of the above, I had each subject read and sign an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix 2), which outlined the project and detailed their rights. This helped protect research subjects, Tyndale faculty and students and the nightlight Board, staff, volunteers and guests.

CHAPTER 5:

OUTCOMES AND INTERPRETATION

To remind the reader of the original purpose, this thesis, through a Christocentric interpretation of Matthew 5:3-10, attempts to reveal what obstacles are hindering middle class, Western Christians from developing Beatitudinal Character, especially as it pertains to an authentic, practical and purely-motivated mission of discipleship-making and engaging the other. This Chapter briefly outlines the thesis' data analysis process: what and how information was collected and discerned, leading to some conclusions and implications (Chapter 6).

As has been previously articulated, the data of this thesis was obtained through Action Research, informed by a kind of Appreciative Inquiry and Auto-ethnography, along with the coding processes known as Value and Thematic Coding (see Chapter 4). The first cycle of research and analysis was conducted over six months through a series of positive (Appreciative; see Appendix 3) interviews and subsequent transcription. The transcribed text of the seven interviews, consisting of three participants (exemplar volunteers) from Guelph and four participants (exemplar volunteers) from Kingston, were examined by the researcher and a research assistant. The intent was to determine the intersection of and connection between participants' orthodoxy, orthokardia, and orthopraxy, with the larger Beatitudinal coding framework. The findings from this analysis

informed the creation of a chart (see Figure 4: Heat Chart), which detailed the qualitative findings in a quantitative way (making them somewhat simpler to work with). Finally, to test and complete the Action Research cycle, a survey was created, based on the core findings of the above analysis, which was administered to four additional participants (exemplar volunteers from *nightlight* in Belleville) over a three-month period. This second cycle of research and analysis was intended to test if Beatitudinal Character could be better shaped in volunteers of *nightlight* in a similar setting by offering the insights ascertained from the previous two iterations of *nightlight* (through the interview process described above). The findings of the total research cycle are outlined below.

One note going forward: for the purposes of this thesis, the Value Coding terminology of "attitudes, beliefs and values" are interchanged freely with the theological terms "orthodoxy (right belief), orthokardia (right motivation) and orthopraxy (right practice)," respectfully. For a more thorough investigation concerning the translation of these theological and sociological terms, refer to Chapters 2 and 3.

Process

Seven Appreciative Inquiry interviews were conducted by the researcher in the cities of Guelph and Kingston. Interviews took place at various locations where participants were able to meet, from a hotel lobby, to a living room, to a Skype conversation. The interviews were recorded with a video camera and lasted approximately two hours each.

Prior to interviewing each participant, an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix 1) was given, gone over together, and signed. The researcher and his team were committed to adhere to the Research Ethics approved by the Tyndale Research Ethics Board. It was critical to protect each participant from any potential harm that may occur from participating in this thesis' information-gathering.

Once the interview had been completed, transcripts were produced from the videos by a research assistant. The transcripts were verbatim, containing all relevant data for the purposes of the thesis (friendly conversation and general "catching up" were not included). The research assistant was instructed to delete interview sections that were deemed irrelevant to Appreciative Inquiry discourse.

After the transcripts were finalized, another research assistant was asked to Value Code each transcription for attitudes (orthodoxy), beliefs (orthokardia) and values (orthopraxy). Value Coding was guided by Saldaña's (2012) definitions and practice (see Chapter 4 for a detailed consideration of this effort). Unlike the first research assistant who watched the interviews, the second research assistant coded only from the transcript. The process was two-fold, first in indicating what was being said (for instance, a value statement was marked "V") and then, secondly, what descriptive term came to mind which corresponded to the value statement (for instance, "Vulnerability"). See Figure 2: Spreadsheet Setup for an actual coding example. Thus, the coding was done without the nuance of body language, tone, and intonation which was privy only to the first

research assistant and the researcher.

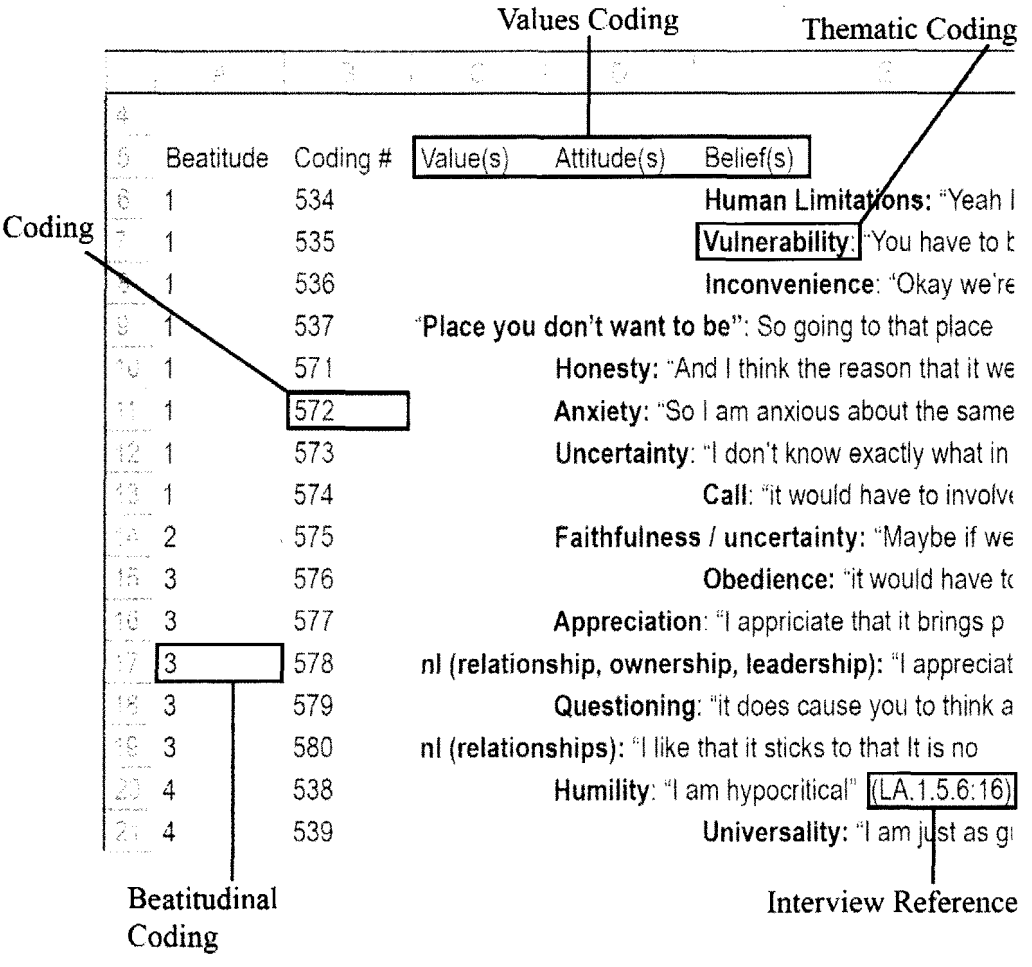


Figure 8: Spreadsheet Setup

When the research assistant completed the task of coding for the seven participants, the coded sections were entered into a spreadsheet (again, see Figure 2: Spreadsheet Setup). For example, if from minutes 0:02:00 to 0:04:00 a belief, "B", was identified, the spreadsheet would capture the given sentence(s) in which the belief was coded. This part of the transcript was demarcated by a reference with the participant's initials, video number, page of transcript, and time of video. From that, as stated above, a further descriptive—a secondary code—was given to nuance the belief statement. For example, if one read "Christology—

JE.1.6.2:00" it would mean that something of a belief in Jesus was expressed by Joe Everyone, during the first video of his interview, on the sixth page of the transcript, at the second minute. Each interview was recorded on its own spreadsheet. Each participant was given a reference number so to protect their identity. Each reference number was given as to the order in which the interview took place. For example, Joe Everyone might have been represented by 500 and had 20 codes: the spreadsheet with their interview AVB coding would be referenced 500-519. This kind of numbering system was important as the data produced hundreds of datum.

While the second research assistant completed the aforementioned Value Coding process, the researcher used an identical copy of each of the seven transcripts to do Thematic Coding for a theological set of Beatitudinal codes which were identified in the interviews. In other words, sections of the transcript were coded numerically, 1-8, which represented the eight Beatitudes respectively (Matthew 5:3-10). The entirety of each transcript was coded as such. For instance, a section from minutes 0:12:00 to 0:25:00 might have been coded simply as "2" (corresponding to the Beatitude which speaks of mourning; the Thematic Code for this theological concept had been determined "Comfort"). Likewise, as a further example, where a section from the same transcript 0:25:00 to 0:29:00 might have been coded "5" (again, corresponding to the Beatitude which speaks of mercy; the Thematic Code for this theological concept had been determined "Dead Sea"). To clarify, like the second research assistant, the researcher did not use the video recordings in his Thematic/Beatitudinal Coding. This said, he was

present while conducting the interview, giving him greater insight into what was being said over that of the second research assistant. And, furthermore, unlike all of the research assistants, the researcher had the advantage of Auto-ethnographic insights from which to draw and interpret that data collected. That is to say, the researcher had shared history and experience with the participants both from the interview and time spent at *nightlight* (past and/or present) which allowed him to discern in a different way than the second research assistant in the overall Coding process. This is significant as (in Thematically Coding for Beatitudes) the researcher often used his understandings of the participants in a unique and relational way to determine how the various Beatitudes were present in the interview transcripts. The researcher might know from other experiences, for instance, that a person was very close to his or her family, hence, their moving away from their family showed significant Beatitudinal character in the area of "Comfort" on the participant's part as they were sacrificially acting for the sake of Christ and not their own. While it is hoped that most readers would appreciate the value of family and see this kind of move as sacrificial, the depth of insight and, in turn propensity to code accordingly, may be missed if done by someone other than the researcher.

Further, the statements were coded according to an Appreciative Inquiry method of positive statements…therefore, statements made about each Beatitude were seen as "positive", leading to the conclusion that the more statements made about one Beatitude indicated a strength in that area. Questions were asked in order to provide opportunity for the participant to speak to each of the areas of

attitudes, beliefs and values that they hold for the given Beatitude.

After both the Value and Thematic Coding were complete, the findings were cross-referenced such that every orthodoxy, orthokardia and orthopraxy found their place within Figure 4: Heat Chart, through the following sequence of filtering the data. As stated above, the seven transcripts were Thematically Coded, resulting in 113 total Beatitudinal Codes, spanning the eight Codes within this theme. The Value Coding produced 449 results, divided by the three Codes of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values (or orthos-). The Thematic Coding, in Figure 4: Heat Chart, shows the breakdown of the eight Beatitudes into eight columns, into which the 449 individual Value Codes were placed, as they were filtered secondarily. It may help to think of the thesis' initial analysis like a filter in which sand is shaken to first catch large pieces of debris, then smaller pieces, to eventually remove even the smallest sediments. Similarly, starting with the (truncated) transcript, Beatitudinal Coding caught the "largest" parts of the interviews; Value Coding then caught the mid-sized pieces; and descriptive terms found their way to the bottom of the funnel as they became the smallest parts. See Figure 3: Coding filters, for a visual representation of this process.

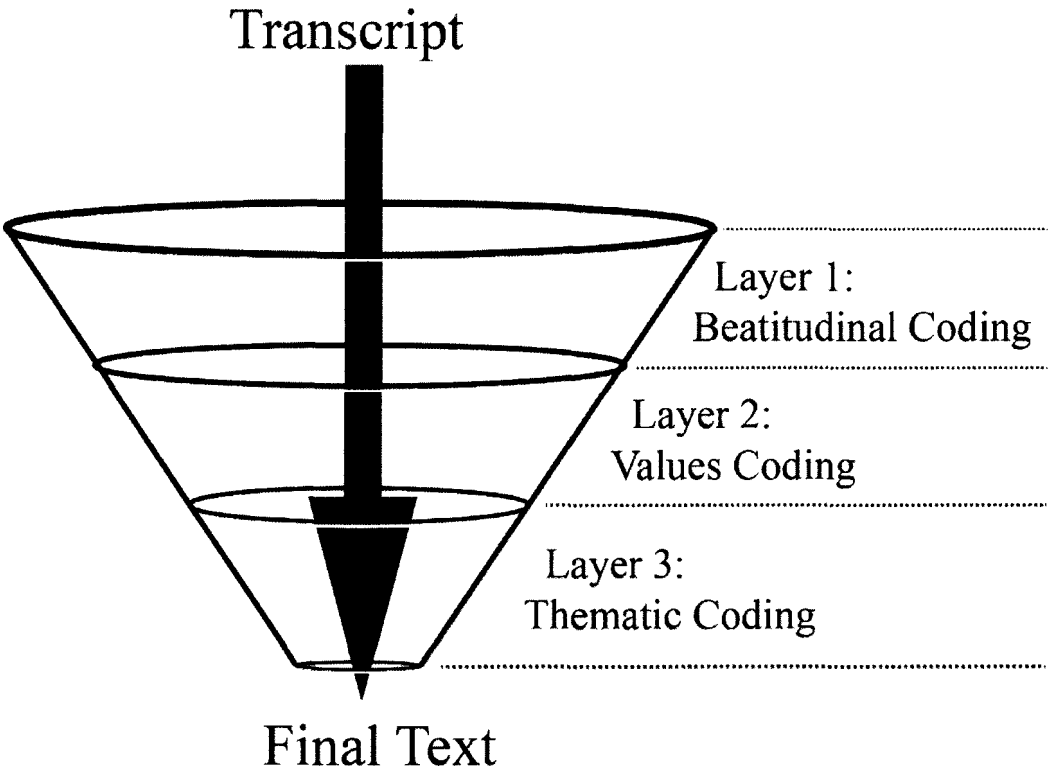


Figure 9: Coding Filters

The goal of this process was to shift the qualitative data from the interviews into a qualitative Heat Chart as a way to begin interpreting it. To further explicate the Coding process—now in the form of a Heat Chart (see Figure 4: Heat Chart)—the number of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values were totaled. Simply, as rows, across all columns the sums were totaled offering the possibility to rank, 1-3. In the same way, all numbers in each column were able to be totaled, leading, again, to ranking. A Heat Chart application was laid on the data where the highest figure would be dark red and the lowest figure dark green, with a mix of hues in between. In the Heat Chart (Figure 4: Heat Chart), the highest and lowest figures

appear dark and the middle figures appear lighter. The colours span the whole data set and are not variegated per column.

Heart Chart - Total # of Codes

1A–8V
as of Aug. 30, 2014

Beatitude	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**Totals**	Mean	Range
Attitudes	31	[illegible]	24	26	28	35	24	34	217	27	20
Beliefs	18	8	11	22	17	23	12	18	129	16	15
Values	13	5	9	13	11	13	[illegible]	25	103	13	20
Totals	62	28	44	61	56	70	51	77			
Mean	21	9	15	20	19	23	17	26			
Range	18	10	15	13	17	23	12	16			
								Total	449		

Beatitudinal code
1 = Poor in Spirit/Possessions
2 = Mourn/Comfort
3 = Meek/Power
4 = Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness/Denying Oneself
5 = Merciful/Dead Sea
6 = Pure in Heart/Willingness
7 = Peacemaking/Doing Whatever It Takes
8 = Persecuted/Living Example

Figure 10: Heat Chart

Findings

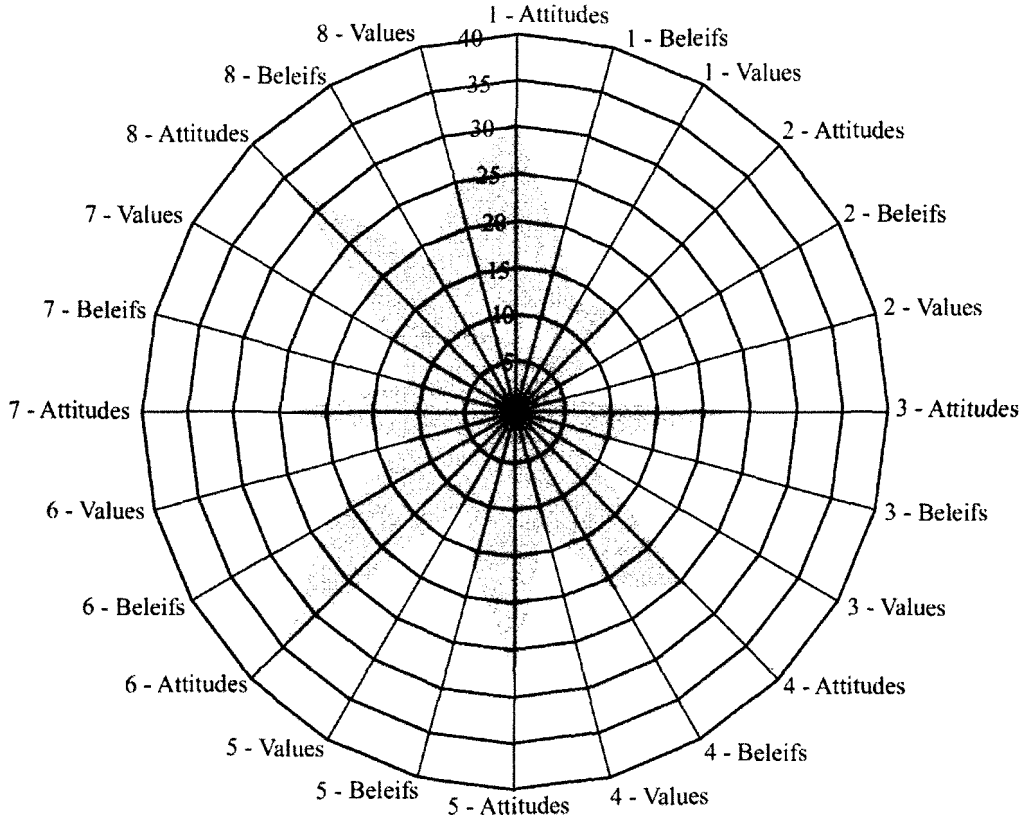
From all the data that were collected and placed into the Heat Chart (Figure 4: Heat Chart), four insights were deemed to be significant interest to the researcher, thus excluding, potentially, many other insights that could have and were found (which could have been explored). The four most interesting elements came as: 1) Column 8—A living example, as the most populated column, 2) Column 2—Comfort, as the least populated column, 3) Column 6—Willingness, as having the greatest numerical range between its statements of orthodoxy and

orthopraxy, and, 4) Row 1—Attitude/Orthodoxy, as having more than twice the numerical significance over the least, Row 3—Value/Orthopraxy.

One way of representing this data is through a spider graph which displays the number of times a certain A, B, or V is mentioned within the context of a certain Beatitude. These data points are plotted and connected. Figure 5 shows the first findings as described. This graph shows the number of statements made for each Beatitude, and the range different themes within those statements as pertaining to Attitude, Belief and Value statements. The Beatitudes are represented by numbers 1-8 as follows: 1-possessions (poor in spirit), 2-comfort (mourn), 3-power (meek), 4-denying oneself (hunger and thirst for righteousness), 5-dead sea (merciful), 6-willingness (pure in heart), 7-doing whatever it takes (peacemakers), 8-a living example (persecuted). See Chapter 4 for a more thorough explanation of the thematic codes for each of the Beatitudes. By connecting the data points, one is able to see the sharp contrast between the Attitude (or orthodoxy) statements about a particular Beatitude, versus the Values (or orthopraxy) statements, for example. Thus, the angle represents the hypocrisy gap that one holds in each area of Beatitudinal Character.

Taking a step back from the data and findings presented thus far, after these initial findings were made, the researcher (who had completed Thematic/Beatitudinal coding) and the second research assistant (who had completed the Value Coding) met to hypothesize as to why the numbers may have fallen as they did. To do so, eleven questions were asked based on the data. Four questions as seen below (see Figure 6: Potential questions to pursue) stood

out from the total eleven as possible questions to pursue in hopes of gaining some insights that would lead to improved results in our test site, *nightlight* in Belleville.



Beatitudinal code

1 = Poor in Spirit/Possessions
2 = Mourn/Comfort
3 = Meek/Power
4 = Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness/Denying Oneself
5 = Merciful/Dead Sea
6 = Pure in Heart/Willingness
7 = Peacemaking/Doing Whatever It Takes
8 = Persecuted/Living Example

Figure 11: Spider Graph of Interview Data Points

Figure 6: Potential Questions to Pursue

Group 1 Questions (1-8/Beatitudes)

- Why is column 8 the most populated?
- Why is column 2 the least populated?
- Why does column 2 have the lowest range
- Why does column 6 have the greatest range

Group 2 Questions (ABV)

- Why is row A the most populated
- Why is row V the least populated?
- Why is the range of A and V?

Group 3 Questions: Quadrants

- Why is 6A the most populated?
- Why is 2V the least populated?

Group 4 Questions: Groupings

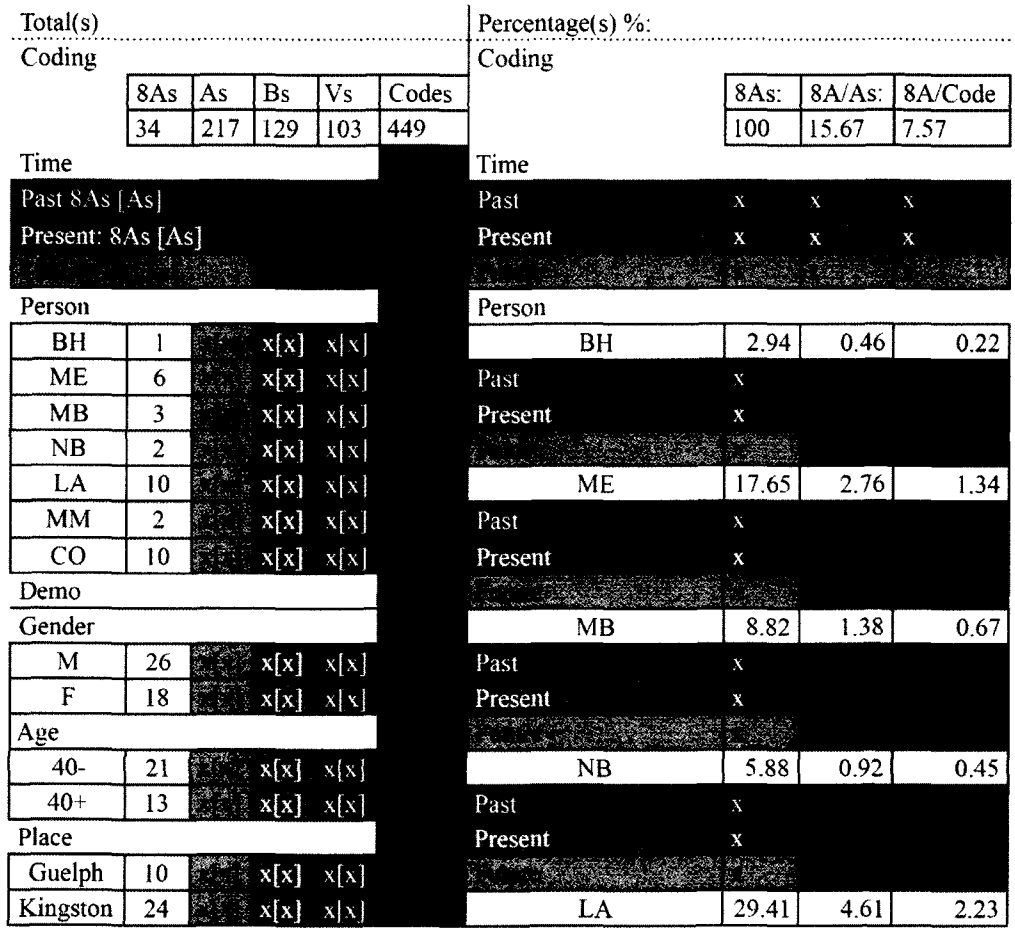
- What are the labels of column 2
- What are the labels of column 8
- So what?/Who cares?

Figure 12: Potential Questions to Pursue

In and through discussions around findings it was acknowledged that numeric figures hold little meaning in and of themselves, especially in light of the methodological short-comings described in Chapter 4. For this reason, as a way to potentially gain additional information, the data was further charted by gender, age, location and the other variables embedded in the research (see Figure 7: A partial disaggregated data sheet). Again, it was hoped that in doing so, the figures would reveal something of interest that would offer additional insights. For

example, if there were to be an outlier—someone who offered something that would skew the results in a significant way—it would be interesting to see what happened to the data if their information was removed from the group. While this consideration was initially pursued, it was ultimately deemed that its potential findings would need to be left for another time, within a different thesis with a different scope.

Figure SEQ Figure \ ARABIC 7: A partial disaggregated data sheet



Total(s)

Coding

8As	As	Bs	Vs	Codes
34	217	129	103	449

Time

Past 8As [As]

Present: 8As [As]

Person

BH	1	x[x]	x[x]
ME	6	x[x]	x[x]
MB	3	x[x]	x[x]
NB	2	x[x]	x[x]
LA	10	x[x]	x[x]
MM	2	x[x]	x[x]
CO	10	x[x]	x[x]

Demo

Gender

M	26	x[x]	x[x]
F	18	x[x]	x[x]

Age

40-	21	x[x]	x[x]
40+	13	x[x]	x[x]

Place

Guelph	10	x[x]	x[x]
Kingston	24	x[x]	x[x]

Percentage(s) %:

Coding

8As:	8A/As:	8A/Code
100	15.67	7.57

Time

Past x x x

Present x x x

Person

BH	2.94	0.46	0.22
Past	x		
Present	x		
ME	17.65	2.76	1.34
Past	x		
Present	x		
MB	8.82	1.38	0.67
Past	x		
Present	x		
NB	5.88	0.92	0.45
Past	x		
Present	x		
LA	29.41	4.61	2.23

Figure 13: A Partial Disaggregated Data Sheet

In a similar way, it was also suggested that it could be worthwhile to consider the "time" element of the data: to ask when a given code was cited in

relation to when it took place. For instance, while participants make reference to situations that would end up finding their way into one quadrant or another within the Heat Chart under the current criteria, this may be altered if there was a way to capture the nuance in which the participants were speaking. For example, if a particular participant was deemed to be speaking to what they believed in the past (or, conversely, the present or what may be the future), it may be significant in the conversation of Beatitudinal transformation. As such, it may help to produce a more dynamic Heat Chart, detailing each Beatitude in more than three ways, as it currently does. While this may be true, due to the complexity of coding as such and the implications apparent in the meta-data, this end was not pursued. Again, it may be of use for another time within a different scope.

Nonetheless, of the aforementioned eleven questions (Figure 6: Potential questions to pursue), as stated above, four were deemed to be most important to invest time and energy into: 1) Why is Column 8 the most populated? 2) Why is Column 2 the least populated? 3) Why does Column 6 have the greatest range? and, 4) Why is Row 1 (Attitudes/Orthodoxy) the most populated? Again, statements taken under the assumption that they are positive.

Finding 1: Most Populated – "A Living Example"

Addressing these questions in order, 1) Why is Column 8—A living example, the most populated? We found, as seen through the Auto-ethnographic lens of the researcher, this to be the case because exemplar volunteers (Living examples), as the criteria, had been selected to participate, over and against average or below average volunteers. That is to say, because the researcher was

aware and a part of *nightlight's* dynamics and knew the volunteers he selected—again, those he thought best embodied and exemplified the character described in the Beatitudes—it so happened that the data proved the criteria in choosing to be true. In other words, it was not surprising that exemplar volunteers would exhibit the trait coded as "a living example" as they were believed to demonstrate such prior to being chosen to participate.

Finding 2: Least Populated – "Comfort"

The second question, Why is Column 2—Comfort, the least populated? was, perhaps, the most interesting to the researcher as it revealed what had become a common experience, across cities, over time, in engaging Christian volunteers within the *nightlight* context. From the data it was concluded that Column 2 was the least populated because middle class, Western Christians tend to struggle en masse when confronted with ways in which they need to sacrifice their comforts for the sake of others, especially those who have been considered inconvenient within its particular culture. It was hypothesized that, overall (considering the three-fold breakdown of the second Beatitude, coded as Comfort), participants struggle significantly in each of the areas of orthodoxy (how they ought to think about Comfort), orthokardia (what their motives ought to be in the area of Comfort), and orthopraxy (what their practice ought to be when it comes to living). In the data found, participants are more likely to speak to the issue of Comfort (in whatever ways this reality presents itself), over and again presenting ways in which they are willing to live in discomfort or show motives for doing so. In fact, stories and testimonies, even in the most exemplar

volunteers, were rare when compared to other character traits that were identified. The question then arose about what data would surface if "medium" or "weak" volunteers went through the same process. It would be likely that even fewer examples of this important character trait would show themselves properly developed. This hypothesis would lead to the conclusion that if Comfort is an area of weakness for members of the community that are considered to have strong character, then it is generally an area that the Church needs to wrestle with as a whole. Again, this could be an area for further research that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Indeed, meaningfully giving up the comforts of life is often confined to tales of rare Christians, of long ago or a different breed. When the researcher shared this finding—its hypothesis and conclusions—with others within and outside the *nightlight* context, people tended to concur with this sad reality.

Finding 3: Greatest Range – "Willingness"

The third of four research questions asked, Why does Column 6—Willingness, have the greatest range? Why do the data show the greatest discrepancy in this sixth column? Perhaps the sixth column, Willingness, had the greatest range between orthodoxy and orthokardia, in the view of the researcher, because Christians are taught intellectually to be "willing" but are not instructed practically to do so. In a Christian tradition that emphasizes propositional faith over and against a rightly motivated and practical one, perhaps the middle class, Western Church is reaping what it has sown. Perhaps it is why participants talked about (orthodoxy) this Beatitude roughly three times more often than they were

coded to have acted on it (orthopraxy), the least in this particular column. This insight was corroborated by years of experience working with *nightlight* volunteers and in conversation between the researcher and other ministry leaders.

Finding 4: Most Populated – "Attitudes/Orthodoxy"

This leads to the fourth and last research question, Why is Row 1 (Attitudes/Orthodoxy) the most populated? As stated in Finding 3, Orthodoxy has been so emphasized in the Western Church that even the best volunteers are still, largely, only able to talk about what (given trait) should look like, over and against the ability to equally act on it, with the right motivations (see Figure 4: Heat Chart). In fact, the first Row—Orthodoxy, totaled 217 codes, over and against, second place, Row 2—Orthokardia, with 129 (almost half as many), and third place, Row 3—Orthopraxy, with the least at 103 combined codes (less than half of the first). The imbalance was shocking, but, too, rings true to experience within the *nightlight* context. Finding 3 and Finding 4 are intimately related and reinforce each other.

Testing the Insights

This analysis was cycled into a third iteration of *nightlight* at our Belleville site. Volunteers/participants were again selected, based on exemplar status. They were engaged and briefed on the findings from Guelph and Kingston and asked to respond to an initial Survey (see Appendix 4), asking the following questions:

1. "Generally describe how God has been shaping you during your time at *nightlight*."

2. "Focusing on your *character*, in what specific ways have you seen God shaping and developing it?"
3. "How has this shaping of your character affected your overall spiritual vitality and willingness to live for Christ?"

Again, the participants were individually engaged and debriefed on what had been learned in the first part of the Action Research cycle and then the same Survey (Appendix 4) was asked to be considered, with the hope that insights would be gained through this method of data collection, but also through Auto-ethnography. The researcher then, informally, continued to engage the participants over the next two months, reinforcing and reflecting upon the data. At the end of a three month timeframe, the researcher, again, asked if the participants would complete the Survey (Appendix 4), and the data was distilled.

The researcher and second research assistant reviewed each iteration of the Survey and debriefed any key insights which came through Auto-ethnography. It was noted what changes were being seen through both methods. It was recognized, for instance, that the language of the Beatitudes (as shared in the Belleville engagement and briefing) began to permeate the volunteers' vocabulary. One volunteer for instance took up the notion of "peace making" (the seventh Beatitude, coded as "Doing whatever it takes") in her second response. Likewise, another volunteer shared that she was "not willing to let go of many comforts." While these two responses came in the second Survey, for some, Beatitudinal language was present in the first Survey response: "He's [God] been challenging me to sacrifice what is easy and comfortable to follow Him," noted

one participant. More than language however, these quotations give credence to the findings already mentioned regarding Comfort.

The Survey also seemed to show that the time of reflection required to complete the survey, presumably both in the moment of responding and the months of processing the briefing and continued volunteering, participants and volunteers (and, anyone, perhaps, that is engaged in a meaningful way in embracing "the other") were transformed, slowly, over time. "It's a small step in learning to be a disciple," wrote one participant. More fully, another penned: "God is challenging me to incrementally give more than I'm comfortable giving. He challenges me with 'little asks' rather than large projects, but each time He asks me to give up what seems manageable and comfortable in order to trust Him with my time, finances, and my willingness to engage with others." Again, from the same participant: "The more I see God's faithfulness towards me in the things He asks, the more I know I can trust Him to be faithful when He asks more of me. The small ask is the necessary first step to following with reckless obedience." These statements reiterate the research by Evans and McCoy in Chapter 3 regarding incremental change. As stated, change happens over small, incremental steps, as one is convinced of the importance of that change. Said likewise by another participant: "I'm more comfortable with my own weaknesses because I'm seeing this walk as a journey—a process."

Ultimately, the language and testimony from the iterations of the Surveys were married with the researcher's Auto-ethnographic insights that verify and deepen the second set of findings. For instance, while not explicit in the

responses, the researcher knew that one volunteer had recently quit his job to serve full time in ministry; another had retired early to be able to minister to the needy; and so on and so forth. These stories show transformation in participants' lives towards Beatitudinal Character, not only in their collective orthodoxy, but orthokardia and orthopraxy too, if only incrementally.

Not only did the researcher and second research assistant see the development of Beatitudinal language and the testimony of God's slow growth in individuals after the Surveys were analyzed, Willingness (based on Beatitude 6, Blessed are the Pure in Heart) was once more apparent as one participant wrote: "Stronger faith and more willing to serve. More willing to forgive others." Further, Biblical themes appeared in Survey responses—namely, a love of God and love of neighbour (a volunteer spoke of his "love of the Lord" and recognition that he "really does need Jesus and...need to have the same passion for people as He does") and the fruits of the Spirit (alluded to in "patience", "gentle[ness]"). Christian disciplines too made an appearance as one participant spoke of the "privilege to read scripture, devotionals, spend time in prayer."

To be sure, that the survey responses were shorter and produced less data to analyze than the interviews is inconsequential because they were used for different purposes. In the spirit of Action Research, the second research cycle (surveys) was intended to validate—or not, as the case may be—the initial findings of the first research cycle (interviews). In other words, the surveys were not intended to produce standalone data as the interviews were. Rather, it was sufficient for the surveys to expose similarities or differences in light of the

interview analysis (which was the starting point for discerning an answer to the researcher's question on Beatitudinal Character). The surveys ultimately lend credence to the interview findings in an outward articulation of the need to address comfort and incremental growth. This, while perhaps expected due to the nature of the questions and auto-ethnographic insights of the Researcher, is unlike the interviews where participants were more veiled in their comments. In fact, the obfuscation of interview comments is part of the reason for the longer and ostensibly more detailed analysis. It is also interesting to note that while the survey responses did not have the same breadth and subsequent analysis as the interviews, they were the end-product of longer explicit investigation. That is to say, the time elapsed between the start and finish of the survey component was three months whereas there was no time between the interviews, just the time the interview took to complete. Thus, the character change which was observed from the survey may in some ways be deemed more valuable as it is a present synopsis of God's transformative work not a retrospective analytical recapitulation (as the interviews are). Either way, while there are differing lengths and levels of analysis of the surveys and the interviews they both perform their respective duty in the cycle of Action Research—the latter to gather and provide foundational material to discern how God may be using engaging the "inconvenient other" to transform volunteers' character and the former to verify these findings based on contemporary application of the aforementioned findings.

In sum, through the first research and analysis process (of Thematic and Value Coding and the discernment-process described above) and, through the

second Action Research cycle (briefing, mentoring and administration of Surveys), there are four main conclusions to be made from participants' interview transcripts and responses. One, "A living example" was the most coded Beatitude (as implicitly anticipated via volunteer selection). Two, "Comfort" was the scarcest Beatitude coded (as expected Auto-ethnographically in conversations between the researcher and other ministry leaders). Three, the Sixth Column—Willingness, had the greatest range (speaking to the fact that we, as a middle class, Western Church tend to focus our collective energies on measuring Orthodoxy over and against Orthokardia and Orthopraxy). Four, as stated in the third conclusion, Row 1—Orthodoxy is more common than the other two within its tri-une scheme, leaving Orthokardia and Orthopraxy significantly stunted in even our best Christian volunteers within the *nightlight* context.

Finally, some further insights were found, such as the importance and impact of reflecting on how God is shaping one through one's engagement and eventual embracing of "the inconvenient other." Through this process with the second set of participants in Belleville, they were able to gain insight as to how they were being shaped by their engagement with the marginalized, and how this could and should impact their faith. Further, sharing how said experiences are bringing about the desired disciple of Beatitudinal Character, even in small, incremental stories (over and against, large, ones) was encouraging to the group of participants. Finally, the need to engage others as disciples, even when one is not fully developed themselves as both a means to Church maturity, growth, and

engagement in the *Missio Dei* became apparent; these insights are discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

There are significant implications derived from the findings previously presented for the individual disciple, the collective Church and the "inconvenient other". Ultimately, as followers of Jesus, together as His Body, allow Him to sanctify them through a process that leads them to exemplifying Beatitudinal Character, and, in turn, grows their capacity to make other disciples of Christ, the possibility of an authentic witness to people and communities expands. Another implication is also derived from the research methodologies of Action Research: the importance of reflection.

In short, Chapter 6, as it returns to the Problem and Response outlined in Chapter 1, suggests that what has been learned through this thesis: that *Jesus overcomes the syncretistic Western Church by transforming His disciples to be more Beatitudinal in Character through engagement with "the inconvenient other."* Embracing the "inconvenient other" will help the Church focus and act on God's Great Commandment to love Him and one's neighbour and focus on His Great Commission to make disciples.

Comfort in the Life of the Individual Believer and the Church

Scripture references the issue of poverty—a complex problem for many, rooted in the desire for a few to have and maintain comfort at the expense of the other—more than 2,100 times (Poverty and Justice Bible). Nevertheless, the failure to address areas of exclusion within both society and the Church has kept the individual believer and the Church from having to face the issue of comfort, thus preventing Christ from sanctifying the disciple and building Beatitudinal Character in the individual and the Church as a whole. In fact, while many denominations were founded based on a practical-spiritual passion for the poor (The Christian and Missionary Alliance 2015), the *Alliance Church* says that it struggles with maintaining and sustaining its original focus (Tavares 2014). However, as seen clearly through the research when participants had the opportunity to interact with those on the margins—moreover, the "inconvenient other"—the issue of comfort came to the forefront, resulting in an increase in motivation to change and actions that impacted both the lives of the other, the life of the Christian, and the Church as a whole. This was poignantly demonstrated in the interviews.

Implications for Individual Believers Regarding Comfort

When one participant made the decision to stop resisting and follow the leading of Christ, she noted that God was able to use her in ways she had never thought possible. For her, it had to do with making the difficult choice to keep doing what she had always done: to remain comfortable in the familiarity of

things or to deny herself and become less self-sufficient. The results, amazingly, lead her to do something she said she would have never done in the past:

> Because I made a choice it freed me to be more available to our guests. One night, one of our guys who struggles with addiction seemed to need more time and more encouragement than what our hours allowed for. So, because I didn't have to get up early for the first time in decades, I was able to offer to go out with him to talk a little longer (hoping that would help him). On our way to a nearby coffee shop, we ran into a woman involved in prostitution. We invited her to join us and, so, there we were, the three of us, engaged in conversation about the joys and hardships of life. I just never could have imagined that I would have ever been in that situation, nor that I could handle it if I were. God is amazing in what He can do. He helps people like me to overcome myself. This has been both good for me, as well as others, I think." (Conversation, September 2014 with a participant shortly after talking through the findings of the research, including Finding 2—Comfort)

Clearly, from this story, the work of the Holy Spirit was effective in the life of this participant, making her less comfortable and more Beatitudinal. Issues such as prostitution, addiction and others are "uncomfortable truths" states Bono, lead singer for rock group *U2*, which cause one to confront matters "deep down [and] accept that their lives are equal to ours" (Bono, cited in Sachs 2005, xiii-xv). While it should never be the claim that something or someone other than God is why miracles like these occur, there does seem to be evidence that God uses engagement between middle-class, Western Christians and those at the margins, the "inconvenient other," in His process of building Beatitudinal Character in His people (His Church) for the benefit of the poor.

Implications for the Church Regarding Comfort

Perhaps as churches learn about the findings of this research it will become clear as to how they can move forward in addressing neglected issues such as comfort and the Beatitudes as a whole. One such practical insight into this

was offered during a follow-up conversation with a participant in the second cycle of research. The individual spoke about his church's struggle to motivate people to give. As a leader in his church, the internal strategy was to offer a series of sermons addressing "the orthodoxy of giving":

> What I can now see—and I shared this with others in leadership and within my small group—is that this problem (which is in every church) of giving is not because we haven't spoken to it and that people don't know what's expected, but, rather, that we don't address the core, character elements described in the Beatitudes also in practical and motivational ways. If we want people to give—if we think it's the right thing to do for the Church, those hurting in our community and around the world, and, not to forget the person giving—then we need to address the area of comfort in every message; if we want people to give in November when our finances show we aren't going to make our budget, then we need to be speaking about comfort in July…..maybe even in January. (Conversation, September 2014)

This participant's insights seem to echo the above participant's experience: when the area of comfort—the second Beatitude—is addressed, the orthopraxy of believers is awakened; they slowly begin to realize the obstacles that are hindering them from following their orthodoxy with orthopraxy. As this persuasion happens, orthokardia (their motives) become stronger willed to align their orthodoxy with their orthopraxy. This simultaneous yet incremental process is what is understood as transformation. Although there are elements to this transformation that will remain the mysterious work of God, if a certain interaction (namely, that with the excluded, inconvenient other, whoever they may be for the particular believer and/or within a particular context of a given church), tends to spur on this transformation, it should be the enthusiastic response of believers to move towards this kind of interaction, in order to meet God and have Him affect their lives. It is only when transformation happens

within the believer that they can then participate with God in His mission, resulting in significant impacts in the lives of those excluded, the local church, and their own lives.

Orthodoxy, Orthokardia and Orthopraxy Are Critical in the Life of the Individual Believer and the Church

As was shown in Chapter 5, the fourth Finding, Orthodoxy was shown to occur significantly more often than Orthokardia and Orthopraxy. This becomes evident soon after a volunteer begins at *nightlight*. Indeed, in a position to embrace those at the margins, volunteers realize the tension within them between their motivations and their practices.

Implications of the Hypocrisy Gap for Individual Believers

During a conversation with a participant who has a uniquely outstanding reputation in his community, his church and within *nightlight* as one that should be looked to as "A living example," he noted that he sees himself as one who struggles with what he believes to be true and what he should do about it. As he reflected on the sixth Beatitude, coded as Willingness, and as Finding 3, he paused for a few moments and digested the data, stating "I have been in the Church for a long time, but I have to admit, I'm comfortable in learning about Christ, but I struggle in ways to express it and I'm not sure when I do address it, that my motives for doing so are always pure" (conversation, September 2014). He went on to describe how culture, as he sees it, has been eroding the Church of its faith, leading to its inability to effectively witness in the community and make

disciples. Essentially, he described this paper's theological rationale around the Enlightenment (Chapters 1 and 2). After seeing how each of the eight Beatitudes were broken down into three categories (ortho-doxy, -kardia, -praxy), and, how they were disproportionately represented in the collective data, he went on to say that "this makes too much sense! We have been so focused on telling people the truth, we've forgotten to address what this looks like and keeping one another accountable for our motives in doing what we do" (conversation, September 2014).

With the affirmation of the finding that there is misalignment between believers' orthodoxy, orthokardia and orthopraxy, one naturally must ask what needs to be done differently in the way the Church disciples. Places like *nightlight*—which strive to be safe and focused on building relationships with the "inconvenient other"—are places where Christians can learn and see their hypocrisy gaps (see Figure 8: Hypocrisy Gap) and have opportunity to grow towards alignment, should become a regular part of disciples' lives to seek environments where they can be challenged by the embrace of the excluded. Out of this learning, one can begin, over time, to address these inconsistencies (in the wide and diverse ways in which they are present in every life), resulting in a greater alignment of the three categories in each of the eight traits essential to Beatitudinal Character. Local churches may not be safe environments for this to happen and, equally, they tend to lack engagement opportunities with people who have been excluded—a key piece in God's plan to address character issues in individuals and the Church as has been presented in this thesis.

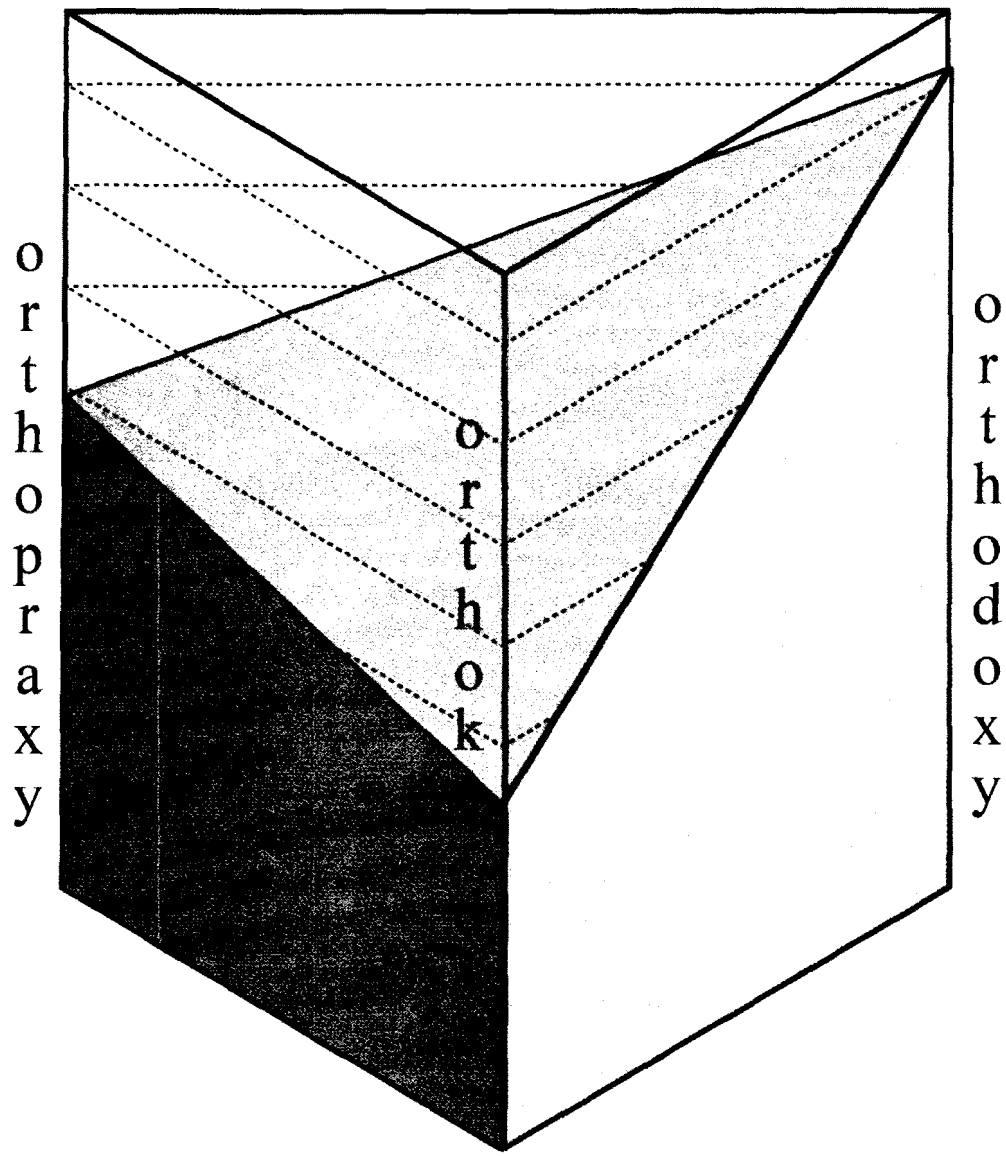


Figure 14: Hypocrisy Gap

Implications of the Hypocrisy Gap for the Church

For this reason, the Church should restructure its current model and methods of disciple-making as they are orthodoxy-biased and -weighted and orthokardia and orthopraxy-resistant and -deficient. Perhaps the reason for this imbalanced approach is rooted in the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary

Conference where an emphasis was placed on developing the "intellectual" aspect of the missionary and Church at large (Jacobson 2006, 28). Nevertheless, it is this thesis' contention that while it may be difficult for the Church in the short-term to restructure itself sufficiently as such (if ever), the immediate opportunity to address matters of discipleship as character-formation can be done in places like *nightlight* and similar ministries where engagement with the excluded, inconvenient other is possible.

In fact, in neglecting the inconvenient other, it would appear that many Christians—at one point or another— have felt hopeless towards the effectiveness, role and impact of the Western Church. One significant indicator of such hopelessness is the rapid decline in Church attendance in the 21st century. Most notably forty-year-olds and under are almost never in Church. This, some suspect, is due to the increasing evidence of the Western Church's dysfunction in the Mission of God, the *Missio Dei*; a mandate to make disciples. In other words, new generations see the ineffectiveness of the Church mentioned above.

During a conversation with a fourth participant in the second part of the data-collection process—a participant that self-identifies with the statements of the paragraph immediately above—several key things were noted. One illustration, for her, is how the Church is a place that she's not yet ready to give up on, but one that is increasingly frustrating to be a part of:

> Why is my church wanting to raise and spend millions on a new building when so many are hungry, hurting and homeless in our own city, not to mention the world? How does it justify that? I just don't get that I guess. I'm thankful for the people that I meet there and, sometimes, what is taught, but I'm so glad I have this place to be a part of too…..a place where I can meet people that I'll never meet in a church. It's through these

> relationships that I feel as though I meet Christ. It's through the relationships that I can make a difference in the lives of others and where they make (Christ) makes a difference in my life. (Conversation, September 2014)

She went on to note how many "cool people" there are in the city that share her concerns and are looking for the same things that she is looking for. The implications drawn from the research, which include statements from exemplar participants, show how there is something that compliments what is already taking place in an orthodoxy-heavy local church experience. It is not the goal of this thesis to discard orthodoxy, but to allow for a holistic discipleship model that builds upon all three orthos: doxy, kardia and praxy.

Based on the sources used throughout and the findings determined, the Western syncretistic Church needs to address its one-dimensional, primarily orthodox approach which generally fails in seeing disciples made, to being a three-dimensional, Beatitudinal Character-forming, disciple-making gathering of a people with a purpose—the definition of a "Church."

The Methodology of Communal Reflection Is Essential in Developing Beatitudinal Character in the Life of the Individual Believer and the Church

Finally, a common theme throughout these findings has been that intentional, communal (two or more people) reflection—the Action Research methodology itself—is key to spurring the development of Beatitudinal Character in the life of the individual believer and the life of the Church.

Implications for Individual Believers Regarding Reflection in the Context of Embracing the "Inconvenient Other"

The discipleship process, from its inception, was always thought of as an apprenticeship kind of relationship. This means that two or more people were engaged in a kind of relationship that was understood to be mutually beneficial, usually leading to and resulting in the wider benefit of "the inconvenient other." Key to the apprenticeship model was time spent with a mature believer as they, together, engaged those they found difficult to embrace (for whatever reason). In the process of this time spent, the duo would engage one another in matters of concern as they engaged "the inconvenient other." This would lead to a kind of learning and shaping that would be noticed by outsiders in that they would see the effects of change; they might note that you "sound like so and so" or "are motivated by the same kinds of things as so and so" or "that's how so and so does it." What one finds is that, respectively, the apprentice shares in the orthodoxy, orthokardia and orthopraxy of the Master. If the content of the matters of concern are character-related, as they were with Jesus, then one would expect that a discipleship-apprenticeship relationship would result in His disciples sharing in what concerns Him, in three-dimensional ways. The need to reflect, over time, with others, in ways that are of matters of highest concern to Jesus is critical to discipleship as Beatitudinal Character-forming.

Implications for the Church Regarding Reflection in the Context of Embracing the "Inconvenient Other"

Building on the above, the implications of this kind of model occurring in the Church are critical. Following it, the Church thrives, individuals are changed for the good, and communities impacted in undeniable, evangelistic ways; not following it and the Western Church continues on its course of struggling, failing to impact individuals in life-giving ways, and increasingly become irrelevant in the communities to which it is called. The negation of this embrace with the other is detrimental to the central purpose of the church:

> The exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemingly useless people, from a Christian community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ, the one element needed in order for individual believers and the Church to fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples. (Bonhoeffer 1954, 38)

Perhaps corporate church services, which have largely been the activity of the Western Church for many years, should be less about teaching and reinforcing orthodoxy, but rather about celebrating the ways in which discipleship has been occurring in the life of the Church since last meeting together. In this, there should be a concerted effort to not overcompensate in the correction of the Western Church in this matter, resulting in orthodoxy becoming under-appreciated in favour of the other two. The three orthos, seen within the eight Beatitudes, should always be of central importance—always striving for alignment!—as they point to and reveal the Beatitudinal Character of Christ.

Returning to the Opportunity for Project and Response

Jesus said you cannot serve two masters. Yet the *Problem* of syncretism has rendered the Western Church irrelevant to both the people it is intended to disciple and the world it is called to serve. Syncretism today in the Western Church is the blending of Christ's ways and the world's ways, specifically the Enlightenment's ideologies of humanism, individualism and consumerism. The results have led Christians to exclude the "other" (in *nightlight's* case, those of low socioeconomic status) despite Christ's call to embrace them (John Knox in Greaves 1976, 36-48). By failing to embrace the "inconvenient other" Christians have cut themselves off from the primary means of disciple-making by which God aligns one's values, attitudes and beliefs to His own. Thus, the Church's authentic witness is lost.

This conclusion is disastrous. By giving in to humanism, the Church has cut herself off from the most intimate and true way of knowing Christ; by seeking an individualistic way of life, the Church has ignored that the call to be a disciple moves the Christian towards and not away from others; and by accepting a culture of consumerism, the Church has sacrificed the opportunity to give of herself and of what she would have to give Christ himself who is present through "the inconvenient other."

The Western Church's over-emphasis on orthodoxy at the expense of orthokardia and orthopraxy, the failure to address issues of comfort, and the lack of reflective practice in the context of embracing the "inconvenient other" on how Christians and the Church can become more Beatitudinal in Character are the

symptoms of the syncretism described above. In every way they must be seen as primary obstacles that the Church must allow Christ to address in order to make disciples who will embrace, as God has embraced.

Who are the others in our world today? Are they the mentally ill, those in the LGBTQ community, those of other faiths, those who have committed terrorist acts against us? In the example of Schindler previously explored, the German entrepreneur is open to the inconvenient other in the enemy. By embracing the Jews he helps break ethnic and nationalistic barriers to save lives and in the end such embrace saves his own life. For some Evangelicals, the other may be the Catholic, the United Church of Canada or the one who fails to hold to the doctrine of inerrancy. In cases of sibling rivalry the other may be the younger sister or older brother; and so on and so forth. What does it look like to embrace the other? For the Christian called to politics, for instance, embracing the other is a way of overcoming adversarial, polarized debate. Rather, they can be open to hear Christ across the party system and the political spectrum for more meaningful exchange and compassionate relations in the jurisdiction in which they serve.

Simply stated, the "inconvenient other" is not only the poor in a material sense. They may be those who are inconvenient for, opposed to, or working against us. By embracing these individuals we are countering the ideologies of the Enlightenment and breaking with the syncretistic Western Church. By being led to embrace, our roots become Godly (knowing Him from His revelation not our own sense), become collective (in relation to others and not only ourselves) and become self-donating (not looking to get).

The Western Church must stop living in a delusion which tells us that an emphasis on orthodoxy and a pursuit of comfort will bring us closer to God, when these things are blinding us from the very life source He has supplied. It must stop strangling its umbilical cord and accept the gift of the "inconvenient other" which Christ has readily provided, and embrace them in a way that calls Christians and the Church to sacrifice comfort, to move from believing to actually doing, and to allow itself to be transformed through others in the process of becoming Beatitudinal in Character.

The response, as was determined in Chapter 1, is that Jesus overcomes the syncretistic Western Church by transforming His disciples to be more Beatitudinal in Character through engagement with "the inconvenient other." Out of this an authentic witness emerges because the way of Christ—the way of embracing the "inconvenient other"—rectifies discord from the slums of Calcutta to the streets of Alabama; it spurs justice through drop-in centres in Kingston to the doorsteps of Schindler's factory. When God transforms someone into His own image, the residual effects of that impacts not just their own lives, but the most complicated aspects of society. But let it be said that the former needs to happen if the latter has any hope and not in any other order.

Conclusion

nightlight offers a model for addressing the problem of character development within volunteers. This ministry has indeed been blessed with tremendous displays of compassion towards the "inconvenient other" from the volunteers who attend, learn, and grow in the drop-in centre context. As a direct

result of volunteers being tasked with the goal of establishing a safe place where they can build relationships with people who live at the margins of society, *nightlight* volunteers are increasingly becoming Christians of Beatitudinal Character who have a strong witness within the community through their actions towards "the inconvenient other." The inconsistencies that exist within every Christian, namely between their ortho-doxy, -kardia and -praxy, are in the process of being reconciled. This project-thesis successfully accelerated the growth in character of the Christian by engaging them in reflection on the Beatitudes, drawing together the teachings of Jesus with their activities at *nightlight*.

Jesus said that one could not serve both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24, KJV). Yet the problem of syncretism erodes character within the Church, rendering it irrelevant to the society it is called to serve. By reading Matthew 5:3-10 in light of Christ, this project-thesis revealed what obstacles are hindering middle-class, Western Christians from developing Beatitudinal Character, allowing the Church (marked by syncretism) to regain an authentic, purely-motivated and practical of disciple-making. This project-thesis has shown that embracing the "inconvenient other" is necessary to shape the kind of character that God uses to change individuals and communities and foster discipleship.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Statement of the Ethical Principles and Procedures

The following is a statement of the Ethical Principles and Procedures I will follow throughout my Project-thesis[1]:

I will be involved in on-going research[2] involving human subjects[3] conducted under the jurisdiction of Tyndale University College & Seminary (Tyndale). For this reason I will seek to ensure that I maintain respect and the highest ethical standards in the conduct of research involving human subjects. In addition to the basic principle of respect for human dignity and concern for the welfare of all involved, the ethical principles that will guide my research include the obligations to:

- Obtain and preserve free and informed consent on the part of research subjects;
- Protect the rights and interests of vulnerable people (including children, the elderly and institutionalized individuals);
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of research subjects;
- Ensure justice and inclusiveness in research;
- Minimize harm to research subjects by avoiding, preventing or minimizing harm to others;
- Maximize benefits to research subjects; and
- Balance potential harms and benefits to research subjects (i.e., ensure that foreseeable harms do not outweigh anticipated benefits).

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[1] Adapted from three primary resources: 1) The Tyndale University College and Seminary. 2008. *Research Ethics Policy*, pp ii 2) The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. 2010. *Tri-council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans*, pp 11 and 3) Bell, Judith. 2006. *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science.* 4th ed, pp 58.

[2] In this policy, the term "research" means systematic investigation designed to establish facts, principles, or generalizable knowledge including theses and work done in the context of the Tyndale Seminary Doctor of Ministry program.

[3] In this policy, the terms "human subjects" and "research subjects" refer to living human individuals.

To ensure each of the above I will have each subject read and sign an *Informed Consent Form* (see Appendix 8), which outlines the project and details their rights.

I understand that the purposes of carrying out an ethics review of research involving human subjects are (a) the protection of research subjects, (b) the protection of Tyndale faculty and students, (c) the protection of the nightlight Board, staff, volunteers and guests, and (d) the education of those involved in research.

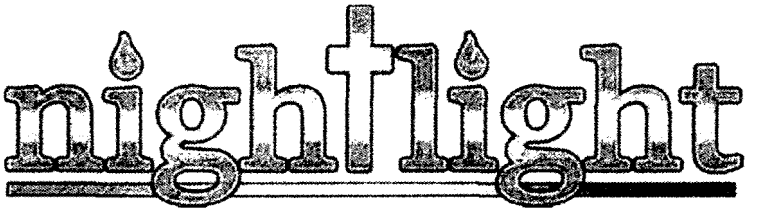
Reference List

Bell, Judith. 2006. *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science.* 4th ed. Maidenhead, Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. 2010. *Tri-council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans.*

Tyndale University College and Seminary. *Research Ethics Policy.* 2008.

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form



c/o 825 Gardiners Rd, Kingston, ON, K7M 7E6
WWW.NIGHTLIGHTCANADA.COM
– 343.363.0508–
INFO@NIGHTLIGHTCANADA.COM

Informed Consent Form

for:_____

Name of Researcher: Benjamin Platz
Name of Organization(s): nightlight/Tyndale Seminary
Name of Sponsor: N/A
Name of Project: Doctor of Ministry Project-thesis

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- **Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)**
- **Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)**

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

My name is Benjamin (Ben) Platz. I am doing Action Research for my Project-thesis through Tyndale Seminary. The research I am doing is on the topic of nightlight as it relates to developing character in volunteers. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

Purpose of the research

Life today presents us with a disturbing reality. Otherness, the simple fact of being different in some way, has come to be defined as in and of itself evil. Theologian, Miroslav Volf, for example, contends that if the healing word of the gospel is to be heard today, Christian theology must find ways of speaking that address the hatred of the other. Reaching back to the New Testament metaphor of salvation as reconciliation, Volf proposes the idea of embrace as a theological response to the problem of exclusion. Increasingly we see that exclusion has become the primary sin, skewing our perceptions of reality and causing us to react out of fear and anger to all those who are not within our (ever-narrowing) circle. In light of this, Christians must learn that salvation comes, not only as we are reconciled to God, and not only as we "learn to live with one another," but as we take the dangerous and

costly step of opening ourselves to the other, of enfolding him or her in the same embrace with which we have been enfolded by God. Is there any hope of embracing our enemies? Of opening the door to reconciliation? The 'exclusion' of people who are alien or different is among the most intractable problems in the world today. Volf writes, 'It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference. The issue is urgent. The ghettos and battlefields throughout the world 'in the living rooms, in inner cities, or on the mountain ranges 'testify indisputably to its importance.' Exclusion happens, Volf argues, wherever impenetrable barriers are set up that prevent a creative encounter with the other. It is easy to assume that 'exclusion' is the problem or practice of 'barbarians' who live 'over there,' but exclusion is all too often our practice 'here' as well. This is true in most modern western societies, including Canadian society; this is the problem that nightlight seeks to address through its ministry. Most proposed solutions to the problem of exclusion have focused on social arrangements 'what kind of society ought we to create in order to accommodate individual or communal difference? But perhaps the focus should rather be on **'what kind of selves we need to be in order to live at peace with others**.' In addressing the topic, Volf stresses the social implications of divine self-giving. The Christian scriptures attest that God does not abandon the godless to their evil, but gives of Godself to bring them into communion. We are called to do likewise 'whoever our enemies and whoever we may be.' The divine mandate to embrace as God has embraced is summarized in Paul's injunction to the Romans: 'Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you' (Romans 15:7).

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in the format of: personal reflection during a three-hour interview.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because I feel that your experience as a nightlight volunteer can contribute much to my understanding of nightlight processes and practices.

- *Do you know why we are asking you to take part in this study? Do you know what the study is about? Yes___ No___ (explain again)*

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate nothing will change in your volunteering.

OR

The choice that you make will have no bearing on your job or on any work-related evaluations or reports. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

- *If you decide not to take part in this research study, do you know what your options are? Do you know that you do not have to take part in this research study, if you do not wish to? Yes___ No___*
  Do you have any questions?

Procedures

A. I am asking you to help me learn more about how you see your time volunteering at nightlight affected your spiritual growth in terms of Beatitudinal character (understood in terms of how God shaped you in ways consistent with Matthew 5:3-10). I am inviting you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in an interview with me.

B. During the interview, I will sit down with you in a comfortable place. If it is better for you, the interview can take place in your home or a friend's home. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and I will move on to the next question. No one else but me will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else except me will have access to the information documented during your interview. The entire interview will be recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the recording. The tape will be kept in a locked, confidential filing system. The information recorded is confidential and so no one else will have access to the recording.

Duration

The research takes place over 104 weeks in total. During that time, I will visit you several times for instructing and interviewing you at intervals we discuss work for you. Each interview will last for about three each.

- *If you decide to take part in the study, do you know how much time will the interview take? Where will it may take place? If you agree to take part, do you know if you can stop participating? Do you know that you may not respond to the questions that you do not wish to respond to?*
  Yes___ No___
- *Do you have any more questions?*

Risks

You may find some of the questions I ask you to be personal in nature. You do not have to answer any question. You do not have to give me any reason for not responding to any question, or for refusing to take part in the interview.

Benefits

There may not be a direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help me find out more about how current and future volunteers can grow in their Beatitudinal character through their time at nightlight.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research. Participation is entirely voluntary.

- *Can you tell me if you have understood correctly the benefits that you will have if you take part in the study? Do you know if the study will pay for your travel costs and time lost, and do you know how much you will be re-imbursed? Yes___ No___*
  Do you have any other questions?

Conflict of Interest

Due to the nature of this project, a potential conflict of interest is apparent (supervisor/direct report relationship). In no way will participation and answers provided, or there lack of, factor into the ongoing ministry of nightlight. The information provided will not affect the current status of the participant.

Confidentiality

The research being done in the community may draw attention and if you participate you may be asked questions by other people in the community. I will not be

sharing information about you to anyone. The information that I collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only I will know what your number is and I will lock that information up with a lock and key. It will not be shared with or given to anyone.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask me now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact me at any of the following: Ben Platz, 343.363.0508.

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Tyndale's Research Ethics Board, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the REB, contact Dr. Mark Chapman, Assistant Professor of Research Methods, at 416.226.6620 ext 2208 or mchapman@tyndale.ca .

- *Do you know that you do not have to take part in this study if you do not wish to? You can say No if you wish to? Do you know that you can ask me questions later, if you wish to? Do you know that I have given the contact details of the person who can give you more information about the study?*
  Yes___ No___

Part II: Certificate of Consent
I have been invited to participate in research about nightlight and related practices.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

If illiterate [4]

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness_____

Signature of witness _____

[4] A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team).

Date_____

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent
I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability, made sure that the participant understands that the following will be done:

1.

2.

3.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent_____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____

Date_____

Day/month/year

Appendix 3: Research Instruments

Appreciative Inquiry Interview Questions

1. Considering your entire time as a volunteer at nightlight, can you recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about your involvement in the ministry?

- What made it an exciting experience? What gave it energy?
- What was it about you — unique qualities you have – that contributed to the experience?
- Who were the most significant others?
- Why were they significant?
- In what ways did nightlight contribute to the creation or support of this experience?
- What were the most important factors in nightlight that helped to make it a meaningful experience (e.g. leadership qualities, structure, rewards, systems, skills, strategy, relationships)?

2. Let's consider for a moment the things you value deeply. Specifically, the things you value about 1) yourself; 2) the nature of your volunteering; and 3) nightlight

- Without being humble, what do you value the most about yourself – as a human being, a friend, a parent, a citizen, and son/daughter?
- When you are feeling best about your volunteering, what do you value about the task itself?
- What is it about nightlight that you value?
- What is the single most important thing nightlight has contributed to your life?

3. nightlight builds on God`s leading which has resulted in "strengths" within the ministry. In this way, nightlight has a history of being a pioneer in a number of areas. In your opinion, what is the most important strength that you can recall that best illustrates nightlight`s innovation?

4. Can you think of a time when there was an extraordinary display of cooperation between diverse individuals or groups at nightlight?

- What made such cooperation possible (e.g. planning methods used, communication systems or process, leadership qualities, incentives for cooperation, skills, team development techniques)?
- How could these lessons be better applied to the overall nightlight experience?

5. In your mind, what is the common mission or purpose that unites everyone in nightlight? How can this continue to be nurtured?

6. What is the core factor that gives vitality and life to nightlight (without it nightlight would cease to exist)?

7. If you could develop or transform nightlight in any way you wished, what three things would you do to heighten its vitality and overall health?
How could these three things be applied to the overall nightlight experience?

Appreciative Inquiry Survey Questions

~ nightlight Belleville ~

1. **Generally describe how God has been shaping you during your time at nightlight.**

2. **Focusing on your *character*, in what specific ways have you seen God shaping and developing it?**

3. **How has this shaping of your character affected your overall spiritual vitality and willingness to live for Christ?**

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