

Northwest University

Discipleship at Bethany Christian Assembly: Examining our Effectiveness at Preparing New
Christians to Serve Jesus in the Culture They Live in.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a qualitative study examining Bethany Christian Assembly's (BCA) effectiveness at discipling new Christians. BCA is a church in Everett, WA located in the Pacific Northwest. BCA has a 100 year history and is currently averaging 1,500 in attendance on a given Sunday. This work explores whether BCA is fulfilling the biblical mandate of giving proper care to new converts.

This study was driven by 5 research questions: 1) Is the current approach to discipling new Christians at BCA effective for their ongoing spiritual growth? 2) How do participants who have gone through the new believer process in the last 5 years at BCA view this journey? 3) How do participants who went thru the process *more* than 5 years ago feel about the new believer process they were apart of? 4) What systems and practices are other select churches employing and what can BCA learn from them? 5) What changes, if any, does BCA need to make in its care for new converts?

Data was gathered by collecting anonymous surveys from recent attendees of Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB) class, which is the initial step for new converts at BCA. In addition to collecting surveys, 11 face to face interviews were performed to gather data from 3 different groups of individuals: 1) Attendees of BCB within the last 5 years, 2) Attendees of BCB from more than 5 years ago, and 3) Church Leaders. The Church Leader interviews consisted of one Church Leader presently on staff at BCA and 2 Leaders serving at other churches. These Church Leaders provided triangulating evidence based on their own separate experiences.

Overall, the data revealed a combination of strengths and weaknesses in the new believer process at BCA. During the research project 4 implications emerged: 1) New Believer Discipleship must become a "church wide movement." 2) BCA must repurpose Basic Christian

Belief's class and make the necessary adjustments for greater effectiveness and ongoing spiritual growth. 3) Launch a follow up class to BCB focusing on reading and understanding the Bible. 4) Provide each new Christian the opportunity to have a Spiritual Coach or mentor. These themes that emerged serve as mandates for the leadership at BCA in our effort to disciple brand new Christians.

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Chapter 1

Statement of Problem

There has never been a time in church history when the importance of successfully bringing new Christians into the faith community is more important. Many local churches seem to lack the ability to move people beyond “infancy” and into Christian maturity.¹ There are few transgressions that elicit greater outrage than the crime of child neglect. Child neglect is capable of stirring raw, visceral emotion in virtually everyone. To make matters worse, often times this crime of neglect is committed by the child’s own parent, which makes the negligence even more egregious. What a tragedy when the very parent who is entrusted to care for the child actually does the harm. In cases of child neglect, the law will often move to prosecute parents who fail to care properly for their children. Moreover, these same guardians will also suffer the additional stigma of being branded as unfit parents by their own community. In the same way, are churches who fail to disciple new Christians committing crimes of neglect in similar fashion as unfit parents?

According to a recent Gallup poll, 46 percent of Americans claim to be “born again.” Gallup however found that only 13 percent evidenced behavioral and attitudinal differences compared with the general population.² By way of comparison, George Barna found that only 5 percent of adults — and less than 10 percent of church youth³ — possess a biblical worldview⁴, defined as making one’s life decisions thru a biblical lens of the Bible. Dallas Willard tersely states,

¹ Gordon MacDonald, "So Many Christian Infants", (10/1/07).
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/currenttrendscolumns/leadershipweekly/cln71001.html?start=1> (accessed September 17, 2010).

² Barna Update, "Teens Evaluate the Church-Based Ministry They Recieved as Children"
<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=14> (accessed September 2010).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Barna Update, "Most Adults Feel Accepted by God, but Lack a Biblical Worldview"
<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=194> (accessed September 2010).

“Nondiscipleship is the elephant in the church.”⁵ These statistics paint a dismal picture.⁶ Like a newborn baby, new Christians are vulnerable to their surroundings. Left alone, new Christians will be bombarded by and absorbed into the prevailing culture. Christians today, face a culture that is not conducive to their spiritual growth. Why? No longer do we live in a society where we can presume a strong Judeo Christian worldview is prevalent. Lesslie Newbigin underscores this when he says:

It is certainly not more than a hundred years since children in Scottish schools learned at an early stage the fact that “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” This was as much a fact as the movement of the stars and the Battle of Bannockburn. Today, it is not taught as a fact. It may be included in a syllabus of religious studies, along with the beliefs of Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims, for it is a “fact” that some people do have these beliefs. But it is not itself a fact; it is a belief in which some people hold. It is not part of the curriculum in the public schools. “Values” has replaced the traditional language of “right” and “wrong”...there is only personal choice.⁷

America, just like Scotland, has gone thru a cultural transformation. We are living in a post Christian world, endorsing a form of “churchianity,” which demands nothing of discipleship and is endorsed by the culture of the day.⁸ Within this cultural landscape, new Christians are often left to fend for themselves as they navigate the challenging journey of serving Jesus in a culture that does not value a Christian worldview.

The church is given a clear biblical mandate to offer careful attention to cultivating spiritual growth in new Christians (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:42). The goal is simple; *make disciples*. The word “disciple” is defined as “a learner in the school of Christ.”⁹ The operative word is “learn.” The goal is spiritual maturity and to see each new Christian both learn *and* become who God desires them to be.

⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (Harper San Francisco, 1998), 301.

⁶ Stephen Lim, "Why Churches Don't Disciple and Yours Can," *Enrichment Journal* (Winter 2008), 48-54.

⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralists Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: WCC Publications, 1989), 15-17.

⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 180.

⁹ *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* ed. Everett Falconer Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 167.

Yet too often churches view the Great Commission as a call to “make *converts*,” rather than a serious commitment to “make *disciples*.” Trotman believes “there is a great tragedy today—we love to get decisions, converts, names, and numbers.”¹⁰ The church sometimes falls into the trap of thinking the process is complete once the individual makes a commitment to Christ. We celebrate, check them off our list, and immediately turn our eyes to the next person who needs the gospel. In the rush to enfold more people into our faith communities, what happens to the person who has just taken their initial step of faith? Are they left alone? Will these newborn babies “raise themselves?” This neglectful action disregards the example of the early church in Acts (Acts 2:42-48). In the early church, those who responded to the Gospel were immediately brought into relationship and accountability with people of faith. These new believers were called out to follow Christ.¹¹ Coleman states:

We can observe that all the way through there was a special effort to bring new Christians, without delay, into close relationship with other believers, both on the corporate and personal level. This way their growth was sustained. The three thousand converts at Pentecost were immediately amalgamated into the church life, and this pattern continued daily with others as they were being saved.¹²

Our celebration of a convert’s new life in Christ should also be coupled with a commitment towards the new Christian’s continuing maturation in the faith. This mandates that the church celebrate the converts new commitment while simultaneously committing to roll up their sleeves, as if saying “here comes the real work;” the discipleship process has now begun. Are churches willing to make the necessary commitment to train new Christians or does this biblical priority get “lost” amongst a litany of other activities and programs? Bringing this to my present ministry context, is Bethany Christian Assembly (BCA), a church in western Washington

¹⁰ Richard D. Foster, *The Navigator* (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 1983), 119.

¹¹ Robert Emerson Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Old Tappan, N.J.: F.H. Revell Co., 1987), 59.

¹² *Ibid.*, 71-72.

averaging approximately 1,500 on a given Sunday, preparing new Christians to serve Jesus in the culture they live in? Or, is BCA leaving them to grow to maturity on their own?

As the Grow Pastor¹³ at BCA, it is my responsibility to ensure that there is a system in place that meets the current needs of brand new Christians. My personal experience at BCA has been both an exciting and sometimes frustrating process. It has been exciting to see people commit their lives to Christ on a weekly basis. As just one example, my neighbor Ben¹⁴ recently came to faith in Christ. Two years ago he had no connection whatsoever to a faith community. Today, he has committed his life to Christ. Recently, he began attending BCA's new believer course, entitled Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB). While it is exciting when a new Christian comes to a beginner class, what happens to the new believer after (s)he completes the course? Recently, I have become concerned about the number of people who have gone thru BCB and have since not attended church as frequently, appear to have lost enthusiasm, or have lost overall connection with the church.

Currently, the process of bringing new believers to maturity at BCA suffers from a lack of evaluation. In other words, BCA's church leadership has not carefully looked at how many continue to attend church, join a small group, serve in ministry, get baptized, or give their testimony. BCA has not done a thorough job of tracking new believers longitudinally. This has led our church leadership to ask some institutional questions as to whether or not BCA is a "fit parent" for these new Christians. I am asking how we can prepare these new believers to live out their Christian life in today's post-Christian culture. This evaluation of our follow up process is significant in that it will help a church determine if they are doing well at it.

¹³ In BCA's vision to "Know, Grow, Serve, and Share", the "Grow" Pastor has the responsibility of creating a system where new Christians are discipled. Available at: <http://www.bca-online.com/about/vision/> (accessed Sept. 17, 2010)

¹⁴ Pseudonyms are used throughout unless otherwise indicated.

The leadership of BCA believes this study will be very helpful for BCA. Likewise, this research may help other congregations looking to improve their process as well. Other churches in western Washington may find similarities in the cultural realities their new Christians face. This study may also help other church leaders in general prioritize the Biblical mandate to care for new Christians.

Chapter 2

Literature Review*A Challenge Facing the Church*

This chapter will review some of the relevant work that has been written by other pastors and leaders in regards to grafting new believers into the Church. Today, the word “Christian” is being redefined with varying beliefs, values, and lifestyles. As the reader digs deeper, and examines the broader culture today, they will find that the lack of discipleship is real and growing.

John Ortberg cites a Gallup poll indicating “...nine of ten Americans say they pray daily and eighty four million Americans, almost a third of the population, say they have made a personal commitment to Christ as savior.”¹⁵ Yet William Iverson, as cited by Ortberg, writes: “A pound of meat would surely be affected by a quarter pound of salt. If this is real Christianity, the “salt of the earth”, where is the effect of which Jesus spoke?”¹⁶ Iverson’s concern brings to light today’s reality that some claim to be Christians but lack the authentic life change and spiritual growth the Bible demands. This central issue will be explored in greater detail later on in this chapter.

There seems to be a growing schism between the maturation process the Bible calls Christ followers to, and how many Christians choose to live today. Kinnaman and Lyons paint a clear picture:

For nearly two decades, the Barna team has been exploring church participation among American teenagers. We consistently find that the vast majority of teenagers nationwide will spend a significant amount of their teen years participating in a Christian congregation. Most teenagers in America enter adulthood considering themselves to be Christians and saying they have made a personal commitment to Christ. But within a decade, most of these young

¹⁵ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted : Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1997), 33.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 33.

people will have left the church and will have placed emotional connection to Christianity on the shelf. *For most of them their faith was merely skin deep* (emphasis added).¹⁷

In 2005 the Assemblies of God (AG) released a decade long study highlighting the perception that there was a lack of “real Christianity” today.¹⁸ From 1995 to 2005, the AG in the United States reported 5,339,144 decisions for Christ while Sunday morning attendance for the same period grew by only 221,790.¹⁹ These figures indicate that for every one hundred commitments to Christ, only four remain connected to that same church. Likewise, Hall found out that there is an alarming trend in the AG with more than 75% of all decisions being lost through attrition, meaning the church where they committed their heart to Christ is not engaging the new Christian in discipleship.²⁰ Whether it is 96 or 75 percent attrition is not the central issue, the concern is that the majority of new Christians are not staying connected to a church.

Foster and Smith maintain that part of the problem may be that some churches have drifted from emphasizing discipleship as a condition for following Christ; a great “omission” from the Great Commission. The first goal Jesus set forth for the early Church was to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). Over the years we have drifted from this call. This drift omits the training that will bring new Christians ever increasingly to do what Jesus directed.²¹ Rainer and Gieger discuss the Church’s failure in this area:

Stories of orphans in countries like Romania and Russia have grabbed the hearts of many Americans. Children are placed in large orphanages with hundreds of other children. The ratio of adults to children is shocking. All the caretaker can do is be sure each child has his or her basic needs met. Food, water, shelter. However, the children are not touched. They are

¹⁷ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity-- and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 74.

¹⁸ The AG is a Pentecostal Denomination made up of over 13,000 churches in the United States. For more information visit <http://ag.org/top/>. Bethany Christian Assembly is an AG church. For more information on Bethany Christian Assembly visit www.bca-online.com.

¹⁹ Charles Crabtree, "The Crisis of Discipleship in the American Church," *Enrichment Journal*, (Winter 2008), 24.

²⁰ Jim Hall, "Turning Decisions into Additions and Additions into Disciples," *Enrichment Journal* Winter 2008), 101.

²¹ Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith, *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 13-17.

not hugged. They are not nurtured. A decade ago journalists first entered these orphanages. They were shocked at what they did not see or hear. There was no laughter. No tears. Three-year-olds could not speak or cry. Without touch the orphanages were void of laughter and tears. Without touch the children's growth was stunted. Without nurture, they did not mature normally. The lack of attention was damaging to the children.²²

According to Rainer and Geiger, "...many churches treat new believers like these orphanages treat children. There is little attention and nurture. New believers are tossed aside. There is typically no follow up. The person is unsure what to do next."²³ What is the reason? Are churches and leaders too busy? Could it be that the church fails to fundamentally grasp, and enact, the Bible's mandate to care for new Christians? (See for example Acts 2:42-48, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2).

These studies, along with other findings to be discussed in this chapter, uncover a Christian whose faith is "skin deep", disconnected from a local church, and living a lifestyle that does not resemble the picture we find in the Bible (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12, Colossians 2:6-8). There is a lack of spiritual maturity. What is the root of the problem? The church is not discipling brand new Christians.

Spiritual Maturity

The global Church is blessed with a rich body of historical literature addressing the topic of spiritual maturity. For example, Tozer clearly communicates that Christ followers must turn to the "deeper life"²⁴ and defines this life as one who is "in the Spirit far in advance of the average and nearer to the New Testament norm."²⁵ Bonhoeffer mandates the importance of spiritual maturity in his work *The Cost of Discipleship*. He posits that Christians have separated a

²² Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church : Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 2006), 154-155.

²³ *Ibid.*, 154-155

²⁴ Aiden Wilson Tozer, *The Radical Cross* (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread Publishers, 2009), 14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

confession of Christ with the act of obedience, and a bridge must be found between them.²⁶ To Bonhoeffer, “Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship.”²⁷

Augustine believed one of the purposes of the Scriptures was to help Christians discover what needs to be understood.²⁸ The believer makes a commitment to the study of scripture and these truths are then applied to the believer’s daily activities. For Augustine, the Scriptures guide the Christian down the path of spiritual maturity and towards discovery and understanding.

The aim is to see people commit their life to Jesus and then take the necessary steps to honor him in every aspect of their life. If writers have historically discovered the importance of spiritual maturity, are we missing something by not cultivating spiritual development?

Spiritual Maturity is Prioritized in the Bible

The Bible is specific in its call for Christians to move towards spiritual maturity and growth. The early church encountered thousands of new believers (Acts 2:44-47). Over the course of the next few chapters in Acts, the new converts were not very visible or spoken of in great detail.²⁹ Eims believes, “they must have been like young children in a family, watching everything, hearing everything, and soon to *imitate everything* (emphasis added).³⁰ Webber, when discussing the early church, concludes that Christian conversion “included a change of heart and mind, rituals of Christian identification, instruction to flee the vices of the world, and a description of Christian community and its worship.”³¹

²⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 48.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁸ Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, ed. O.S.A. John E. Rotelle, part 1, vol. 11 (New York: New City Press, 1996), 106.

²⁹ LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Corp., 1978), 41-42.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

³¹ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism : Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 19.

There are numerous scriptures that emphasize the goal of brand new Christians moving towards spiritual maturity. Christians are instructed to leave the elementary teachings and go on to maturity (Hebrews 6:1). Paul's letter in Ephesians implores Christians to move beyond infancy so we will not be tossed back and forth by every false teaching. Instead, Christians are called to grow up in Christ (Ephesians 4:14-16). Paul then challenges the believers in Colossians to be rooted, built up, and strengthened in the faith. They are instructed to pay careful attention to deceptive philosophy that is anchored in human tradition rather than Christ (Colossians 2:6-8).

The biblical writer of Hebrews rebukes Christians for their *lack* of spiritual growth. The writer rebukes Christians for not continuing down the path of maturity: "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness (Hebrews 5:12-13)." Tony Stoltzfus, when considering this scripture explains:

The group he was addressing had been taught the basic principles of the Christian faith. Paul's expectation was that they would not continue to remain dependent on being taught but, but would mature and become teachers themselves. Those who are children in the faith are dependent on others to show them how to live the Christian life. Maturity is achieved by applying basic biblical principles to your own decisions, and learning by practice to distinguish right from wrong. An infant is someone who primarily receives. A mature believer is someone who gives.³²

Eims, in his work *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, exemplifies Paul as a man who understood the need for discipleship: "Paul continued to undergo the pains of childbirth for his converts till Christ was formed in them (See Gal. 4:19). He prayed for the Corinthians that they would not do anything wrong (see 2 Cor. 13:7)."³³ It was Paul's expectation that Christians

³² Tony Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skills, and Heart of a Christian Coach* (Virginia Beach: Tony Stoltzfus, 2005), 39.

³³ Eims, 63.

would grow spiritually. It is God's expectation that the church would be a venue where new Christians find a path towards Him.

Spiritual Maturity is a Lifestyle

Christian discipleship is the intentional process of Christians sharing their life together so they are built up into maturity in Christ.³⁴ Ortberg concisely explains: "The term spiritual life is simply a way of referring to one's life-every moment and every facet of it-from God's perspective. Another way of saying it is this: God is not interested in your "spiritual life". God is just interested in your life. He intends to redeem it".³⁵ Gordon MacDonald brings to light multiple areas this change is seen in the life of a new Christian. They are; wise in human relationships, humble and serving, comfortable and functional in everyday society, respectful in conflict, faithful in commitments.³⁶ The message is that there is an identifiable lifestyle that marks a Christian. Carlson, in his D. Min. Project *Building Community*, speaks of the salvation experience inducing believers into a living fellowship.³⁷ There is a fellowship and a new way of living that a Christian begins upon salvation. We can trace this standard all the way back to the Old Testament.

Grenz writes that Israel was called to a life of "obedience to the covenanting God as motivated by love and gratitude (Deut. 6:5, 20)."³⁸ Christensen believes, "...this emphasizes that God's actions in the historical events that make up the exodus-conquest provide the motivation for a covenant relationship between God and his people."³⁹ In short, the people in

³⁴ Dean Ridings, "Making Disciples: Four Churches, Four Plans", (May/June 1994).
<http://www.navpress.com/magazines/archives/article.aspx?id=12625> (accessed September 23, 2010).

³⁵ Ortberg, 17.

³⁶ MacDonald.

³⁷ Robert Carlson, "Using Small Groups to Build Community- Bethany Christian Assembly, Everett, Washington," (Everett, WA: D.Min.Project, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary 2002), 41.

³⁸ Grenz, 98.

³⁹ Duane Christensen, *Word Bible Commentary*, vol. Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9 (Thomas Nelson, 2001), 143.

covenant relationship with a holy God must likewise be holy.⁴⁰ Believers are also instructed (Psalm 15) to live a blameless life and do what is righteous.

Grenz writes that Christ taught that presence in God's family brought ethical implications. This means if a believer belongs "to the family" there needs to be a family resemblance in how we think and act.⁴¹ It is common to see like mannerisms between siblings which serve as signs of a unique family connection. Being part of God's family means that believers strive to look as much like Jesus as they can. The Kingdom of God is to penetrate our feelings, habits, thoughts, words, and actions. According to Niehbur, it is to penetrate our entire social existence,⁴² meaning the goal for any believer is to follow the example of Jesus and strive to perfectly honor God with their life.

Historically, throughout church history there has been a strong emphasis on the covenant responsibilities that Christ followers have. Grenz emphasized the teaching of Augustine, "Love, and do what you will."⁴³ Grenz believes that by this, Augustine meant that "when we truly love God, we desire to act in a manner that pleases God."⁴⁴ The Reformation model, ushered in by Martin Luther, brought about the reformation of grace, yet also emphasized the moral life a Christian must live teaching that "we live each moment in the very presence of God who calls each human to make responsible choices in the situations of life."⁴⁵ Every aspect of our life changes when we realize that we are to live each moment in the presence of God.

No longer can Christians separate their "faith life" from what they view as "real life." McClaren's viewpoint is that Jesus proclaimed a different kingdom, a kingdom where Jesus was

⁴⁰ Grenz, 98.

⁴¹ Ibid., 112-113.

⁴² H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951), 228.

⁴³ Grenz, 138-139.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 160

saying “situate your lives in another story... the good news that God is king, and we can live in relation to God.”⁴⁶ We are instructed in the Bible not to live a divided life. Kimball underscores this when he shares that he was in a conversation with Dallas Willard, who explained that a “disciple of Jesus is one who practices his presence and arranges his or her life in such a way as to live as Christ would live if he were them.”⁴⁷ We have only one life; the life committed to honoring Christ. Driscoll and Breshears support this when they write that “to be a Christian is to be a “little Christ”.”⁴⁸

Spiritual Maturity is a Process

Overall, the extant literature underscores that the process of making disciples is lengthy, time consuming, and far from simple. Osborne writes that spiritual growth is not linear simply moving from point “A” to point “B”, yet many of our discipleship programs tend to be.⁴⁹ Trotman believes that a church must believe in the process that *begins* once the new convert makes the commitment to Christ. Trotman often put it: “Making the decision is 10 percent; follow through is 90 percent.”⁵⁰ Coleman goes so far as to confront the church when he declares, “The hectic way that churches have tried to force this into a few weeks of confirmation classes, if they have done it at all, is entirely inadequate. Disciples must have devoted Christian friends to follow, and this can be only facilitated by being together over a period of time.”⁵¹ Holz says that the driving

⁴⁶ Brian D. McLaren, *Everything Must Change : Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 90.

⁴⁷ Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church : Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 214.

⁴⁸ Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Jesus: Timeless Answers to Timely Questions* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2007), 120.

⁴⁹ Larry W. Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 41.

⁵⁰ Foster, *The Navigator*, 123.

⁵¹ Coleman, 76.

factor of spiritual maturity should be the outcome we are targeting. We need to think clearly about what we're going to do together and also how long we expect the process to take.⁵²

The Biblical Mandate to Make Disciples

Not only are new Christians mandated to pursue spiritual maturity, the Church is tasked with superintending this process. Wilkins says: "Disciplemaking is not a recent phenomenon, it started 2,000 years ago with "follow me."⁵³ Jesus called men and women out from their ordinary lives to join him. He then clearly communicated the demands of being a disciple (Mark 8:34). They were to leave everything and follow Him. Simon, Andrew, James, and John left their jobs and families to follow Jesus (Mark 1:14-20). Jesus did not immediately send these disciples to reach the world and start the Church. He spent time with them, invested in them, laughed with them, taught them, rebuked them, and challenged them. In the example of Jesus we witness what it looks like to journey with disciples as they learn matters of the Kingdom.

The training that Paul received after his conversion underscores this need. When taken to Jerusalem, he remained with the apostles for some time, "going in and going out" among them (Acts 9:28). Coleman believes that not only did Paul learn much by way of information for his own spiritual journey, he also learned a valuable lesson in the care of new believers.⁵⁴ For the rest of his life he modeled this with his new converts. He understood the need for personal follow up.⁵⁵ Paul would continue to relate to them, visit them, and train them as much as possible. Often times he would retrace his missionary journey's so he could stop by to encourage the new believers. When circumstances were that he could not go himself, often times he would

⁵² Adam Holz, "Beginning with the End in Mind", (May/June 2002).

<http://www.navpress.com/magazines/archives/article.aspx?id=10668> (accessed September 23, 2010).

⁵³ Michael J. Wilkins, "Disciple Making for Changing Times and Changing Churches," *Enrichment Journal* Winter 2008), 40-46.

⁵⁴ Coleman, 72.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

send others to take his place.⁵⁶ For example, Silas and Timothy were left behind at Berea when he had to leave; and Timothy and Erastus were sent to Macedonia when Paul could not go (Acts 17:14, Acts 19:22).⁵⁷ Paul's heart for new believers was also evident in his writing as Foster states:

When Paul wrote Philippians 1:6, he was writing a follow up letter to the little band of believers at Philippi. Paul followed up on them by personal visits, with much prayer, by making sure some of his godly friends went by Philippi and paid a visit. Paul did it by many lengthy and costly letters. He had no telephone, no printing press, no typewriters, and no air transportation, but Paul got the job done. As you study the Bible, you'll see how he had his converts in his heart, day and night. DAILY they were his concern.⁵⁸

Eims cites John 21:15-17 as an important lesson on caring for new believers from the account between Jesus and Peter. Peter is commanded to "feed my sheep" by Jesus (John 21:17). Eims believes "Jesus' mandate was that they must be fed and they must be disciplined."⁵⁹

Cultural Realities

George Hunter defines culture, metaphorically, as "the software of the mind", that has been 'programmed', into a given people's shared consciousness through their enculturation."⁶⁰ Additionally, Niebuhr defines culture as the "artificial, secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organizations, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values."⁶¹ Historically, it has always been a challenge to bring biblical truth to a non-Christian culture. Many keen observers of the Church believe this is also true today. Creps writes that there is a reaction against the "modern world."⁶² Creps states, "Modernism includes the primacy of reason, objectivity of truth, and

⁵⁶ Ibid., 73

⁵⁷ Ibid., 73.

⁵⁸ Foster, *The Navigator*, 120-122.

⁵⁹ Eims, 41-42.

⁶⁰ George G. Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism : How Christianity Can Reach the West-- Again* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 100.

⁶¹ Niebuhr, 32.

⁶² Earl Creps, "Disciplemaking in a Postmodern World," *Enrichment Journal*, (Fall 2002), 52-59.

certainty of absolutes. The modern world is not gone, it is more accurate to say that modernity and postmodernity have collided and are now struggling for dominance.”⁶³ Christians today find themselves in “colliding cultures.”

McNeal believes the current church culture of North America is struggling.⁶⁴ There is great cause for alarm when considering the cultural realities a church faces today. McNeal continues, “The lower you go down the church attendance food chain, the less you see people attending church. 56 percent of builders (those born before 1946) and seniors to only thirty 6 percent of gen Xers.”⁶⁵ If you take a look at the unchurched population, the number of Americans who have “no religious preference” has doubled from 1990 to 2001, now reaching 14 percent of the population, indicating a growing culture of pluralism.⁶⁶

In the Old Testament, after God’s people moved into the Promised Land, they slowly absorbed the culture and its religious beliefs. In time, “everyone did as he saw fit.” (Judges 21:25). The disciples first proclaimed the good news throughout the mixed Mediterranean world with its many gods and temples, various Greek Philosophies, and the Roman government’s religious requirement of emperor worship.⁶⁷ In spite of being 2,000 years removed from biblical times, many of the same cultural realities seen then are evident today. Often times, our current culture is referred to as “post-Christian.”⁶⁸ What captures the imagination of the postmodern culture is not Christianity.⁶⁹ Man has superimposed certain realities that we face today. Church leaders do well to be aware of them.

⁶³ Ibid., 52-59.

⁶⁴ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future : Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 1.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁷ Paul Copan, "Following a Unique Christ in a Pluralistic Society," *Enrichment Journal* (Fall 2008), 41-52.

⁶⁸ Leonard I. Sweet, *Soulsunami : Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 45.

Pluralism is Today's Reality

Copan states that “We can readily agree with the benign, descriptive fact of pluralism—that many religions exist.”⁷⁰ Pluralism is suited to our individualistic, consumer oriented, buffet style approach to religion that says “I’ll take some of that, no I don’t like that.”⁷¹ Many people have a misguided approach to spirituality, picking and choosing what they like rather than what is truth. This view is called “Syncretism.”⁷² As Barna notes: “Our continuing research among teenagers and adolescents shows that the trend away from adopting biblical theology in favor of syncretic, culture based theology is advancing in full gallop.”⁷³ According to Barna, fifteen informal rules directed and defined youth of the mid to late 1990s. Now grown, those teens are emerging as leaders in our churches. Two of those rules were: 1) Do not waste time searching for absolutes because there are none, and 2) Spiritual truth may take many forms.⁷⁴ The prevailing belief is that there is truth, and it is defined by “me.”

Watered Down Faith

In the millennial culture, many follow a “mutant form of Christianity.”⁷⁵ In a recent CNN article, Kenda Dean makes the case that more American Teenagers are embracing a form of “moralistic therapeutic deism”, which according to Dean is a “watered down faith that views God as a divine “therapist.” In her study of 3,300 American Teenagers she found that most were indifferent or inarticulate about their faith. Three out of four American teenagers claim to be Christian, fewer than half practice their faith, only half deem it important, and most can’t talk coherently about their what they believe. Kinnaman, in a recent article validates Dean’s claim:

⁷⁰ Copan, 41-52.

⁷¹ Ibid., 41-52.

⁷² Ibid., 41-52.

⁷³ Ibid., 41-52

⁷⁴ Samuel R. Chand and Cecil Murphey, *Futuring : Leading Your Church into Tomorrow* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 113.

⁷⁵ John Blake, "More Teens Becoming Fake Christians", (August 2010).

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/08/27/almost.christian/index.html?hpt=T2> (accessed September 16, 2010).

While there is still much vibrancy to teen spirituality, it seems to be ‘thinning out.’ Teenagers view religious involvement partly as a way to maintain their all-important relationships. Yet perhaps technology such as social networking is reconfiguring teens’ needs for relationships and continual connectivity, diminishing the role of certain spiritual forms of engagement in their lives. Talking to God may be losing out to Facebook.⁷⁶

As these authors underscore, the millennial generation may still be connected to a church, but there is sufficient reason to be concerned about the depth of their faith and their overall commitment to Christ.

Decline of a Christian Worldview

Christianity is no longer considered by many to be the predominant worldview. It is now only one of many beliefs that exist. Creps writes that “a more common view is that people have the right to choose which truths are absolute for themselves-today.”⁷⁷ According to Volf, we live in a day when there is “no stable subject, divine or human, that can give direction to the departures.”⁷⁸ Keen observers of church culture, such as Driscoll, have noted that our culture is elusive and is not always open to spiritual direction from the church. Driscoll states that the church has been marginalized and holds no privileged position.⁷⁹ These authors clearly articulate that there is a significant decline in the influence of the Church in our society today. Stanley Grenz agrees with this point when he states:

There are certain traits of our culture that are real and must be both recognized and addressed. Until a generation ago, there was some agreement over guiding principles that reigned within the wider population. This “agreement” was based, however loosely, on the ethical traditions of the Bible. That moral consensus, however, has been thoroughly eroded. This parallels another phenomenon that Christians, and especially pastors, must take seriously: The declining influence of the church in Western society. This is so widespread that many people speak in terms of a “post Christian” world. No longer does

⁷⁶ Group Barna and Kinnaman, "How Teenagers Faith Practices Are Changing", (July 2010). <http://www.barna.org/teens-next-gen-articles/403-how-teenagers-faith-practices-are-changing> (accessed September 16, 2010).

⁷⁷ Creps, "Moving Target: Reframing Discipleship for Postmoderns," , 68-73.

⁷⁸ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace : A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 40.

⁷⁹ Mark Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformation Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 19.

Christianity, whether doctrine or its ethical principles, exercise an all-pervasive influence on society's understanding of purpose or understanding.⁸⁰

We seem to have lost a sense of having a grand, overarching narrative.⁸¹ The prevailing view within modernity that the church speaks with authority no longer prevails in a post modern society. Why? Authority figures are losing their "name only" influence.⁸² There is a new reality: paradigms have changed and the result is that authority figures or institutions no longer hold sway just because of who they are. Sweet articulates it well when he says, "Authority increasingly is something earned, not learned."⁸³ Today's culture has moved from a world of the absolute to the ambiguous.⁸⁴

Grenz, Sweet, Driscoll, and other thinkers seem to indicate that these are the cultural realities the faith community must acknowledge when striving to disciple new Christians. Since these are today's realities, how does the Church respond?

The Church's Response in Discipleship

Christian leaders note that the Church *must* respond in light of these cultural realities because the most natural place for discipleship to take place is in the local church.⁸⁵ Creps believes the critical question is *how* when he argues, "Real discipling today is a missionary enterprise. The very effective missionary operates under the principle of contextualization."⁸⁶ Churches must not only contextualize evangelism efforts, they must take the additional step to contextualize their discipling strategy. They must remain current, effective, and evaluated.

⁸⁰ Grenz, 17.

⁸¹ Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996), 8,45.

⁸² Sweet, 186.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁸⁴ Chand and Murphey, 30.

⁸⁵ Ridings.

⁸⁶ Creps, "Discipling in a Postmodern World," 52-59.

Rainer and Geiger agree that there must be attention to “*how* someone is handed off from one level of commitment to another.”⁸⁷ How will church leaders disciple new converts?

New Methodologies for Discipling New Christians

Frederick Taylor had an influence on the industrial sector of America in the late nineteenth century. His formula: the greatest production results when each worker is given a definite task to be performed in a definite time and in a definite manner.⁸⁸ Church leaders must realize that the question is not only whether we are prioritizing new Christians, but whether our system for discipling them is effective. Is our process effective for each new Christians? Stephen Lim identifies four “defective approaches”⁸⁹ in the church:

1. Discipleship by osmosis versus intentional discipleship
2. New Believers are given basics beliefs and the churches work is “done.”
3. The Church is sometimes guilty of Selective Discipleship versus a holistic approach.
4. Focus on curriculum versus transformation through relationship.⁹⁰

Each of these approaches negates a holistic approach to new believer discipleship. For the Church to be missional in nature will require a deep commitment that is neither defective nor simple. Stanley and Willits argue that discipling new Christians takes work, effort, stress, strategy, and a commitment to their *ongoing* maturation process. We cannot simply put them in a spiritual boot camp and believe that after that, they are disciplined. This perspective assumes that spiritual maturity comes at a point in time-namely, when the process or curriculum has been completed.”⁹¹

⁸⁷ Rainer and Geiger, 73.

⁸⁸ Randy Raysbrook, "Cookie Cutter Discipleship", (January/February 1990).
<http://www.navpress.com/magazines/archives/article.aspx?id=13235> (accessed September 23, 2010).

⁸⁹ Lim, , 48-54.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 48-54.

⁹¹ Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 62-63.

Summary

Various experts agree that there is a crisis of discipleship in our churches today. The Bible instructs the Church to care for brand new Christians. Yet the confronting reality is that our culture provides significant barriers for church leaders to be attentive to. The Church has a decision to make as to whether leaders will be proactive and engage new Christians in the process of spiritual maturity or will new Christians be left to raise themselves?

Chapter 3

Methodology*Method/Rationale*

One of the hallmarks of qualitative research is its ability to capture the experiences and thoughts in the words of the participants when carried out carefully. Accordingly, this study employed a qualitative approach that facilitated learning from various individuals and groups for the betterment of BCA's new believer process. This study examined BCA's effectiveness at equipping new Christians to live for God in the culture today. Defined, a qualitative study is a "means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem."⁹² Because this research relied heavily on open ended answers from the participants and focused on their thought processes, experiences, and opinions of individuals, a qualitative approach was an appropriate means of inquiry. This provided the opportunity to explore the "individual meaning"⁹³ that each new Christian carries about the process BCA enacts for the growth of new Christians.

This study provides data from those who have been through the "new believer process" at BCA within the last five years and also from those who journeyed thru the same process *more* than five years ago. Because a qualitative approach is capable of providing trends and common themes, this study will provide evaluation of the process of mentoring new believers.

There are five specific questions that guided this research: 1) Is the current approach to discipling new Christians at BCA effective for their ongoing spiritual growth? 2) How do participants who have gone through the new believer process in the last five years at BCA view this journey? 3) How do participants who went thru the process *more* than five years ago feel

⁹² John W. Creswell, *Research Design : Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2009), 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

about the new believer process they were apart of? 4) What systems and practices are other select churches employing and what can BCA learn from them? Finally, 5) What changes, if any, does BCA need to make in its care for new converts?

Sample

For this study I utilized survey information as well as interviewed three specific groups of people. First, I sent out a survey to a group of 25 individuals who have attended Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB) within the last five years. The survey was mailed by my Administrative Assistant on my behalf. I then asked my assistant to collect the completed, anonymous surveys and return them to me, therefore maintaining confidentiality. By making it anonymous, it was my hope to get honest and helpful feedback. Out of the 25 individuals contacted, 12 responded yielding a 48% response rate.

Secondly, I met with five individuals who had attended BCB within the last five years. The purpose of these interviews was to further gauge how BCA had done providing a system for growing towards spiritual maturity. I performed 4 of these interviews in my office at BCA and 1 in my home. During each of these interviews I will took research memos as part of the data for the study and digitally recorded the conversations so transcripts could be provided.

Another strategic group that I interviewed was those who were a part of BCA's new believer process *more* than five years ago. There are individuals at BCA who committed their life to Christ years ago, and are still actively growing in their faith today. Some are core members of BCA and provided feedback as to what helped guide them on their journey towards maturity. In an effort to gain their perspective, I sat down with 3 individuals who committed their life to Christ more than five years ago and asked specific questions about what has guided their maturation process.

Lastly, I interviewed 3 church leaders who are generally recognized experts in the field of ministry. One leader serves as a church planter in California and is widely considered a cultural expert. The second leader interviewed is a pastor of a turnaround church that has grown from a weekly average of 500 to 1500 on a given Sunday the last 15 years. The last expert that I interviewed is a staff pastor at a church plant that has grown to a weekly attendance of 4000 the last 6 years. I met with these individuals and asked them to explain what their key principles and insights are for reaching out to new Christians and leading them toward maturity. These pastors also provided feedback as to what they perceived were “cultural roadblocks” that stop people from continuing on the path of spiritual growth. This provided helpful insight on church culture today. All in all, 11 people were interviewed for this study.

Instrumentation

As previously mentioned the first component of information gathering was to send out a survey to those who attended BCB within the last five years. This survey was followed up with interviews of people who had been given a survey. The interviews included the following questions: 1.) What did you think about the class Basic Christian Beliefs? 2.) How would you gauge your ongoing spiritual maturity since finishing BCB? 3.) What has been the biggest challenge in your ongoing spiritual growth? 4.) If you have had a spiritual mentor, how were they helpful in your spiritual growth process? 5.) How would you describe BCA’s new believer process as a whole?

Additionally, I interviewed those who committed to Christ years ago and are still actively involved at BCA. The following questions were used: 1.) In your opinion, can you share what were the strengths and weaknesses of the new convert process you were a part of? 2.) Was there a specific class that you were a part of when you became a new Christian? If so, can you explain

the effectiveness of the class? 3.) If you had a spiritual coach or mentor how did they aid your growth process? 5.) What has been helpful to your ongoing spiritual maturity at BCA?

The third group of individuals I interviewed were pastors who had significant expertise in church culture. The questions I asked these individuals were: 1.) How do you disciple brand new Christians? 2.) How effective do you feel your process is? 3.) What are some of the today's cultural realities that you feel hinder a new Christian's growth? 4.) If you were designing a new believer process from scratch, considering those cultural realities, what are some elements you would ensure were included?

Analysis

How might BCA improve the process of discipling new believers in light of what this study shows? Chand and Murphy believe that "churches tend to keep on doing things the way they did them a generation ago. Maybe we don't like to hear exhortations to reexamine our methods because we don't like being pushed to alter the way we've always done things."⁹⁴ The challenge we face today is to step back from our assumptions and explore our effectiveness. That is the purpose of this study. I sought answers to various questions that were important when examining BCA's ability to disciple new Christians in our changing culture.

After the interviews were completed, I examined the data and looked for common themes that emerged from the survey and interviews. I employed the following specific steps to analyze the data: 1) Examine the findings of the surveys and look for common strengths and weaknesses in BCA's discipleship process. 2) Look for common themes that emerged throughout the surveys and interviews. 3.) Have another church expert review the findings as a means of triangulating the data. 4) After completing the first three steps, I utilized those findings to propose refinement to the current discipleship program at BCA.

⁹⁴ Chand and Murphey, 30.

Limitations

This study only looked at those who attended BCA therefore the findings cannot be generalized to other churches. However, similar churches in this region may benefit from the study. A second limitation is the fact that I am interviewing participants who have been through the new believer process with me as their guide. This relationship and history may have impacted the authenticity of their answers. It is also feasible that this limitation was off-set by the fact that I have a relationship with them and they may have been *more* willing to discuss the process with me than they would with a perceived “outsider.” The anonymity of the survey will also be a mitigating factor in that it will help individuals to honestly express their true opinions. The survey will also provide additional data beyond just the interviews. A third limitation is that I only interviewed three church experts. This may be mitigated by the diversity of their experience being that one serves as pastor of a large church, another is a staff member at a mega church, and the third is a well known cultural expert who is now planting a church.

Chapter 4

Data

The data for this research project was drawn from 12 completed surveys from recent attendees of BCB and 11 face to face interviews. The purpose of this chapter is to present the “raw data” in its simplest form. Therefore, this chapter will be a breakdown of the completed surveys which will be illustrated using various tables and graphs. A summary of each face to face interview is also provided. After the surveys were completed I paid a research assistant \$100 to both transcribe the interviews and assist with creating graphs that utilized information drawn directly from the data.

The Process for Collecting Surveys

On October 27, 2010 I sent an e-mail to recent attendees of Basic Christian Beliefs informing them that they will be receiving a survey in the mail. I invited them to fill out the survey as a part of this research project. A copy of the e-mail has been provided (Appendix A) for the reader. Then, on November 9, 2010, I distributed 26 surveys. My assistant and I mailed both an informed consent form (Appendix B), a Basic Christian Beliefs Survey, and a stamped return envelope. Over the course of the next two weeks we received 12 surveys back. My assistant collected the surveys, made a photocopy, and then gave me the original. The process of my assistant collecting the returned surveys in the mail and only giving me the original survey ensured anonymity for the participant since we did not ask them to include their name on the survey.

The Process for the Interviews

In all, 11 face to face interviews were conducted. I interviewed 5 individuals who have been thru Basic Christians Beliefs class *within* the last 5 years and 3 individuals who had

accepted Christ *more* than 5 years ago at BCA and subsequently went thru the New Convert Process. In addition, 3 church leaders were interviewed to gain their perspective and learn from insights they might have. Many of the interviews were done in my office at Bethany Christian Assembly as well as various locations such as a coffee shop, my home, or online via Skype. During each of the interviews I took research memos and digitally recorded the conversation to ensure accuracy. Transcripts of each interview are provided in the Appendices (Appendix C) should the reader choose to learn more about any individual interview.

Survey

The following section is a collection of the BCB survey results. In all, 12 anonymous surveys were collected from BCB attendees who have participated in the class within the last 5 years. Their responses are illustrated below.

Survey Responses

Survey Question #1: What did you think about the class Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB)?

Table 1 communicates what people thought of BCB class utilizing key words and phrases that respondents wrote. The number of times that a particular word or phrase is also indicated.

Table 1. Key words used to describe Basic Christian Beliefs class

Key Word/Phrase	Number of people who used the word/phrase
Informative/informational/information	5
Great/excellent/fun/enjoyed class	5
Understanding/understand	3
Foundation/ground roots of faith/beginning/introduction	3
Tool/equipped/encouraged me to seek	3
Friendly atmosphere/meet others	2
Broad	2
Become familiar with the church	1
Relaxed	1
Helpful	1
Interesting	1
Reintroduced me to Christ	1
No question was considered insignificant	1
Straight out of the Bible	1

Survey Question #2: Since attending BCB, please describe your ongoing spiritual growth in a short paragraph.

Individuals briefly described, in their own words, what their ongoing spiritual growth has been like since *concluding* BCB. The responses indicated a variety of perceptions about their personal spiritual growth. Table 2 is the key words and phrases that were written on the survey, including the number of times it appeared.

Table 2. Perceptions of New Believers ongoing spiritual growth

Key Word/Phrase	Number of people who used the word/phrase
Every day/daily	4
I attend church/involvement in the church/church family/attend church	4
I meet with a small group/small group	3
I have grown spiritually/growing deeper	2
Serve	2
Continued friendships/interpersonal relationships	2
Regularly	2
Baptized	2
Pray/speaking to the Lord	2
Positive upturn in my spiritual self	1
Attend(ing) additional ongoing classes at BCA	1
Read the Bible	1
Working to live a Christ-centered life	1
Continued friendships/interpersonal relationships	1
Sharing	1
I've been more committed to my relationship with Jesus	1
Learning	1
I needed filled up spiritually	1
Life has gotten out of control	1
My growth has been on a detour	1
To forgive myself...without the weight of guilt	1
I have actually stopped going to church	1
Challenging myself	1
Press on	1

Survey Question #3: What do you feel has been the biggest challenge in your spiritual growth journey?

Individuals were asked to identify what their biggest challenge has been in their spiritual growth. Table 3 is the percentages of how often a specific challenge appeared on a survey.

Table 3. Biggest challenges for BCB attendees in their spiritual growth journey

Challenges	Percentage of people who deal with the listed challenge
Reading/understanding the Bible	50%
Accepting certain aspects of Christianity on faith alone	9%
Overcoming feelings	9%
Sharing my faith with others	4%
Not going to church	4%
Spouse not sharing faith passion	4%
Sinful habits	4%
Tithing	4%
Finding that relationship with the Holy Spirit	4%
Getting involved in church/trusting others	4%

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole percent point

Survey Question #4: How would you describe BCA's new believer process *as a whole*?

The survey asked for participants to share, in their own words, how they would describe BCA's new believer process as a whole. Table 4.1 lists the descriptive words that appeared on the surveys along with their frequency.

Table 4.1. Description of BCA's new believers process as a whole

Key word/phrase	Number of people who used the word/phrase
Liked/pleased/enjoyed	4
Accepting/understanding/supportive/ encouraging	4
Helpful/designed to assist/opportunities to discover	3
Excellent/wonderful/great	3
Process	2
Feel at home/welcoming people	2
Way to learn	2
Short/quick	1
Enlightening	1
Effective	1
Fun	1
Friendships	1
Not confrontational, not a lot of pressure	1

a. What are some areas you feel we may be lacking in?

Because we desired to know areas where our process was lacking, it was imperative to receive feedback regarding our areas of deficiency. Table 4.2 identifies areas we are lacking in according to the surveys received.

Table 4.2. Areas where BCB is lacking

Statements made	Percentage of people surveyed who stated the corresponding
Not lacking in any areas	34%
The class moves to fast	17%
Need additional question/answer time	17%
Need more focus on the relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament	8%
Need a “next step” class	8%
Need to stay connected	8%
No answer	8%

b. What could we have added to BCB that would have made it more effective?

Not only did we desire to know where we were deficient, we also wanted to understand what could make BCB more effective. Table 4.3 lists ideas that individuals shared that may increase the effectiveness of our initial New Convert class.

Table 4.3. Ideas of what could make the class more effective

Key word/phrase	Number of people who used the word/phrase
Longer (class time)/Add a week or two	3
“Next Step” class/2 classes	2
Larger room	1
Day time class	1
Introduce leaders of other small groups	1
Mentoring	1
Food	1

Survey Question #5: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements by filling in the appropriate circle:

Individuals shared their agreement or disagreement with the following areas of BCB.

Table 5 details the average score of the responses given.

Table 5. Mean scores of 12 participants rating BCB's current effectiveness based on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale

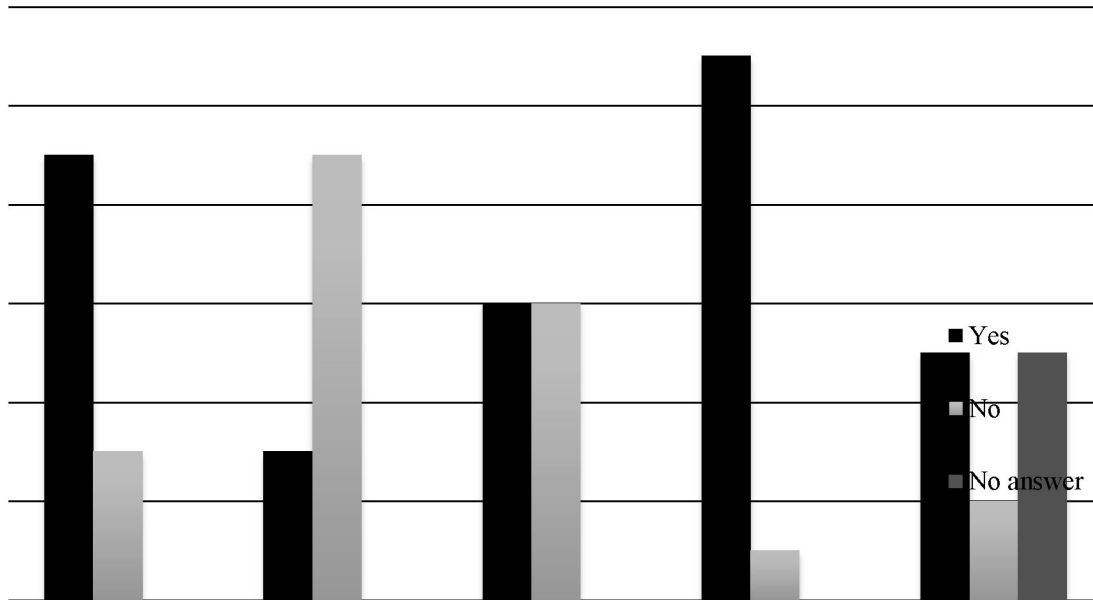
Statement	Mean Score
The content of BCB adequately addressed the needs of a new Christian	4.25
BCA gave adequate resources to help me on my journey as a new believer	4.17
Clear "next steps" were communicated for continued spiritual growth after BCB was completed	3.92
8weeks was a good length for BCB class	3.50

Note: 12 participants replied to these survey questions (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5 Strongly Agree) .
 Note: Mean scores are rounded to the nearest hundredth.

Survey Question #6: Please answer yes or no, keeping in mind this will be anonymous:

The survey also sought to identify how effective BCA was at moving people towards the next steps in their faith. Table 6 illustrates how many survey responders (out of the 12 received) are in a small group, read the Bible every day, serve in ministry, have been water baptized, and have been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

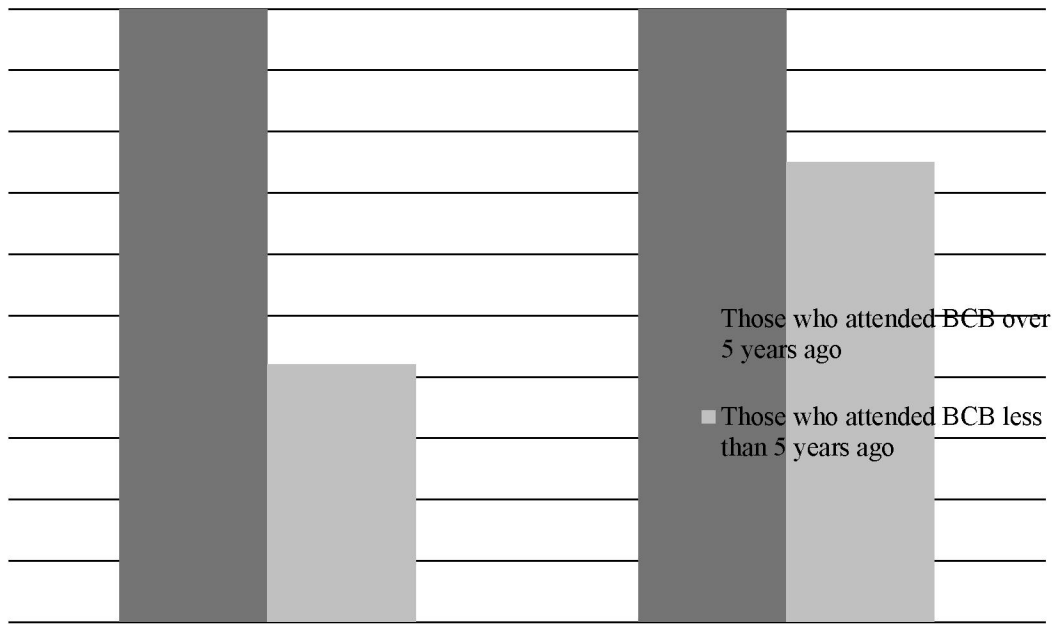
Table 6. A snapshot of the “next steps” that are being taken by prior attendees of BCB



Question #7: Is there an individual (non-family member) whom you would consider a mentor or “Spiritual Coach” at BCA? By “Spiritual Coach” I mean a person praying for you, connecting with you, and someone who is there to answer questions you may have. Yes or No?

- a. If yes, how has that individual been instrumental in your spiritual growth process?
- b. If no, would a spiritual coach have helped as you began your spiritual journey?

Table 7 is a graph that illustrates how many individuals, who gave their heart to Christ *more* than 5 years ago, have a spiritual mentor or see the need for one. Also shown is the number of individuals, who gave their heart to Christ *within* the last 5 years, who have a mentor and how many of them see the need for one.

Table 7. Mentoring trends from attendees of BCB

Interviews

Three different groups of individuals were interviewed. Below is a listing of the pseudonym, age, gender, and approximately how long since they completed BCB (for those who attended BCB within the last 5 years). The interviews are summarized below to give the reader an understanding of the conversations that took place. The goal of the summaries was to use the participant's exact phraseology whenever possible so as to maintain the integrity of the interviewee's own words. As noted earlier in this chapter, transcripts are provided in the Appendices (See Appendix C) should the reader choose to examine the interviews in greater detail.

Table 8. Individuals who went through Basic Christian Beliefs in the last 5 years

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Span of time since completion of class
Terry	40's	M	2 years
Steve	30's	M	3 months
Mitch	40's	M	2 years
Karol	40's	F	1 year
Hal	30's	M	6 months

Table 9. Individuals who went through Basic Christian Beliefs more than 5 years ago

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Number of years since completion of class
Pete	50's	M	25 years
Doug	40's	M	15 years
Dane	50's	M	26 years

Table 10. Church Leaders

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Type of Ministry
Evan	50's	M	Church Planter
Rich	50's	M	Lead Pastor
Jake	30's	M	Staff Pastor

Individuals who went through BCB in the last 5 years

Terry

Terry appreciated the warm and welcoming environment for all. He indicated that BCB class was beneficial to his spiritual growth:

It reacquainted me with the principles of Christianity. It reminded me that Christianity isn't necessarily an end, it is also the means.... That we're all capable of living the life that is exemplified thru Jesus Christ. So, what it did was it brought home to me the opportunity to change my life by following the path of Christ, - and what that was, it detailed that life for me...the lessons. I think so often, just...just in reading the Bible or even studying the Bible, we miss the lesson that might be there for us. Basic Christian Beliefs grabbed that lesson and then laid it out for us all and made sure that we could see it and apply it to ourselves.

Terry affirmed that the approach he has found at BCA has been one of "open arms" and a willingness to accept a person for who they are. He continued to grow after the BCB class and

has found himself getting more out of the sermons on Sundays. In his words, he was given “tools that he can use on a daily basis.” Terry has been energized in his Christian life after BCB and has realized that he was given a pattern of life that he can follow.

Although he personally does not have a spiritual mentor in his life, Terry feels that he would have been open to it:

It would have been a tremendous effort and support for me. I am 23 years sober and my sobriety was brought about by having someone who had been there and back and could help me avoid some of the potholes. Well, in the case of my spiritual growth and my walk with Christ, if I had had a coach, or somebody who I would consider a sponsor, if you will, that would follow up and reignite sometimes, if they thought they saw the light getting dim in my excitement about Christ, that they could, if there was enough of a personal relationship and trust, that they could point that out and give me more fuel for that fire.

Steve

Steve felt that BCB provided great fellowship. He noticed that by the end of the class there were hugs, people bringing food, talking about what they did last weekend, and sharing how people in their family were doing. When gauging his ongoing spiritual maturity since finishing BCB, Steve indicated that he was still growing:

My growth has been crazy, but every other Wed. I am meeting for coffee with somebody and you know, we're talking Bible and fellowship and personal stuff so, you know, I'm growing and talking in religion and in personal. You know, so I'm growing in a friendship plus fellowship. You know? And then BCB's gone, I've still got Small Group⁹⁵ I fall back on, which kind of keeps me in the routine...but if I don't follow the steps that I was taught in BCB, as far as you know, you've got your Sunday service, your fellowship, do something outside within your church family and then also do a small group.

His biggest challenge in his spiritual growth has been relying on faith. In Steve's words, the new believer process at BCA is “understandable.” He has a spiritual mentor and has taken the important step to join a small group and stay connected to the church. These steps have been critical to him continuing down the path of spiritual maturity.

⁹⁵ Small Group is a gathering of 8-12 individuals who meet for the purpose of Fellowship and Bible Study.

Mitch

Mitch thinks differently now than he did before he took BCB class. Before he took the class he knew, intellectually, what to do in order to be a good Christian. BCB gave Mitch a road map to follow in his faith:

What BCB was able to do is set a more stable map to move forward in and break it down into steps. These things are priorities, these things are important, and this is what we need to do every day. It strengthened my knowledge of what to do and ultimately, I need to be the one that executes it, the class can't make me do it.

When describing BCA's new believer process as a whole, Mitch responded:

The strengths are that there's a definite foundation there. There's a non-threatening invitation. I think that a non-believer comes into church and they quickly realize that these guys aren't fake, these guys are genuine...and, it's almost really easy to follow Christ in this church, it's the cool thing to do here. Those are the strengths.

Mitch's biggest spiritual challenge was, as he put it, "life getting in the way" and being able to move God to the "front of the line" instead of trying to take care of what he thinks is important. Mitch shared that this has always been a challenge for him. He feels this is true for most Christians as well. Mitch feels that he does have numerous spiritual mentors who are there for him.

Karol

I interviewed Karol on Wednesday, November 17th. For Karol, getting into BCB was important so she could get more acquainted with God and the Bible. She would go on to share positive thoughts about BCB:

For me, BCB was a real eye opener being a new Christian and being away from the church for over 40 years. So, for me getting into the basic class was important to be acquainted with, well not only acquainted with God but acquainted with the Bible and the books of the Bible and where to find things. I thought it was really informative because we went thru so many different aspects of the NT, the OT, the differences between them

so it was very systematic, I felt, in going thru the study guide from what we were discussing in each group.

Karol made a point of stating that BCB class could have been extended longer due to the fact that there was so much material:

I think I have grown as a Christian. Only because I understood better what I was reading because of the class. Aside from the class, I have been able to read the Bible on my own and go “Oh, yeah, I remember that”. It becomes a bit more clear for me. I think probably, I would have liked to see the class last longer than 8 weeks. I think from all the material that was there, I think there’s probably a good 12 weeks that could have very easily been taught. I think as a... when you get into a class like that... for me and for our particular class, some of us were really first timers that were in there... so there’s a lot of questions and there’s only so much time that you can answer and still continue with the curriculum, um, so that’s why I think that it could have gone longer as well

Her biggest spiritual challenge was to make time to be with God. Her life gets busy and it is easy to, in her words, to “forget who is in control.” Karol felt that a pastor at BCA had been a spiritual coach to her. They were her first contact at BCA and brought Karol thru the learning process. Karol feels that once you have a connection at the church it is a natural progression to take another step. For her, she tends to find spiritual mentors in every class she takes. Recently, it has been personally difficult for Karol to move away and not have as much of a connection with the people of BCA.

Hal

I concluded this section of interviews with Hal. BCB was a good starting point for Hal and he communicated that the class was a positive start at the “grass roots level.” Hal remarked:

I think it’s a good starting point. A lot of times there’s a lot of misconceptions about the Christian Faith so I thought it was a good place to start. You kind of start at the grass roots level, which is a good thing. Like for example, I didn’t even know, I always thought that a church was a building, I didn’t know that a church was a body of followers so that’s one of the misconceptions that was alleviated for me. I felt that it starts you out and puts you on the right path of your spiritual journey. It was a good class to alleviate fears and questions that you have. Which is one of my favorite things about it was that... people are often afraid to ask questions and I thought that that was a good medium to do it in.

Hal's spiritual growth has slowed down since finishing BCB. His schedule has changed which has not allowed him to attend classes at BCA. According to Hal, his biggest spiritual challenge has been himself. He feels that he is a selfish person and it is a challenge to be selfless. In his own words, "he can't seem to get out of his own way long enough to get right with God."

There are spiritual mentors who have invested in Hal's life. He made a point to mention a mentor who was instrumental in him coming to church:

A guy I worked with...he's attended this church for years and his children now serve here. So Dean got my foot...got me to come and my children fell in love with the place. And then, as opposed to dealing with the tears of not going to church on Sunday, I just came to church, 'cause it was just easier that way—that's God's design there as far as I'm concerned. But then, of course, I did the BCB class and it was so open that I had all these questions that you're afraid to ask 'cause you're afraid to offend people of faith, you know, at least I was...and then finally I just said "Well, you know, if I'm going to do this, then you know, and I'm going to be honest about it and believe with all of my heart, then I need to have these questions answered."

Individuals who went through BCB more than 5 years ago

There are individuals at BCA who gave their heart to Christ more than 5 years ago and subsequently attended BCB. I was given the opportunity to sit down with them and learn what made the new convert process at BCA effective for their spiritual journey.

Pete

Pete first accepted Christ at BCA in 1985 and shared how there was a specific class he attended shortly after accepting Christ:

Yeah. It was awhile back. Hard to remember that kind of detail 'cause I'm trying to remember things in the right order. There was, because we, uh, basically, they tailored a program together based on why I was there to begin with. I was interviewed and asked why I was there and what I wanted to get out of being at this church and they put together something for me. As it turned out they had the foundation class that we use now as part of that. It was called "Discovery."

“Discovery” class has since been renamed “Basic Christian Beliefs.” When asked about the effectiveness of the class, Pete responded, “I am still here today!” “Discovery” was part of the answer for him. Pete indicated that he did have a spiritual coach and that 2 pastors at BCA had served in that capacity. When asked what they had done for him, Pete responded, “Based on a human level, I couldn’t have asked for anything better.”

Pete feels that the structure of BCA has been helpful for his ongoing spiritual maturity. BCA has a plan for its people. He feels that BCA gives people the opportunity to take on responsibilities within the church and that it is truly “their church.” In Pete’s mind, pastors are hired to lead people in getting things done, but it is “their church” and they need to serve.

Doug

Doug came to BCA as a homeless drug addict. Today, Doug operates a thriving business and has been active in discipling people thru their addictive recovery process at BCA. There was a specific class that Doug was a part of that he took the time to share about:

John taught me discovery. It just waded thru it line upon line, assuming that you know nothing, “we’re gonna start here and we’re just going to go over everything.” It’s not really an indoctrination class, it’s helping a guy to figure it out so he can own it for himself. ‘Cause you gotta own it, it’s got to be yours, you got to own it. It can’t be just something you read or something somebody told you, you have to own it. Uh, he took the time and answered every question...he didn’t care how long it took until you got an answer

When asked about the strengths of the new convert process at BCA Doug first mentioned the senior community. The seniors would teach classes and question him on where he was at in his relationship with God. Doug mentioned that multiple individuals had served as mentors to him:

Fred came along side of me and said “If you are going to be a Christian, here is what you’re going to do.” Doug also feels that a critical step in his spiritual growth journey has been serving in ministry. In his words, “unless you are doing stuff, you are just treading water.”

Dane

Dane felt that there were numerous strengths of the new convert process he was a part of.

One of those strengths was that the new convert class was a place to make friends:

We went to the Discovery class at that time in our lives. I would say a strength was – it was a - things were happening kind of a class, there was a lot of people in it. That was in the early 80's and the church had some kind of growth spurt going on at that time, so there was a lot of people in there. My wife and I made friends. Okay? So that was a strength of it. We made friends there. So that, you know, when I was investigating the whole idea of Christianity in a deeper level than just watching Billy Graham on TV or whatever. So... so there was a friendly atmosphere. So we connected with some other new people, we knew they were not veterans. So, okay, what's another strength? I think I was about 30 years old. Yep. Right, Yea? 1983? It was probably 1984, so I might have been almost 31.

According to Dane, a second strength was that the class material was presented well and questions were readily answered:

But anyway, it was all well presented and all the questions were readily answered. You know, it was the searching moment for me was the, "I really want some to know the answer to some of these questions of faith that, if you're going to make a change..." I was a real deliberate, umm, convert. I was not a suddenly "boom" change your mind, I soaked it all in for a while, so...Everybody has their own different pathway, I suppose.

Dane had a mentor that was not a part of the pastoral staff, but a "regular layman guy." In Danes words, "he was just a guy like us." Dane would also talk to the pastor, but he saw this mentor as an individual that he could reach out to and he was ready to share what he knew. When asked about what has been helpful to his ongoing spiritual maturity Dane stated that he often goes back to the fundamentals of when he was a young Christian.

Church Leaders

I interviewed 3 church leaders to gain their perspective on leading a discipleship process for new believers. They were engaging, insightful, and each provided valuable information to consider when seeking to successfully guide new Christians towards spiritual growth.

Evan

Evan serves as a church planter in a large metropolitan area in northern California. He began the church in 2008 and communicated in his interview that this is the most fun he has had in ministry. Previous to planting a church Evan served as a pastor and also directed a Doctoral Program at a prominent Seminary. In addition to these posts, Evan has been a frequent author and speaker on cultural issues.

When discussing how they disciple new Christians Evan emphasized relationship and went so far as to state that they work to disciple them *before* they believe:

The lynchpin of our approach will be to disciple them before they believe- in other words, when a person comes to our Sunday event, they will already be fairly far along in a relationship with us on 2 levels, of course one to one you know we met them someplace and also with some sort of connection to our midweek type of activities (like dinners we hold at our house, that kind of stuff, where they sort of get woven into the social fabric of what we are.) We feel they will probably show up at a Sunday event last rather than first.

The theory is that if they arrive *with* a “one on one” small group relationship then by the time they commit to Christ they are already in a network. The person who has the relationship from the congregation will become the person who walks them through the basics of faith on a one to one basis.

This model is also a stretching experience for existing Christians. Evan goes so far as to say that most Christians don’t grow because they don’t do anything “frightening.” Evan feels that nothing is more frightening than trying to walk “Bob the Biker” through his new life in Christ. This will put Christians on their face praying and then everyone starts to grow. Evan believes that once a seasoned Christian gets a taste for that, he can never be happy with just “institutional stuff” again.

Evan desires to see relationships formed before belief. Because of this, Evan prioritizes being out in the community and attempts to be a pastor to non-Christian people. Then, as an individual comes to faith in Christ, pastors and leaders have the best seat in the house to be able to walk them through what faith means. Evan stated that the fruit of their efforts has been heartening and very positive.

When asked what some of today's cultural realities are that could impact a new Christians growth, Evan made a point of saying that the level of information today is greater than ever. In a nutshell, we have access to better content than ever, but the context of our country is moving in the opposite direction:

Socially we are poorer. The culture around us does not provide us with the same props. We don't have the conservative consensus that we did 2 generations ago. The family has changed. Pluralism is real today- young evangelicals are universalists.

If Evan were to design a new believer process from inception, he felt that the first step is not to rush to generalizations about what the first step should be. The one on one approach and small group relationships is what is on his mind now. Their motto is to "follow the fun." If they are having fun, let's let them continue meeting as a group.

Rich

Rich is the Lead Pastor of a 100 year old church located in Snohomish County. Since taking the role of Lead Pastor the church has seen considerable growth in numerical attendance. When Rich became the Lead Pastor the church was averaging 500 on an average Sunday. Today, the church averages 1,500 on a Sunday. Before becoming the Lead Pastor, Rich served as the Associate Pastor and has been on staff at the church for more than 25 years.

When discussing the strengths of their new convert process Rich stated that they met for 12 weeks, "so you had about 3 months of teaching and training." In each class there were small

group leaders there to lead discussions and walk the new converts through the course. They were also available to connect on a regular basis. They also had class fellowship:

We always had a class fellowship. We would get together and I found that helpful in just building relationships and letting new Christians know that Christians can have fun, you know, we'd just have food and play games and just hang out. We did that each quarter.

Another goal was to put action steps to what they were teaching:

During the course of the class, as you teach about baptism you try to get them baptized. You'd teach about ministry, you'd try to get them into ministry

When considering what they could have done better Rich felt that the idea of having a spiritual mentor available for all would be a critical step. It is a significant task to get a mentor program for a "one on one" approach, but even if there was a "one to three" breakdown there could be some real benefits. Rich also felt that if there was a 2nd class that would supplement the initial class, that would be a "nice feel." The class could be focused primarily on studying a book of the Bible. This has been attempted in years past, but with mixed results.

In Rich's opinion there is a great environment where people are looking for truth as they struggle to connect with their own spirituality. If seekers can find some authentic Christians that they like, build friendships, and walk thru through life issues together than the church can be in a prime position to impact a community. This is where a new convert class is a tailor made approach. Because of the good relationships with classmates and teachers you have a great chance to see life change. When speaking of other cultural realities, Rich discussed an opportunity for the church:

Families are trying to get their kids and their teenagers on the straight and narrow and in some cases it kind of pushes them to make the same discoveries for themselves. So I think we're suited well to really meet that. Whether it be young families or young adults – we've got enough stuff going on.

A hindrance, in the eyes of Rich, is that we live in a day and age of relativism where people are often saying, “What makes your approach right?” Rich believes there is a lack of respect for God and the Bible that seems to permeate our culture as more people become cystic and cynical. He believes this is quite different than it was 30 years ago when people had more respect for God, the Bible, and truth. Today, you are forced to start *before* square one.

Jake

Jake is a 34 year old pastor on staff at a church in King County that has grown to average 4,000 on a given Sunday within the last 5 years. Jake serves as the Family Life and Small Group Pastor and has primary oversight for their new convert groups. Before joining this current staff, Jake traveled as a full time speaker and was a youth pastor at numerous larger churches.

Jake has never seen new Christians mobilized more quickly than at their church. They work hard to eliminate the gap between salvation and active involvement in service. Jake emphasized the immediate communication with new believers:

They are going to get a letter from the Pastor in the first 72 hours and then they’re going to get a letter from me as the Formations Pastor, within another 72 hours. Basically, offering our acknowledgment that they have joined the team, seeing if there’s any resources that they would need, they get a first 30 days reading plan from Scripture. We give them a 30 day reading plan from scriptures. We give them the dates of the next baptism. We send them information about our foundational groups, which are like Christianity 101 growth groups. So that’s the letter they get from me within a week, within 6 days.

People fall in love with the mission and are deeply committed to creating an environment to reach new Christians. You can go from a curious seeker to an involved loyalist in a matter of 2 weeks. Because of that, they have seen 60% of adults plug into a small group and 60% of their adults serve each week. Jake, when asked about cultural realities, made this observation:

Unsaved people don’t want to look like Christians. I think if we are trying to change their externals than they’ll shy away. I think one benefit is our culture is deeply connected to cause

and if you can connect purpose to tasks and purpose to communities they are more likely to become involved.

Jake believes that any program that a church does must be simple and easy. You must build people, not eliminate them. Instead of doing a 6 week course, maybe offer one 6 hour course to eliminate as many opportunities for people to not be involved. If they want to serve, let them start this week. If they want to be a member, let them join this week. Make it so the only “hoop” they have to jump thru is the decision for Christ.

Data Summary

The surveys and interviews provided a rich amount of data. In all, 12 surveys were collected and 11 interviews were conducted. The answers to the survey questions, as well as the interviews, were beneficial in learning the perspective participants have about the new convert process at BCA. Each of the individuals interviewed were willing participants eager to share their thoughts and opinions about the new believer process at BCA. As the pastor in charge of spiritual formation, it was then incumbent on me to analyze the data and look for themes and action steps that emerged. This step will be accomplished in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

In this chapter I will analyze the data and seek to bring answers to the research questions that have guided this research project. Effective qualitative data analysis entails “collecting open-ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants.”⁹⁶ By collecting the data from the surveys as well as the opinions from the interviews, this study acquired a wealth of information as it pertains to the new believer process at BCA.

Question 1: Is the current approach to discipling new Christians at BCA effective for their ongoing spiritual growth?

According to the data there are 3 specific areas BCA excels concerning a Christians ongoing spiritual growth: Small Group Involvement, Water Baptism, and Resources. Both the survey and interviews brought these specific areas of perceived strength to light. An awareness of these strengths is important so leaders at BCA can *continue* to see give the necessary attention to them.

*Areas of strength**Small Group Involvement*

As illustrated in Table 6, 9 out of the 12 surveys indicated that they are *currently* involved in a small group. BCA places a high priority on small groups, as we believe that a church must continually become both “larger and smaller” at the same time. The goal of small groups at BCA is to see fellowship, relationship, and study all take place in groups. We feel this will lead to ongoing spiritual growth.

⁹⁶ Creswell, 184.

Small Groups are viewed as the logical second step in the vision of BCA. God has brought consistent growth to BCA as there has been an increased focus on small groups. As of this writing, there are 828 individuals in small groups at BCA.⁹⁷ According to Osborne, the most powerful tool for keeping the back door shut is a commitment to small groups.⁹⁸ Stoltzfus writes that when asking a group of individuals what brought the most transformation it was not the classes or seminars, but instead relationship and pivotal life experiences.⁹⁹ This underscores the need for small groups.

Water Baptism

A second strength for BCA was how many new believers get water baptized. As also illustrated in Table 6, 11 out of the 12 surveys received indicated they had been water baptized. Crabtree believes that while “Water Baptism is not a means for salvation, it is a *serious* (emphasis added) first step. Obedience is the first step of discipleship.”¹⁰⁰ This practice of the church is a significant step for the new believer. One of the lessons in BCB class is solely devoted to Water Baptism which could be a cause for the strong response to it. Water Baptism is highly visible at BCA, as water baptisms are performed the 2nd Sunday of each month. This could be a secondary cause for the strong response of people being water baptized.

Resources

Table 5 displays BCA receiving an average score of 4.2 when asked if we had provided adequate resources for their ongoing spiritual journey. According to the data, this was one of the greatest strength of BCB class, next only to “Adequately addressing the needs of new

⁹⁷ This number does not include Children’s Ministries but entails families and teens in small groups. BCA’s database maintains a current number of total small group participants.

⁹⁸ Osborne, 21.

⁹⁹ Stoltzfus, 33.

¹⁰⁰ Crabtree, 22-28.

Christians.” Karol specifically stated that the BCA Daily Quiet Time Journal had aided her growth process. She affirmed:

And Pastor Rob’s journal is a great tool for new Christians, and for old Christians. It was a great tool and resource for me. And I still use it. And then I can go back and grow from different areas. I think the journal can be used as a resource tool in the class.

Jake also stated the importance churches providing resources for new Christians immediately upon their commitment to Christ:

They are going to get a letter from our Lead Pastor in the first 72 hours and then they’re going to get a letter from me as the Formations Pastor, within another 72 hours. Basically, offering our acknowledgment that they have joined the team, seeing if there is any resources that they would need, they get a first 30 days reading plan from Scripture. We give them a 30 day reading plan from scriptures. We give them the dates of the next baptism. We send them information about our foundational groups, which are like Christianity 101 growth groups. So that’s the letter they get from me within a week, within 6 days.

Neutral Areas

Serving in Ministry

Upon receiving completed surveys, 6 out of 12 indicated they were currently serving in ministry. While 6 out of 12 would probably not be seen as a “glaring weakness,” we would neither consider it an area of strength as only 50% of new believers are serving. BCA will want to give careful attention going forward as whether new believers are plugged into ministry.

Church leaders as well as a Christian who has been at BCA for *more* than 5 years both *specifically mentioned* the role serving plays in spiritual maturity. Jake, when emphasizing the importance of serving said:

We believe that serving is a hinge that opens up the door for worship and so the quicker we can get them on a serving team, if not already, they begin to take ownership of the church and their faith. ‘Cause they are giving back to help other people create an environment for other people to experience what they just experienced.

Doug highlighted the role that serving played in his ongoing spiritual maturity at BCA:

They call on you to do things. They call on you to teach classes, they call on you to preach at the mission, they call on you...Unless you are doing stuff, you are just treading water.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit, 5 out of 12 indicated that they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Of the 7 who said “No”, 2 indicated that they had not with one of those asking what the difference was between water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. The other 5 gave no answer to the question which could indicate an unawareness of what the baptism in the Holy Spirit is. Of those who did not answer one individual put a “?” by the answers and another asked “What is that?” while still another said that it “depends on the definition.” While BCA has a class on Bible Doctrines that is taught infrequently, a lesson on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit has not been included in BCB. BCA will need to continue to wrestle with “how much” is “too much” for a new believer to initially comprehend. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a core doctrine of BCA as well as its affiliated denomination, the Assemblies of God. BCA may need to consider a class focused on educating believers about the role of the Holy Spirit in their life.

Areas of Concern

The surveys and interviews introduced areas of weakness as it pertains to a new believers ongoing spiritual growth. These areas of concern are obvious and will need immediate action from the leadership at BCA.

Reading and Understanding the Bible

New believers leave BCB and struggle to read and comprehend the Bible. 3 out of 12, or 25%, felt that they read the Bible each day. One limitation of the data is whether the words “each day” caused for some faithful readers of the Bible to respond with “no.” Yet when further analyzing the data, this deficiency becomes *more* glaring. Table 3 pointedly illustrates that 50%

of those surveyed felt that reading or understanding the Bible was their biggest spiritual challenge. This fact also was brought to light over the course of the interviews. When asked about the biggest challenge to their ongoing spiritual journey many voiced the ability to read and understand the Bible as a primary concern. Karol shared that this is a true challenge in her spiritual growth:

“Taking time to, how do I put this in words...Taking the time to be with God. Taking the time to have my quiet time and my spiritual time. Life just gets busy and we forget who’s in control. I know, especially with everything we’ve been doing recently...it just, it goes on the back burner. It’s always in my heart but I know that I have to read the Bible in order to feel that I am doing what’s right. I need that reassurance and I need that guidance. So that’s been the biggest obstacle for me, the time. Finding the time. And that’s an excuse!”

This concern was also apparent in the results from the anonymous surveys as multiple individuals wrote that reading or comprehending the Bible was a challenge:

“Making time to study the Bible.”

“Reading the Bible and understanding the whole story, or what was happening at the time.”

“I still struggle to really understand the Bible, and because of it, I don’t always feel excited about reading it.”

Table 3 illustrates various challenges people have towards their ongoing spiritual growth. Some of the challenges written were, “Accepting certain aspects of Christianity on Faith Alone” or “Overcoming Feelings.” While there is little a church can do to predict one of the many feelings that new Christians will face, the one challenge that 50% of new Christians are struggling with is something that we can help prepare them for, which is to equip them to read the Bible.

Lack of Mentorship or Coaching

An analysis of Table 7 demonstrates that 5 out of 12, or 42%, felt they have a spiritual mentor they could go to with questions. This is a definite area of concern as the reality of this number indicates that 58% of new believers at BCA feel there is *not* an individual they could go to for support, encouragement, or an answer to a question they may have. Ogden goes so far as to say that one of the eight causes for the low estate of discipleship today is that “most Christians have never personally been discipled.”¹⁰¹ This deficiency in BCA’s new believer process will be addressed later in this chapter.

Benefit of a new believer class

Question 2: How do participants who have gone through the new believer process in the last five years at BCA view this journey?

According to table 4.1 many enjoyed the new believer process and felt it was helpful. This study shows that 5 individuals responded with a phrase similar to “the process is great”, or “enjoyed it.” Another 3 individuals responded that it was “helpful”, and 2 responded that they “felt at home.” Other words used to describe the process were “enlightening”, “fun”, and “a way to learn.” It is clear from both the survey and interviews that there is a benefit to having an initial class or gathering for a new believer at BCA. Over the course of the interviews, this was spoken of many times. Hal, when asked about BCB said:

I think it’s a good starting point. A lot of times there’s a lot of misconceptions about the Christian faith so I thought it was a good place to start. You kind of start at the grass roots level, which is a good thing. Like for example, I didn’t even know, I always thought that a church was a building, I didn’t know that a church was a body of followers so that’s one of the misconceptions that was alleviated (sic) for me.

Terry agreed that a new believer class added to his faith and was a useful step to take:

¹⁰¹ Greg Ogden, "Making Disciples Jesus' Way: A Few at a Time," *Enrichment Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter 2008), 56-66.

Just in reading the studying the Bible on our own (sic), we miss the lessons. BCB grabbed that lesson and laid it out for us all and made sure that we could see it and apply it to ourselves.

Two dominant themes emerged about the new believer process at BCA. Those themes were that the process is *informative* and is *a way to build friendships*. These themes serve as positive signs for the leaders and teachers of the new believer process and challenges us to continue being effective in these particular areas.

Informative

Regarding Table 1, the word “information” or “informational” was used 5 different times when describing BCB class. An additional 3 individuals stated that it gives a “good understanding of the main principles of Christianity.” Beyond that, 3 individuals felt that it was a “great introduction” or “great beginning” for their faith. Not only did the *survey* produce favorable feedback about BCB class, this was also spoken of during the *interviews*. Some individuals specifically addressed enthusiastic feelings about BCB class. Hal mentioned:

I felt that it starts you out and puts you on the right path of your spiritual journey. It was a good class to alleviate fears and questions that you have. Which is one of my favorite things about it was that...people are often afraid to ask questions and I thought that that was a good medium to do it in.

Mitch also specifically mentioned how BCB gave valuable information that was helpful to his spiritual journey:

It just reiterates and solidifies what we as Christians ought to know and should do.

Friendship

People that felt the BCB class was fun. The words “great”, “fun”, or “enjoyed the class” were used by 5 different respondents. In addition to those individuals, 2 people mentioned that it was a “friendly atmosphere” and a place to “meet others.” In all, 7 of the 12 surveyed individuals indicated some aspect of fun and friendship that was evident in the class. The principle of

friendship is agreed with and emphasized by Creps when he writes, “Postmoderns discover truth where there is interaction. Discipleship will need to be structured so fellowship is a central aspect of the experience.”¹⁰² Steve specifically addressed in his interview that fellowship was the “thing” that stood out the most:

I thought it was great. Fellowship, I guess, would be the thing that stood out the most in my mind

Concern over the length of the class

When analyzing the data about the new believer process at BCA a concern was the length of the class. As Table 4.2 illustrates, 34% of respondents felt the class was not lacking in any area. While this initially appears encouraging, a closer analysis of the data reveals concerns over the length of the class.

Class moved too fast

Table 4.2 illustrates that 17% of individuals thought the class moved too fast, 17% felt there was a need for additional question time, and 8% felt we need a “Next Step” class. In all, 42% of respondents felt there was a need for a greater amount of time allocated to new believer classes at BCA. Table 5 affirms that our biggest weakness was the length of the class. In Table 4.3, 42% of individuals thought a “longer class time” or a “next step class” was the way to make it more effective. This data was supported by interviews as multiple BCB attendees noted a concern about the length of the class and the need to consider elongating it or adding a “BCB 2.” Karol mentioned a “BCB 2” in her interview:

I think to have a “BCB 2”. Sometimes when we jumped into a new class, it was too much. Instead of jumping into something else, let’s take it into the extra step.

¹⁰² Creps, "Disciplemaking in a Postmodern World," 52-59.

Not enough time for questions

New believers have a lot of questions and they did not feel there was enough time to ask them. Karol noted that there was not enough time for questions in BCB class:

I think probably, I would have liked to see the class last longer than 8 weeks. I think from all the material that was there, I think there's probably a good 12 weeks that could have very easily been taught. I think as a...when you get into a class like that...for me and for our particular class, some of us were really first timers that were in there...so there's a lot of questions and there's only so much time that you can answer and still continue with the curriculum, um, so that's why I think that it could have gone longer as well.

This data supports the belief of Holz that leaders must have a plan to launch those we have disciplined into the next season of their lives. He identifies a few options like meeting a few months later or being available to answer questions in an ongoing capacity.¹⁰³ In addition, Rich also reflected on the strength that a “BCB 2” could bring to the new believer process:

I do think that...we dabbled with it...but we never did find the right rhythm to have them go onto like a Discovery 2-we developed the Get a Grip curriculum, but it was a little different variety. I think had we had just like a Bible Study in James, like you mentioned things like that...as I look back on, it would have been really stronger

Question #3: How do participants who went thru the process more than five years ago feel about the new believer process they were apart of?

The new believers from more than 5 years ago felt satisfied with the process they went thru. Their life and longevity at BCA was evidence that the process had worked in their particular case. The interviews with these individuals presented both simple and eye opening data. *Each* interviewee mentioned 2 specific items that were instrumental in their spiritual growth process. All three interviewees mentioned a *specific class* that they attended and a *specific person* who served in a coach or mentor role.

¹⁰³ Holz.

A specific class

The data indicates that BCA is succeeding in our effort to provide an initial step for a new Christian to take. Doug when asked about a specific class, shared about how instrumental it had been in his journey:

The class instructor taught me discovery. It just waded thru it line upon line, assuming that you know nothing, “we’re gonna start here and we’re just going to go over everything.” It’s not really an indoctrination class, it’s helping a guy to figure it out so he can own it for himself. ‘Cause you gotta own it, it’s got to be yours, you got to own it. It can’t be just something you read or something somebody told you, you have to own it. Uh, he took the time and answered every question... he didn’t care how long it took until you got an answer.

A specific person

When interviewing those who have been at BCA for many years, the presence of a spiritual coach in their life was apparent. *Each* individual who was interviewed was able to name a specific person at BCA who had served as a spiritual coach during their initial growth. They felt that the coach or mentor was critical to their growth, as Dane emphasized in his interview:

Okay so, the mentor was not a pastor or the staff. It was a regular laymen guy. I hate to put it that way, but he was just a guy just like us. He was a regular guy, a seasoned Christian dude. So, that fellow I don’t know if that was part of the overall structure at the time. Maybe it was an intentional thing on his part but I would occasionally talk to him about certain things... There was a mix of new people and seasoned Christians which I perceived as intentional. They had seeded the class with long time believers. They were helpful to move the process along. It was a big group.

Doug also addressed the importance of a mentor in his life when he began his interview sharing about the influence of mentors at BCA:

The strengths was the senior community. You know, they would teach the classes. But they really. Niles and others would teach the classes. Wed. night, Sunday morning, and they would really touch base with where I was at that point. What was huge was Fred was a one on one mentor. How I was doing in that moment. Fred came along side of me and said “If you are going to be a Christian, here is what you’re going to do.”

New Believers at BCA Lack Spiritual Mentors

In response to this data, a concerning reality is the lack of mentors current new believers have at BCA. As illustrated in Table 7, 100% of those interviewed saw the value of a mentor and were able to name the mentor. Contrast that with recent attendees of BCB whereas just over 40% have a mentor and just over 70% see a need for one.

Need for mentors

Terry, who does not have a mentor, took time to share how a mentor would have been useful on their spiritual journey:

It would have been a tremendous effort and support for me. I am 23 years sober and my sobriety was brought about by having someone who was there, and back and could help me avoid some of the potholes. Had I had a coach, or a sponsor, who would follow up or reignite, had they saw my light getting dim that they could point that out and give me more fuel for the fire. I think it would be an excellent addendum to that program.

Rich, a church leader, took time to share about what they asked from their spiritual coaches:

I would ask each small group leader to kind of walk with the new converts through the course of the class and afterwards they were asked to connect with them on a regular basis. Some did it weekly, some probably didn't do much of it at all. But, there was at least a familiar face and a name.

Change is something that happens within relationship. Stoltzfus writes that the “reason we run out of energy, is that we were not created to overcome these obstacles all by ourselves. Change is a team sport.”¹⁰⁴ The prevailing lesson is that a process of providing a mentor to a new Christian must be established. While this can be accomplished in various ways, be it small groups, a mentor program, or thru informal relationships, there must be an identifiable individual who the new believer has access to. Trotman passionately believed that new believer follow up was done by *someone* not *something*:

Is the answer merely materials to distribute to those who come to Christ? No, it is obvious from the experience of successful follow up programs, both in the New Testament and out of it, that follow up is done by SOMEONE, not SOMETHING. Paul

¹⁰⁴ Stoltzfus, 257.

wrote to the Romans, “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gifts, to the end ye may be established.”¹⁰⁵

Recent New Believers at BCA who have a mentor find it invaluable

Another support for a mentor or coach is the impact they have had on recent new Christians at BCA who indicated they *did* have a mentor. During his interview, Hal shared about the value he finds in his mentor:

I think Dick would be the first one. A guy I worked with...he’s attended this church for years and his children now serve here. So Dick got my foot...got me to come and my children fell in love with the place. And then, as opposed to dealing with the tears of not going to church on Sunday, I just came to church, ‘cause it was just easier that way—that’s God’s design there as far as I’m concerned.

Steve meets with a mentor every other Wednesday and highlights the significance of that relationship:

My growth has been crazy, but every other Wed. I am meeting for coffee with somebody and you know, we’re talking Bible and fellowship and personal stuff so, you know, I’m growing and talking in religion and in personal. You know, so I’m growing in a friendship plus fellowship.

Question #4: What systems and practices are other select churches employing and what can BCA learn from them?

When interviewing other church leaders I was given the opportunity to interview leaders serving at churches with 3 different approaches to ministry. In analyzing the data, 2 themes emerged for BCA to consider as we move forward. Those themes are the importance of relationships and the importance of serving.

Importance of relationships

Other church leaders focus on relationships and see those relationships as a key driver for spiritual growth. While each philosophical approach to developing relationships might be unique and diverse, the underlying value of relationships was present. This theme came thru when each

¹⁰⁵ Foster, *The Navigator*, 123.

of the leaders shared about their approach to new believers. Evan highlighted the importance of having a relationship before they attend a Sunday event:

The lynchpin of our approach will be to disciple them before they believe- in other words, when a person comes to our Sunday event, they will already be fairly far along in a relationship with us on 2 levels, of course.

Rich believes that relationships must be woven into every aspect of a new convert class and that this priority begins with him:

I think just cultivating a relationship any way we could. Myself with the student, the small group people with the student.

This theme was supported by a new believer who committed their heart to Christ *more* than 5 years ago at BCA. Dane specifically indicated that the friendships and relationships were strengths of the process he was a part of:

My wife and I made friends. That was a strength. I was investigating Christianity on a deeper level instead of just watching it on TV. So we connected with some other new people, we knew they were not veterans.

Stoltzfus supports this need for an inter-dependent faith when he articulates:

I believe the biggest reason Christians in general experience so little transformation in their lives is that they ignore the Bible's relational mandate for how to affect change. We were never meant to live the Christian life alone. Christianity is an interdependent, community-oriented faith. And yet, when we set out to improve our prayer life, or deal with our anger problem, or increase our income, or become a better father; most of the time we work on it completely alone.¹⁰⁶

Importance of serving

An emergent finding of this study is that serving is critical. Church Leaders feel that the quicker you can get new Christians serving the better off they are in their ongoing spiritual journey. Jake emphasized this principle when he said:

We believe that serving is a hinge that opens up the door for worship and so the quicker we can get them on a serving team, if not already, they begin to take ownership of the

¹⁰⁶ Stoltzfus, 29.

church and their faith. ‘Cause they are giving back to help other people create an environment for other people to experience what they just experienced.

Rich also believes that church leaders must provide action steps such as serving over the duration of the class:

During the course of the class, as you teach about baptism you try to get them baptized. You’d teach about ministry, you’d try to get them into ministry.

Table 6 illustrates that 50% of respondents currently serve in ministry. This indicates a need for BCA to give attention to the process for each new Christian to serve. This point was supported when Doug indicated that serving was critical in his spiritual growth process:

They call on you to do things. They call on you to teach classes, they call on you to preach at the mission, they call on you...Unless you are doing stuff, you are just treading water.

Question # 5: *What changes, if any, does BCA need to make in its care for new converts?*

After examining the survey results, interviews, and the emergent themes, four key changes arose from the findings of this study. These changes serve as a recommended strategy for BCA going forward. These recommendations may also benefit other churches in western Washington ministering in a similar cultural context. Each of these changes will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. After a careful analysis of the data, the recommended changes for BCA are:

1. New Believer Discipleship must become a “church wide movement.”
2. Repurpose Basic Christian Belief’s class and make the necessary adjustments for greater effectiveness and ongoing spiritual growth.
3. Launch a follow up class to BCB focusing on reading and understanding the Bible.
4. Provide each new Christian the opportunity to have a Spiritual Coach or mentor.

Chapter 6

Implications & Conclusion*Church Wide Movement*

When considering the data, it is clear that a “church wide movement” of discipleship must be created at BCA. Leadership must first understand the mandate to follow up on new believers and this conviction must then be passed onto the church body. Creps also emphasizes that discipling new Christians cannot be something that one individual or even one department of a church does. He writes that “Making disciples (rather than running programs) will have to be what the church does, the core reason for its existence. Only a commitment of this magnitude will see the congregation through the steep learning curve and inevitable failures that will be negotiated along the way.”¹⁰⁷

This implies that there is a clear process for new Christians that the entire church is aware of, can communicate, and actively participates in. The goal for BCA will be to see new believer follow up begin in the student ministry and continue on thru the adult ministry. The Youth Pastor at BCA has caught the vision to teach new Christians and will be offering BCB as an elective for teens.

BCA will accomplish this by concentrated teachings to staff, deacons, and the various departments of BCA. BCA must also communicate, via sermons and other teachings, that each attendee of BCA *is* “the Church” and appointed by God to be discipling new believers. In the same way, other churches may wish to examine how they are facilitating the growth of discipleship and consider providing teachings to those who are called to make this happen.

¹⁰⁷ Creps, "Disciplemaking in a Postmodern World,".

Repurpose Basic Christian Beliefs Class

Second, BCA will need to repurpose Basic Christians Beliefs class and make the needed adjustments to increase effectiveness and long-term spiritual growth. BCB is the 1st step in BCA's new believer process and an important gathering point for new Christians. Yet, when considering the interviews and surveys, it is clear there are shifts that need to be made to the class.

Increase Class Length

The first adjustment needed is to increase the class length from 8 weeks to 10 weeks. It is apparent that those who attend BCB enjoy the class, but would like more time for dialogue and asking questions. Recently, when sharing that BCB was nearly done, an attendee said "Can we keep going?" This is representative of an overall positive feeling about BCB. The added length will give 2 additional weeks to create deeper relationships and give careful attention to long-term spiritual growth. As part of the added length, BCA may also look to leverage current technology to engage BCB students throughout the week. This may be to create a BCB blog where those who are new to faith can post questions, prayer requests, add to a discussion board, or even share about their new faith journey.

Clearly Identify Next Steps

A second adjustment to BCB will be to spend an entire class session on "Next Steps." Currently, little time is given to communicating next steps after the conclusion of BCB. Careful attention will need to be given to this so as to retain the spiritual momentum these new believers have. Some of those important next steps are to get baptized, join a small group, seek a spiritual coach, and plug into an ongoing ministry team. BCA has a Spiritual Growth plan (see Appendix D) which communicates a path towards spiritual maturity.

Add Basic Christian Beliefs 2

It is clear from the data that BCA needs to offer a secondary class to BCB. New Believers come out of Basic Christian Beliefs and are excited about their newfound growth. Yet the data teaches that most of these new Christians are not ready to grow independent from leadership. A 5 week class which focuses on how to study the Bible will be a great tool for their journey. This class will give the opportunity for leaders to walk new Christians thru a book of the Bible that focuses on life application and also challenges new believers to live with a biblical worldview.

This class will also equip students with tools for how to study the Bible and challenge them to study on their own. By making “BCB 2” a 5 week class, timing will still allow BCA to offer the initial class of BCB as well as the sequel “BCB 2” three times a year. This is critical for keeping class sizes small enough where questions and interaction are encouraged. Being that I presently serve as the “Grow” pastor, I feel it is most ideal to get another co-leader for BCB 2 so that our current teacher does not become overwhelmed. This would be a good opportunity for an individual to serve who has a heart for New Christians.

Spiritual Coaching

A final implication from the data is to provide a spiritual coach to brand new Christians. BCA needs to recruit and train those Christians who would be willing to serve as a Spiritual Coach. The coach would be connected with a new Christian and walk with this individual down the path of spiritual maturity, committing to a 1 year process. Coaching would entail praying for them, connecting with them face to face, supporting them thru the ups and downs of the Christian life, and answering questions they are sure to have. This becomes a critical addendum to BCA’s new believer process and is the step that seems lacking today.

As part of being a Spiritual Coach, BCA will ask these coaches to come to a few weeks of BCB class for the purpose of building relationships. This will allow the coaching relationship to evolve organically rather than institutionalizing the process by assigning each person a coach they may or may not connect with. If there is a foundation of relationship that is developed in BCB class, there is a greater chance of the coach and the mentee succeeding over the year long process.

These implications signify a great deal of work. They will necessitate recruiting, planning, and training. Yet each of these implications is significant when it comes to BCA fulfilling its mandate to equip new Christians to serve God. Inaction is unacceptable. The work is worth it.

Summary

This study has examined the new believer process at BCA. Using the process of gathering data from anonymous surveys, face to face interviews with both BCA congregants and also expert church leaders, and data analysis the reader is able to acquire valuable information as it pertains to BCA's effectiveness at discipling brand new Christians. Both the Bible and other literature stress a church's role guiding a new believer down the path of spiritual maturity.

The data revealed that BCA is excelling in the area of providing an initial class for a new Christian to attend. This class is highly regarded and is a successful step for recent converts. While there were a variety of strengths about BCB, this study also demonstrates that BCA needs to make adjustments to the class. BCA must consider adding length to the class and adding a follow up class to BCB because study participants indicated that the class went too fast and lacked sufficient time for questions. In addition, this research demonstrates that a majority of new Christians at BCA do not have a spiritual coach or mentor they could go to for prayer,

questions, or encouragement on their journey. This is concerning when you consider the impact spiritual mentors have had on new believers in past years.

It is likely that this study will have an influence on how BCA structures its new believer process. In addition, this research may be useful to churches in the Pacific Northwest who are looking to disciple those who have recently made a decision for Christ. These findings may also be beneficial to churches in general in formulating a process to guide new believers down the path of spiritual maturity. Nothing could be more important to developing and strengthening the body of Christ.

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Appendix A: E-mail to Recent BCB Attendees

Hey guys!!

How are you today!? I wanted to take a brief moment and give you a heads up about a survey you will be receiving in the mail in the next week or two. I figured I would e-mail you so you are not caught off guard. I am nearing the end of my Masters Program (Yes!) and as part of my final project I have to write a Thesis on a certain subject that pertains to my local ministry context. I have chosen to write my thesis on something that I am greatly passionate about: Discipling New Christians. For my Thesis I am going to explore what adjustments we need to make to our New Convert Discipleship System. As one of the ways to gather research I am sending out a survey to those who have attended Basic Christian Beliefs within the last 5 years. This will provide *valuable feedback* as we examine our current process and will be a huge favor to me personally! The survey will be completely anonymous and will be both sent out and received back by my Administrative Assistant Darlene Thompson. She will *only* give me the completed surveys. I will only know what answers you put for the different questions if you agree to be interviewed. Also, there will be something called an "Informed Consent Form" sent with the survey. It will seem a little goofy (in our context!), but if you could just sign that form and return it with the survey that would be great. It basically says that I have not coerced you into participating! I don't think that it really applies in our context but is something that is required as part of this process. All that to say, if you can take just 15 minutes to fill out this survey and return it within a day or two of getting it, it would be a TREMENDOUS blessing to me!! Again, I am hoping to have the survey to you in a week or two!

Thanks guys!

Jeff

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Examining Bethany Christian Assembly's Effectiveness at Equipping New Christians to Live for God in the Culture They Live In.

I am conducting a research study for my thesis in order to complete my Masters Degree at Northwest University. For this research I am examining BCA's effectiveness at discipling brand new Christians. If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to either fill out an anonymous survey or answer questions during an interview with me.

This study involves answering a series of questions that calls for the honest and forthright answers of the participants. Your written responses will remain anonymous. You will not be asked to write your name on the survey. If you participate in an interview, your answers will be recorded and may be used in my study, although your real name will not be used. If you participate in this study, you will greatly aid this research that aims to encourage new Christians towards spiritual maturity. Taking part in this study is up to you, and you will not be penalized in any way if you choose not to participate. If you agree to participate and then decide otherwise, you may withdraw at anytime without any adverse effects. The recorded interviews and completed surveys will be permanently discarded after the research process has been completed.

This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at Northwest University.

If you have any questions or comments, you may contact me at 425.339.3303, ext. 108. You may also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Dr. Kevin Leach, at Northwest University at 425-889-5248 or Kevin.leach@northwestu.edu.

Thanks!

Jeff Duchemin
MA in Missional Leadership Student
Northwest University
Jeff.duchemin08@northwestu.edu

I have been made aware of my responsibilities as a participant. Furthermore, I am at least 18 years of age and legally able to enter into this agreement. I have also been made aware that I can withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty.

Print Name

Date

Signature

Appendix C: Interviews of Recent Attendees of BCB

Interview Questions for those who attended Basic Christian Beliefs within the last 5 years *Hal*

1.) What did you think about the class Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB)?

I think it's a good starting point. A lot of times there's a lot of misconceptions about the Christian Faith so I thought it was a good place to start. You kind of start at the grass roots level, which is a good thing. Like for example, I didn't even know, I always thought that a church was a building, I didn't know that a church was a body of followers so that's one of the misconceptions that was alleviated for me. I felt that it starts you out and puts you on the right path of your spiritual journey. It was a good class to alleviate fears and questions that you have. Which is one of my favorite things about it was that... people are often afraid to ask questions and I thought that that was a good medium to do it in.

2.) How would you gauge your ongoing spiritual maturity since finishing BCB?

Umm, well for me that's...ahh...my schedule change has not allowed me to do...to be and do the things I want to do. Attending the BCB did a number of things for me, but one of it – it proved that I could make the time in my life to come and worship God and to learn more about God and His Word. Now I'm working nights and that options not for me so I would say that my spiritual growth has slowed down. But that's just an excuse at the end of the day. I mean it really is... It really is. I like being around people that have been in the faith a long time because they're just like a pitcher of knowledge – they just pour it all out to you. What's really awesome about this church is anytime I ask a question, I always get an answer, though maybe a day or two later, maybe a week later. That's really a great thing about the people that are involved in this church.

3.) What has been the biggest challenge(s) in your ongoing spiritual growth?

Myself. Umm, I was such a selfish person before and it's such a challenge to be selfless. So, 'cause in our society today it is so easy to be selfish, everybody...it's just kind of accepted. So my biggest challenge has just been me, I can't seem to get out of my own way long enough to get right with God. Whereas, I feel... I have listened to this song that says that "Who am I, but the person... that I would stand on the beach that you've made". And also there's a line in there that I really identify with, how does it go...? Basically I need to shut up long enough to listen for God's answer. I'm such a talkative person that I just tell God how it is and then he just sits up there and laughs at me...

4.) If you have had a spiritual mentor, how were they helpful in your spiritual growth process?

I think there's 2 people..I think Deek would be the first one. A guy I worked with...he's attended this church for years and his children now serve here. So Daryl got my foot...got me to come and my children fell in love with the place. And then, as opposed to dealing with the tears of not going to church on Sunday, I just came to church, 'cause it was just easier that way—that's God's design there as far as I'm concerned. But then, of course, I did the BCB class and it was so open that I had all these questions that you're afraid to ask 'cause you're afraid to offend people of faith, you know, at least I was...and then finally I just said "Well, you know, if I'm going to do this, then you know, and I'm going to be honest about it and believe with all of my heart, then I need to have these questions answered." The second one would be you. Outside of

your sermons you have taken time out of your busy schedule to meet with me and encourage myself and go over Scriptures with me and just kind of fellowship... which is good. It's a good thing 'cause it's hard because there are so many people that I'm surrounded with in my life that aren't followers of Christ, or, aren't followers of anybody – just flat don't believe in a higher power or whatever, so... The part that helped me grow is the encouragement coming from you and Daryl, where he reinforces it a little bit. I'm really hoping to get onto days so I can get back to Bible Study during the week, Wednesdays, and then meet with Daryl on Mondays.

5.) How would you describe BCA's new believer process as a whole?

What I liked about this church, is every church I had ever been to, they... when you're a newcomer... and this is just of my opinion but, one thing that I hated was you're a newcomer and then the pastor would have you stand up and everybody would clap and it kind of put you on the spot and you're a little embarrassed 'cause you have this feeling of everybody in the church is like, "look at that sinner, now you want salvation..." You know what I mean? So, I was actually literally able to come here for like 9 months and never have to do anything other than just listen to the Word of God... whether I believed it, whether I was a believer or not. I like to think that I am a fast learner, but I'm really starting to think that maybe I'm kind of a slow learner. So, I like that this church was so big that I could slide in and out unnoticed... Which I know, you guys don't want to hear that... you don't... You've got the 5 minute guest party – I'm not trying to hear that stuff: I want to come in, I want to hear the Word and I wanted to leave. That's how I was. The 5 minute guest party thing was of no interest to me, because I didn't know... I've had incidences where... I grew up with my grandma being of Christian faith and I never really walked that line so I think I held a lot of embarrassment or I don't know what that... I never really thought about that dynamic. You know, you always think, you've got those Christmas Christians or Easter Christians and then those people that are here every day and contribute their time, and volunteer, and give selflessly... you know you feel like those people are going to look down their nose at you, so I wasn't trying to hear no 5 minute guest party. I really wasn't. Because you know, you feel like you're satin and judgement's passed on you. But then when you sit in the actual class, that's one thing that you learn, "Judge not for thou shall be judged." So, I think that you guys do just about all that can really be done to get new believers in here. The church is big enough to where, if you don't want to be noticed you don't have to be noticed. I don't know if you guys are trying to... I mean, I don't know what else you guys could do. If people want to continue their journey here, they most certainly can. They have every... I shouldn't say every... they have multiple, multiple, multiple ways of continuing their path. And that's what I think.

Interview Questions for those who attended Basic Christian Beliefs within the last 5 years
Karol

1.) What did you think about the class Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB)?

For me, BCB was a real eye opener being a new Christian and being away from the church for over 40 years. So, for me getting into the basic class was important to be acquainted with, well not only acquainted with God but acquainted with the Bible and the books of the Bible and where to find things. I thought it was really informative because we went thru so many different aspects of the NT, the OT, the differences between them so it was very systematic, I felt, in going thru the study guide from what we were discussing in each group.

2.) How would you gauge your ongoing spiritual maturity since finishing BCB?

I think I have grown as a Christian. Only because I understood better what I was reading because of the class. Aside from the class, I have been able to read the Bible on my own and go “Oh, yeah, I remember that”. It becomes a bit more clear for me. I think probably, I would have liked to see the class last longer than 8 weeks. I think from all the material that was there, I think there’s probably a good 12 weeks that could have very easily been taught. I think as a... when you get into a class like that... for me and for our particular class, some of us were really first timers that were in there... so there’s a lot of questions and there’s only so much time that you can answer and still continue with the curriculum, um, so that’s why I think that it could have gone longer as well.

3.) What has been the biggest challenge(s) in your ongoing spiritual growth?

Taking time to, how do I put this in words... Taking the time to be with God. Taking the time to have my quiet time and my spiritual time. Life just gets busy and we forget who’s in control. I know, especially with everything we’ve been doing recently... it just, it goes on the back burner. It’s always in my heart but I know that I have to read the Bible in order to feel that I am doing what’s right. I need that reassurance and I need that guidance. So that’s been the biggest obstacle for me, the time. Finding the time. And that’s an excuse!

4.) If you have had a spiritual mentor, how were they helpful in your spiritual growth process?

During my time at BCA I definitely had more than one spiritual coach. You would be my number one guy, my number one pastor because you were my first contact really and you brought me thru my learning. You baptized me. That was really important for me. But with the connection with the church, I think that when you make that connection, and going through BCB, you just want to go to... it’s a natural progression to go to another step, and to another class. And so you find... for me, I found spiritual mentors in every class that I took... that opened my eyes and brought me closer to God and helped me understand the Bible better in all of the different aspects that I had. Rollin was one. Dave was another. Randy also through the same class, but then also after seeing him after we were already done. You touch base with so many different people in the connection with the church. You are mentored by so many different people, not only those that are a staff member but those that are members of the church as well. I think the key is connecting to the church.

5.) How would you describe BCA’s new believer process as a whole?

It's been a journey. It's emotional (begins to cry) to realize that God loves you no matter where you've come in your life and where you've come from as long as you've been open and honest and you have devoted your life now, your new life as a new Christian to God there are so many things that are possible, no doors are closed. It's been amazing. It has truly been amazing. It's been very difficult in my life to have moved away, that I don't have the connection not so much with the church, with the people of BCA. I think to have a "BCB 2". Sometimes when we jumped into a new class, it was too much. Instead of jumping into something else, let's take it into the extra step. And Rob's journal is a great tool for new Christians, and for old Christians. It was a great tool and resource for me. And I still use it. And then I can go back and grow from different areas. I think the journal can be used as a resource tool in the class.

Interview Questions for those who attended Basic Christian Beliefs within the last 5 years
Mitch

1.) What did you think about the class Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB)?

I think now differently than I thought before I took the class. Initially, I thought that the class was for only new believers or non-believers. What I quickly realized is, any Christian... I would actually go as far as to say that the more you are in the Word now, the more valuable that class is because it just reiterates and solidifies what we as Christians ought to know and should do.

2.) How would you gauge your ongoing spiritual maturity since finishing BCB?

Before I took the class... Initially, I intellectually knew what to do to be a good Christian: Get in the Word, pray, talk to others... but, what BCB was able to do is it kind of set a more stable map to move forward in... it kind of broke it down into steps: These things are priorities, these things are important, and this is what we need to do every day. It strengthened my knowledge of what to do and ultimately, I need to be the one that executes it, the class can't make me do it. If that makes sense? I would say it's gone up (walk with God), I wish I could say it's every day, but it's not. But what it did is, all these Scriptures that I learned as a child and as a young adult, have come back and I'm thinking about them a lot more now than I used to and it has helped me to get kind of back on the right path for my daily living.

3.) What has been the biggest challenge(s) in your ongoing spiritual growth?

Biggest challenge... I would say just daily life getting in the way. Being able to move God to the front of the line instead of trying to take care of what I think is important and then when I get to God I will get to Him. That's always been a challenge for me as I believe it is for most Christians. So I guess, in a nutshell, discipline might be a good word. How to discipline myself into doing what I need to be doing versus what I want to be doing.

4.) If you have had a spiritual mentor, how were they helpful in your spiritual growth process?

I would say it's there for the taking. I have three that come to mind. One's a friend, one's my father, and one's a small group leader. Umm, I probably should utilize them more but I've utilized all three very recently. Someone who is very knowledgeable that can help me find the right Scripture for the situation. So I guess, the bottom line is, yes, I do have a mentor. One (mentor) is (from) BCA.

5.) How would you describe BCA's new believer process as a whole?

The strengths are that there's a definite foundation there. There's a non-threatening invitation. I think that a non-believer comes into church and they quickly realize that these guys aren't fake, these guys are genuine... and, it's almost really easy to follow Christ in this church, it's the cool thing to do here. Those are the strengths. I do think there, and I don't know if I would classify this as a weakness, and I certainly don't want to be critical... There is one thing that I wish was more adamant. At the end of every service, Pastor Rob invites those who do not know Christ to say a prayer, I think that if there was a dedicated time of 5 minutes or 10 minutes in the service (and I've seen this through my life) where there's music in the background and Rob has somewhat of an altar call if you will, that that would set the tone better for somebody that's kind of on the fence or on the bubble to come forward. And, you know what, there are reasons that that's not being done, Jeff. I don't know what they are, but I'm sure that it's not an oversight.

That's must my take. Another strength would be immediately upon entering to come in the church, there's always someone there, especially if they know that they're coming, you or Randy or whoever, to make that person immediately feel at ease. That's important.

Interview Questions for those who attended Basic Christian Beliefs within the last 5 years
Steve

1.) What did you think about the class Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB)?

I thought it was great comradery. Fellowship, I guess, would be the thing that stood out the most in my mind just because we went in there and in the first day there was me and maybe two other people talking in the whole class. Nobody wanted to read verses or anything like that. When you first started handing them out, it was like “Okay, who wants this one?” and the first three people were grabbing and other than that it was okay back around to those first three again. By the end of the class, everybody’s reading. When something comes up everybody’s speaking their mind about something that relates to them, you know, something...they’re answering questions when in the beginning a handful of people were answering questions. When I first walked in the class nobody knew each other, and most people weren’t even introducing themselves to other people – they were just quiet people. I was probably the only one going around to everybody in the class saying “Hey, I’m Shane, it’s nice to meet you.” By the end of the class there’s hugs, people are bringing food, people are talking about what they did last weekend, how this person is doing in their family... People know a lot about the person. They feel comfortable coming in. “Oh hey, I haven’t seen you since Sunday... It’s been three days but hey, lets hug and catch up.” That was the thing that stood out the most in me. It made people grow together no matter what they were growing in. But on top of it, you could see where the Bible and the Lord had effected each persons life over that period. I mean you really could see where people dug into it more. Cindy, more so than anybody. I don’t know if I can say names. Cindy more so than anybody. You could see the growth in her in that class. I believe if I was looking from outside the box you’d be able to see it in me also. But there was numerous other people where you could kind of see they went from not really knowing and, “Oh yes, I believe in God” but not really knowing what they believe in to just being a sponge, can’t get enough—I read the Bible all the time and really wanting to dig in and express their feelings on a thought and dig into the answer.

2.) How would you gauge your ongoing spiritual maturity since finishing BCB?

I think there will be. I can’t gauge what mine... If I could imagine, I don’t think you would be as strong as a growth, as fast as a growth, or as deep of a growth because, unless you get in a small group unless you do the steps that you’re supposed to... What is it? Know, grow, serve, share? Well, unless you continue on those on your own. Through BCB, you’re coming in, not only are you learning, you’re learning your steps there, you’re getting fellowship. You see Cindy and Jody sitting there on Sundays, not even a BCB day, they’re reading a Bible together, talking about stuff. You know, things like that. They’ve got their little system going. Well, if a month, two months goes by and there’s not that Wednesday where we get together, pretty soon their not doing it on Sunday, maybe ...if they’re not in a small group, that pretty much cuts a whole day out losing the BCB, plus Sundays they might not be as you know, outgoing, they’re not in that routine. You almost need that routine. You need the consistency, in my opinion. I don’t know, I can’t say. I ...My growth has been crazy, but every other Wed. I am meeting for coffee with somebody and you know, we’re talking Bible and fellowship and personal stuff so, you know, I’m growing and talking in religion and in personal. You know, so I’m growing in a friendship plus fellowship. You know? And then BCB’s gone, I’ve still got SG I fall back on, which kind of keeps me in the routine...but if I don’t follow the steps that I was taught in BCB, as far as you know, you’ve got your Sunday service, your fellowship, do something outside within your church family and then also do a small group.

3.) What has been the biggest challenge(s) in your ongoing spiritual growth?

Umm... Just flat relying on faith. Just saying “hmmmmflllp”, There’s ...type that, I want to see you type that...just believing in faith. Just not... Understanding that you don’t always have to understand. You don’t always have to know. There’s just a point where, you know what, things have worked out so far and there’s no answers to why and there’s probably not going to be answers to everything as time goes on, but it happens and that’s just enough to believe in. It happens for a reason.

4.) If you have had a spiritual mentor, how were they helpful in your spiritual growth process?

Oh Shit. Ahh, man? There’s so many ways to answer that question. Ahh, let me think because God... Jeff. I would consider you and Bryan as my mentors, and Rob, you know, I don’t know a way that it hasn’t – I know that doesn’t explain anything...but I don’t know of a way that it hasn’t changed my life, to be honest with you – I mean in every aspect of my life..mental, I guess I can’t say that it’s helped me physically, but...mentally, emotionally, financially, really I don’t... obviously spiritually, and that goes unsaid. I know that’s a bland answer but I really don’t know a way that it hasn’t effected my life for the better – I mean, not just effected my life, but effected my life for the better in every aspect of it. I do my best at doing what is said and shown to me by the people I would consider mentors: You, Rich, and Brevan.. I just, I... The models I see have almost been laid out perfect, so if I can just try to live for God in every way of my life as you guys do, then I don’t...that’s bland I know...

5.) How would you describe BCA’s new believer process as a whole?

Understandable would be probably my, if I could put it in one word that would be it because going into it, I was thinking, you know, for one “how do I learn this?”, two, “how do I take it to where it can make me believe?”, and three, most of all, how am I going to take this Bible which I have zero understanding of, how and what can make it understandable for me? Through that class, obviously it had something to do with the way the questions were laid out, you know, the organization of the class prior to, the pre-planning of the class obviously laid it out in laymen’s terms, but the way we dug into everything, the way stuff was explained, your book might have said “this is the answer” to that question, which there’s many answers...but, boom, boom, boom... you know, 4 different answers, different spectrums, different ideas, different understandings of that question came out from different people... They all came to the same conclusion, of course, just said and meant in different ways. Maybe that question, that verse, that answer hit cindy or jody differently than it did me...but there was always a couple different ideas which would make you go “wow,” you know, that affected me in that way also when I never would have thought. You know, it just made me go, “woe...” Understanding. I guess understanding is an easy way to put it in one word.

Interview Questions for those who attended Basic Christian Beliefs within the last 5 years
Terry

1.) What did you think about the class Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB)?

It reacquainted me with the principles of Christianity. It reminded me that Christianity isn't necessarily an end, it is also the means... That we're all capable of living the life that is exemplified thru Jesus Christ. So, what it did was it brought home to me the opportunity to change my life by following the path of Christ, - and what that was, it detailed that life for me... the lessons. I think so often, just... just in reading the Bible or even studying the Bible, we miss the lesson that might be there for us. Umm, the Basic Christian Beliefs grabbed that lesson and then laid it out for us all and made sure that we could see it, umm, and apply it to ourselves.

2.) How would you gauge your ongoing spiritual maturity since finishing BCB?

I would say that after, after the class, after finishing the class, I found myself growing and getting more out of the sermons that I was seeing and hearing on Sundays. It allowed me to see the lesson that is being presented by Pastor Rob or yourself. Umm... to apply it, because I was given tools in BCB, I was given tools that, uh, that I could use on a daily basis and obviously in church on Sundays, umm, a real application there, real practical application of Christianity. And I guess that's the thing that developed for me was a practical application of Christian beliefs. And that means being willing to 1.) Be a Christian, not afraid that I was judging people or that people would think I'm judging them because they see it in me, not necessarily from what I say but how I say things, how I live. Umm, so I guess the maturity that I gained out of that was the desire to live the Christian life.

Was there any drop off after BCB?

No, in fact it was just the opposite... I felt more energized about my commitment to Christ... it got me excited about the journey. Again, it's not the means... it's not the, it's not the destination in a Christian life, it's the journey and how we live it. The destination is there... so it gave me more than just my Savior, it gave me a pattern for life and it actually got me more excited about coming to the church. My dropoff was only experienced after severe illness, umm... I don't know if it relates to your question. You know I got very sick in March. I couldn't get out of bed, I was bedridden for 3 weeks. Then recovery after that 3 weeks was very slow, very painful... I've never been sick like that in my life. So the drop off I did experience was years after our BCB class.

3.) What has been the biggest challenge(s) in your ongoing spiritual growth?

I guess my biggest challenge has been to get to my right size. What I mean by that is to recognize and let go of the wheel of this bus we call life and let my God drive it. That's been a challenge, - I'm a control freak and it's hard for me not to try and take the wheel back from my Lord. So, that's been my biggest challenge.

4.) If you have had a spiritual mentor, how were they helpful in your spiritual growth process?

It would have been a tremendous effort and support for me. I am 23 years sober and my sobriety was brought about by having someone who had been there and back and could help me avoid some of the potholes. Well, in the case of my spiritual growth and my walk with Christ, if I had had a coach, or somebody who I would consider a sponsor, if you will, that would follow up and

reignite sometimes, if they thought they saw the light getting dim in my excitement about Christ, that they could, if there was enough of a personal relationship and trust, that they could point that out and give me more fuel for that fire. I think it would be an excellent addendum to that program if there were to be someone who could take 2 or 3 people coming out of it and be there spiritual coach...it might even grow into a small group, but not necessarily. If there was one person who would be available to 2 or 3 people in the class, that individual would be a real anchor for those of us that are, if you would say, new or renewing our path and our walk in life. I think the benefit would be ongoing for years and years. A new friendship would develop out of it, someone who would support or be a sounding board about questions we might have about our own personal conflicts as they relate to Christianity. I think if that were to be available or to be instituted, there would be a tremendous growth out of that because those people being coached if you will, or being sponsored if you will, would learn how to share their own experience and their own changes with someone else in that position, you know, that's coming into this walk.

Would you have been open to a spiritual coach who came the last few weeks of BCB?

Absolutely.

What would be some of the things you could see a Coach doing?

I would say bringing these potential coaches in for the last 4 weeks, and let's say you have 12 students in the class, and you bring in 4 or 5 individuals that would be willing to be a coach. And out of those 4 weeks there's going to be an attraction, there's going to be...you know, the coach is going to make themselves available to everybody, but certain personalities are going to respond to different personalities. Those coaches, when those relationships begin to gel during the 4 week period, I guess your question again is "What would they do or how would they...?" Some of the things that they might do would be very low key and very unobtrusive: A phone call mid-week "How are you doing?" You know, "How's your week going? Have you got any conflicts?" You know, checking in... If a person doesn't sound like they're quite where they should be based on the experience that coach has had with them, you might be able to get them to talk about a conflict that they're dealing with...help them, not necessarily resolve it, but help them find the resolution in their hearts. Maybe offer to get together for a cup of coffee, let that person talk through their problem or their conflict. Maybe share the joy of a new discovery and then that coach then can share that with someone else...maybe it's a brand new way of looking at something. So, I would see the coach being someone who would make themselves available for support, for guidance, for..heck, let's go grab a cup of coffee..and I discovered this new book...you know, "The Life You've Always Wanted" let me share some of it...if you want a copy, you know, I'll tell you where to get it. That sort of thing that keeps a person, at least a person like myself, whose mind is almost always looking for something to fill it...umm...you know, give me more and more to feed that fire of dedication and commitment to Christ.

5.) How would you describe BCA's new believer process as a whole?

I would, without, you know, sounding like I am trying to pander to you. I find it a warm welcoming feeling out of that. The whole approach that I have found at BCA has been one of open arms. Of a willingness to just accept a person for who they are, what they are, and where they might want to be. And I have never seen a judgmental thought from the staff, from the ministry, even when some of the difficult subjects have been sermonized – the individuals that might be able to relate to a particular, let's say, negative behavior, wouldn't feel judged – they

would feel...they would understand that is why Jesus died, why Christ lived and how that can change them. So I think that BCA's whole approach has been extremely welcoming. I don't know any other way to put it. It is one where someone who has a life to look back on like me can walk in and not feel that I'm going to be struck by lightning walking through the door. And to be honest with you, the first time I came in here, I wasn't sure that wouldn't happen. Umm...you know, when you go 20 years without attending a church service and think that...you know, God is...as a generic as opposed to a specific, you understand what I'm saying...agnosticism as opposed to a belief in a supreme being, God and His Son Jesus Christ. So, I think that your program is successful. I have nothing else to base it on, but I can tell you my feelings and how I felt.

Appendix D: Interviews of BCB Attendees from More than 5 Years ago

Interview Questions for Christians who accepted Christ at BCA more than 5 years ago Dane

1.) In your opinion, can you share what were the strengths and weaknesses of the new convert process you were a part of at Bethany Christian Assembly?

We went to the Discovery class at that time in our lives. I would say a strength was – it was a - things were happening kind of a class, there was a lot of people in it. That was in the early 80's and the church had some kind of growth spurt going on at that time, so there was a lot of people in there. There was a mix of new people and seasoned folks that I think was on... intentional. Yea, new people and seasoned folk, or Christian veterans – or something... however you want to say it. I could tell that they had seeded some folks in here that were long time believers, just by, you know, the discussion that went on or whatever. And of course, you know, they were helpful to move the process along. Yea. So that was... I guess the fact that it was well attended, there was a lot of people in it, instead of just a one on one thing – which that has its strengths also because a lot of one on one I suppose you can feel free to ask more detailed questions and take up the guys time. But anyway, that was a strength. It was a big group. My wife and I were umm... we made friends. Okay? So that was a strength of it. We made friends there. So that, you know, when I was investigating the whole idea of Christianity in a deeper level than just watching Billy Graham on TV or whatever. So... so there was a friendly atmosphere. So we connected with some other new people, we knew they were not veterans. So, okay, what's another strength? I think I was about 30 years old. Yep. Right, Yea? 1983? It was probably 1984, so I might have been almost 31. What was another strength of it? Umm... you know they had a, they had... the curriculum was all laid out, no one was inventing things. Although, they might have been inventing them in their homework... on the night before the class, the leader might have been making these books. I don't know. But anyway, it was all well presented and all the questions were readily answered. You know, it was the searching moment for me was the, "I really want some to know the answer to some of these questions of faith that, if you're going to make a change..." I was a real deliberate, umm, convert. I was not a suddenly "boom" change your mind, I soaked it all in for a while, so... Everybody has their own different pathway, I suppose.

2.) Was there a specific class that you were a part of when you became a new Christian? If so, can you explain the effectiveness of the class?

See above.

3.) If you had a spiritual coach or mentor how did they aid your growth process?

Okay so, the spiritual growth guy, or the mentor was not the pastor or the staff. It was a regular laymen guy, who we could all kind of hook into as like, "Okay, he's not a pastor so he's more like me." Even though, I hate to put it that way, but he was just a regular attender, a seasoned Christian dude. So, that fellow, I don't know if that was part of the overall structure of what they were trying to do at the time, but I kind of developed a friendship with this guy. Maybe it was an intentional thing on his part, I don't know, but I would occasionally talk to him about certain things that I had questions about. I also talked to the pastoral staff at the time, of course, but I would talk to this guy, 'cause I knew he was just a... he wasn't a pastor, he was just a regular seasoned Christian guy that I was kind of seeing that I might develop into at some point. I would

occasionally reach out to that fellow and ask him questions about stuff and he was very open to share what he knew...so, that worked well...I think it was intentional, I think they kind of planned it that way...but I don't know, I could ask him now...I kind of thought at the time, "Maybe I'm paired up with this guy to kind of" – but I don't know, maybe it was just accidental.

4.) What has been helpful to your ongoing spiritual maturity at BCA?

I'll go in a different direction on this question. I'm not sure if this is what you want to hear, but... There have been times when, uh,... I always go back to the fundamentals that I experienced as a very young Christian. It seems like God moves sometimes when you're a young Christian and you really see it happen. And then, as you get a little more seasoned, and God doesn't do something you think He should be doing, you kind of go, "Oh, what happened?" So I am a long term believer, but, occasionally when I start going, "Where are you God?" ...and some recent events have made me do this again... my family's... my brother's death... so, but I always go back to... you know, I had some supernatural things happen to me that I know that it couldn't have been anything but God did it. So, I don't know if that's really a growth question or a "hang in there when times get tough" kind of a question or whatever. I'm not maybe... So the ongoing, uh, when your mind says you want to grow Christianity in the lives of people... that could be a... somehow worked into this answer: That your goal in your life is to support the church and to support the goal of the church to reach more people for Christ, so how do you run your life to try and be part of that big plan? Your ongoing growth and maturity as a Christian, you're trying to be part of the solution to the problems of this world by getting more people to accept that God does exist and He has the best plan for your life. There has been rough times.

Interview Questions for Christians who accepted Christ at BCA more than 5 years ago
Doug

1.) In your opinion, can you share what were the strengths and weaknesses of the new convert process you were a part of at Bethany Christian Assembly?

The strengths was the senior community. You know, they would teach the classes. But they really. Nels and others would teach the classes. Wed. night, Sunday morning, and they would really touch base with where I was at that point. What was huge was Frank Sheraton as a one on one mentor. How I was doing in that moment. It was consistent. It was Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday, I mean it was real consistent, you know...and then there was the recovery classes on Thursday. So it was pretty much every night but Monday, I was here. And that is what I needed back then, because before I got born again I was at the bar every night, so...

2.) Was there a specific class that you were a part of when you became a new Christian? If so, can you explain the effectiveness of the class?

There was a lot of them. Jim Davis taught me discovery. It just waded thru it line upon line, assuming that you know nothing, "we're gonna start here and we're just going to go over everything." It's not really an indoctrination class, it's helping a guy to figure it out so he can own it for himself. 'Cause you gotta own it, it's got to be yours, you got to own it. It can't be just something you read or something somebody told you, you have to own it. Uh, he took the time and answered every question...he didn't care how long it took until you got an answer.

3.) If you had a spiritual coach or mentor how did they aid your growth process?

Frank Sheraton came along side of me and said "If you are going to be a Christian, here is what you're going to do." Service. Time in prayer, time in the Word, teaching the Word...and then he made me do it. He put me in positions where I had to teach the word. When Frank goes to the church and prays for an hour, he goes to the church and prays for an hour. They put me in a position to teach classes and then they put seniors in. Ed Linde sat in Victorious Living for 2 years. He never had an addiction problem, but he mentored me as I taught/mentored others and taught the class.

4.) What has been helpful to your ongoing spiritual maturity at BCA?

Right. Just everybody knows...the people know your name. They call on you to do things. They call on you to teach classes, they call on you to preach at the mission, they call on you...Unless you are doing stuff, you are just treading water.

Interview Questions for Christians who accepted Christ at BCA more than 5 years ago
Pete

1.) In your opinion, can you share what were the strengths and weaknesses of the new convert process you were a part of at Bethany Christian Assembly?

It was 1985... It gave me what I asked for and it gave me what I needed. Sometimes in life those are not one in the same. In fact, often times in people's lives their not the same.

2.) Was there a specific class that you were a part of when you became a new Christian? If so, can you explain the effectiveness of the class?

Yeah. It was awhile back. Hard to remember that kind of detail 'cause I'm trying to remember things in the right order. There was, because we, uh, basically, they tailored a program together based on why I was there to begin with. I was interviewed and asked why I was there and what I wanted to get out of being at this church and they put together something for me. As it turned out they had the foundation class that we use now as part of that. It was called "Discovery". Rob taught the class. I am still here today. Haven't left the church and come back. Discovery was part of the answer of a program for me.

3.) If you had a spiritual coach or mentor how did they aid your growth process?

Well yeah, Rob and Rollin Carlson. The whole Carlson family has mentored me. Of course, my goodness... how have they done? Same as the last one - still here, have not gone anywhere else. Based on a human level, I couldn't ask for anything better.

4.) What has been helpful to your ongoing spiritual maturity at BCA?

Just having a church that has a plan for it's people, a structure. We all need structure in life. I like structure. Structure gives me boundaries, structure gives me direction, gives me accountability, etc., etc. The church has offered that and it always has...and obviously it varies with programs, this kind of thing, but the reality is, it always offered us direction and structure to keep us safe, and I think people like safety and we like to be challenged. So it gives people opportunities to encourage people to take on responsibilities within the church. Afterall, if you really buy into a program, it is their church. Pastors are hired to lead us in getting that done. It's their church and they need to serve their church.

Appendix E: Interviews from Church Experts

Interview Questions for Church Leaders

Evan

1.) Describe the process of how you disciple new Christians

We probably stand at the crossroads between 1 and 4, and then we're doing some and we're also designing as we go. The lynchpin of our approach will be to disciple them before they believe- in other words, when a person comes to our Sunday event, they will already be fairly far along in a relationship with us on 2 levels, of course one to one you know we met them someplace and also with some sort of connection to our midweek type of activities (like dinners we hold at our house, that kind of stuff, where they sort of get woven into the social fabric of what we are.). We feel they will probably show up at a Sunday event last rather than first. Umm...Now that's an untested assumption Jeff, we'll find out – you know ask me again in two years. The theory is if they arrive with a one to one and a SG relationship of some kind on a Sunday event, by the time the Spirit brings belief into their heart, gives them the gift of faith, they're in a network of relationships and then the person who is in that role from the congregation will become the person that walks them through the basics of faith on a one to one basis. I don't know if you've seen Trinity Jordan's new book. Uh, I just got it literally in the mail today, uh, but it is designed for that one to one development of a new believer. I ran a new convert follow up system in a medium sized church in the 1980's as a staff member. We saw about, I think it was either 800-900 people made professions of faith over two or three years and at the end of the day they carefully tracked them. we could identify about a 1/3 of them in our midst maybe 6 months to a year later. But, I don't think that, for our folks saying "repeat the prayer after me" - which I don't believe the sinner's prayer is in the Bible to begin with ...uh, repeat the prayer after me and now here's altar worker 12 your new best friend, I just don't, I see both of those as a disconnect. I think when a person comes to a Sunday event or wherever it happens, you know, believe in your heart, confess with your mouth means to me you're professing what the Spirit has done in you by giving you the gift of faith in Christ, and you're believing by revelation of who Christ is...and then I think that whatever relationship you're in, if you're in one, that's got to carry you on because that's the only way our people are going to learn that that's what Christians do, otherwise we're delegating discipleship to paid professionals, no matter what we preach, the message there is "the paid professionals do the heavy lifting and you attend and tithe so they can do it." There's a lot of holes in this theory, my brother. There's a lot of holes. Like you might be in a relationship with a Christian who's not really very good at discipling. That's a problem. Or, you might just believe, you might come to a service first and defy our philosophy and believe there, which, you know is not allowed but we'll put up with that, uhh, and then what do we do with you – you might not know anybody except Jesus and you know, you just walked in off the street. I think that's a good way to put it, and obviously it's a both end thing – you need teaching and you need classes – like every organization does stuff like that. It's not just us, if you get a job you go to a class for new employees, I mean, there's nothing wrong with that. But, I think especially at our scale, in your phrase "to wash our hands of a person" uhh, you know– most Christians don't grow because they never do anything frightening and nothing's more frightening than trying to walk Bob the biker through his new life in Christ. And that will put you on your face praying instead of the pastor being on his face and then I think everybody starts to grow. Man, you get a taste for that and you can never be happy with just institutional stuff again. At bigger scales I think there are differences clearly. This is what we are shooting for, to

get things rolling before belief. Disciple first so I try to be out in the community as much as I can becoming a pastor to lost people, and then as faith happens to them, then you've just got the best seat in the house - be able to walk them through what all of this means. So this is what we're thinking right now as we'll lean towards a one to one approach reinforced by smaller groups.

2.) How effective do you feel your process is?

I think in terms of outcomes, it is way too early to say. The temptation in this business is to reduce everything to your last two anecdotes and you connect two dots and you've got a line, so I'm not going to try to do that. I would say that the fruit we've seen from our efforts to build relationships has been heartening. It's been very positive. Uh, a big part of what we do here, as where you live, is defusing people's stereotypes, overcoming their negative assumptions, uh and honestly for me, this is the most fun I've ever had in ministry because of face time with lost people. I mean that's like the center of gravity which is way, way easier when you're little and just starting than later. So on the intake side I'd say the results are encouraging. As we've worked with a person or two, I would say that's also been encouraging. But it's just, the numbers are way too small to sustain any conclusions. I'm looking for answers myself.

3.) What are some of today's cultural realities that you feel impact a new Christian's growth?

Man, uh, on the level of information it's never been easier to get excellent teaching than it has been today and that is a sea change. My last pastorate was before broadband. I've got back into pastoring after a 10 year hiatus almost. I'll tell you what my brother, it's like landing on the moon. So much has changed. My last pastorate was when cell phones were BIG, you know? . That shows you what I mean. So, informationally we are richer, I think socially we may be poorer in that the culture around us does not provide the same props to lean up against. We don't have the conservative consciousness that we had two generations ago, the definition of family is changing before our eyes. Tolerance education and pluralism, which are very good things in many ways, also have some implications for us. I think you see that in the large percentage of young evangelicals that are universalists now. Sort of the President Obama model of Christianity. I don't mean that in a disrespectful way, that's just a description. So, we have access to better content than ever, the context of our country is moving in the opposite direction. I think this is almost creating two churches: the sort of John Piper people and the rest of the evangelicals who go through youth group and then drop out. A congregation is probably a mixture of both of those type of people. Information: It has never been easier to get excellent teaching than it is today. Informationally we are richer. Socially we are poorer. The culture around us does not provide us with the same props. We don't have the conservative consensus that we did 2 generations ago. The family has changed. Pluralism is real today- young evangelicals are universalists. Why we have access to more content than ever, the context is moving in the opposite direction.

Creating 2 movements...john pipers and the rest of people who go thru youth group and drop off.

4.) If you were designing a new believer process from inception, considering today's cultural realities, what are some elements you would ensure were included?

My first move would be to call you. We don't know what we're doing - we're just trying to figure it out. I think for me the first step is not rushing to generalizations about what the first

step should be. When we got here, we assumed that we would face a firestorm of personal opposition because we are Christ-followers. And, while we do get some of that, it's turned out to be very different. We've had more spiritual conversations more easily at Berkley than anywhere else we ever lived, with atheists, with scientists, with Muslims... I realize that, I think this comes from having to do speaking at conferences that I've fallen into the habit of doing that two anecdote thing – of creating generalizations way too quickly because they have a certain kind of utility when you're speaking to large groups, but when you're there on the ground, all of that breaks down and you're back at the ministry at the granular level. So, one on one and small groups is what I have in my mind now, but it's very much a plastic kind of a thing that's a work in progress – we're learning as we go. I had that same frustration when we were doing Rick Warren's courses at my last church and we would get to the end of the weeks and that was exactly what everyone asked, "Couldn't we just keep going?" I came to the conclusion that I should've let them. I should've trained a leader, put him in charge, made them a cohort and let them be a medium sized group, maybe not a cell group (they're usually too large for that) but let them be a medium sized group, and if 6 months later their energy runs out, well, whatever – there was momentum and hunger built up – I don't think there's necessarily magic in the one to one thing... it's good for us now, but if a group works why not let them work as long as the life and the energy is there and so I think I would experiment with that. You know, train up someone... see if there's life to it, if they're still around in a year – if they're reproducing. You know, they would be such a natural place for seekers to connect with the church because they are just new to faith themselves. You could almost sort of give them a pastor, like a lay pastor, and they could start to pull in Biker Bob's friends, a whole biker house group or something. Our thing is like "Follow the fun" – If they're having fun, there's lots to it, maybe we shouldn't say "Oh sorry, schools out."

Interview Questions for Church Leaders
Jake

1.) Describe the process of how you disciple new Christians.

Yes. What we do is, we have a connection card that we have in our weekly program. We land every one of our talks as the number one tool for application is the connection card. So, typically we're going to get an indication of a salvation response would be thru those cards. They are going to get a letter from Pastor Ryan in the first 72 hours and then they're going to get a letter from me as the Formations Pastor, within another 72 hours. –An additional 72 hours. Basically, offering our acknowledgment that they have joined the team, seeing if there's any resources that they would need, they get a first 30 days reading plan from Scripture. We give them a 30 day reading plan from scriptures. We give them the dates of the next baptism. We send them information about our foundational groups, which are like Christianity 101 growth groups. So that's the letter they get from me within a week, within 6 days. As we get closer to baptism we follow up if we haven't heard from them with another invitation for baptism and then we follow up to our next season of groups with a letter from me regarding their involvement in foundation groups. With that, to back up, also they will be invited to 101, the next 101. That will be part of the letter they get from me originally as well is the date that 101's coming up with another follow up letter. So they can sign up for 101, baptism and foundational groups responding to my first letter and if they don't we just, you know, follow up on all of that. So we try and get them to 101 as soon as possible and all of that. And for us, it's all about groups, it's all about getting involved in a group, and then serving. We believe that serving is a hinge that opens up the door for worship and so the quicker we can get them on a serving team, if not already, they begin to take ownership of the church and their faith. 'Cause they are giving back to help other people create an environment for other people to experience what they just experienced. After 101 we have 201 that we are just launching, so this will be brand new in 2011. For us we just believe that growth is serving and grouping.

2.) How effective do you feel your process is?

I have never seen new Christians mobilized quicker than at our church. We definitely eliminate the gap between salvation and active involvement in service. The benefit of our system is people fall in love with the mission and are deeply committed to helping create an environment to reach new Christians. You can go from curious seeker to involved loyalist in a matter of 2 weeks at our church. It has created an incredible amount of ownership in the church. And we see 60% of our adults in a group because of it and we have 60% of people serving as well, each week.

3.) What are some of today's cultural realities that you feel impact a new Christian's growth?

Unsaved people don't want to look like Christians. I think if we are trying to change their externals than they'll shy away. I think, um, one benefit is our culture is deeply connected to cause and if you can connect purpose to tasks and purpose to communities they are more likely to become involved. Single mom's dominate our population and any environment we create to let them know they're valued, they want to join. Salvation's easier than... the decision for salvation's easier for them than the decision of "Can I take my kids to this church?"

4.) If you were designing a new believer process from inception, considering today's cultural realities, what are some elements you would ensure were included?

Whatever program it's gotta be easy and simple. You need to build people not eliminate people. So my bias is, instead of a 6 week course, a one week course for 6 hours if you have to...is eliminate as many opportunities for people not to be involved. So we don't...I wouldn't wait for any...If they want to serve they can start this week. If they want to be a member they can start this week. If they want to accept Christ, obviously, it happens right now. But trying to make sure none of our programs stall the time or the process. There's no other hoops, the only hoop they have to jump through is their decision for Christ and that as they're going and as they're committed, and as they're a member, and as they're a Christian, they will wrestle with all the other issues. I would make sure that they're involved in reaching your mission as early as possible once they join the mission. There can't be two tiers of membership: New believers and then the committed believers, 'cause they've gotta believe they're committed believers and they'll reach the mission more than any committed believer would.

Interview Questions for Church Leaders
Rich

1.) What do you feel were some of the strengths of your process that has led to some of those Christians continuing on the path of spiritual maturity?

One, we met probably for at least 12 weeks. So, it was kind of a Discovery 1, 2, 3 all brought together, if you will. You had about 3 months of teaching and training.

With each class I had small group leaders in there. I would break it up into small groups. And so there would be...let's say there were 20 in a class you'd have 4 groups of 5, each with a leader and they would look up the verses, discuss it and kind of build some camaraderie and fellowship. I would ask each small group leader to kind of walk with the new converts through the course of the class and afterwards they were asked to connect with them on a regular basis. Some did it weekly, some probably didn't do much of it at all. But, there was at least a familiar face and a name. We always had a class fellowship. We would get together and I found that helpful in just building relationships and letting new Christians know that Christians can have fun, you know, we'd just have food and play games and just hang out. We did that each quarter.

4 quarters a year. There were some holidays in there that broke things up, but pretty much just kind of kept plowing with it. Just hang out at somebody's house...potluck, some games.

I think just cultivating a relationship any way we could. Myself with the student, the small group people with the student. During the course of the class, as you teach about baptism you try to get 'em baptized. You'd teach about ministry, you'd try to get them into ministry.

We didn't have as many small groups, but we did have classes so you tried to get them all transplanted into an ongoing class, as a goal.

2.) What do you feel were some of the areas that could have been done better?

I think one thing, if we would have had a small group system that we could have planted all of them in very securely. I think that would have been great. I think it was a little less than a sure thing that people took the next step. I really like the idea of having a spiritual mentor for all of these people. Even though we tried it I don't think we accomplished that to the degree we needed to. It is quite a herculian task to have one on one, but even if it was one on three, that would be intriguing to play with the idea. great. I do think that...we dabbled with it...but we never did find the right rhythm to have them go onto like a Discovery 2-we developed the Get a Grip curriculum, but it was a little different variety. I think had we had just like a Bible Study in James, like you mentioned things like that...as I look back on, it would have been really stronger. effective. As you know, that's a nice feel that those classes get after they meet. And you can imagine having met for 12 weeks we just really had some nice fellowship.

We didn't have a system that really carried beyond that. There were times we had the Discovery 2 – not all of them went to it, some did.

3.) What are some of today's cultural realities that you feel impact a new Christian's growth?

There's a real great environment out there where people are looking for truth-trying to connect with their own spirituality. Spiritual Hunger or Spiritual Curiosity: There is a real great environment out there where people are looking for truth and trying to look for their own spirituality. If they can find some real authentic people that they like, build some friendships, and can kind of help them walk through...and that's where life at BCB is really tailor made for that: because of good relationship building opportunities with classmates, teachers, and of course the

curriculum is pretty, uh, pretty much just walk through the Bible. So I don't know if I'd call it Spiritual Hunger, as much as it would be Spiritual Curiosity and trying to find truth. Some people call that a hunger, maybe that's what it is. Good families are trying to get their kids and their teenagers on the straight and narrow and in some cases it kind of pushes them to make the same discoveries for themselves. So I think we're suited well to really meet that. Whether it be young families or young adults – we've got enough stuff going on. Well, you know, it seems like the big one is that people are slow to believe that there is any objective truth out there. So, relativism, you know, "What makes your approach right? Why the Bible? There's other ways of approaching living life." The lack of respect for God and the Bible seems to permeate, it's got to effect some people out there - they become a little more cystic and cynical. It wasn't quite that way 30 years ago, people had a little more respect for truth, the Bible, God. It makes it harder, you've got to start before square one.

4.) If you were designing a new believer process from inception, considering today's cultural realities, what are some elements you would ensure were included?

Well, I think, you know, I think my frame reference is what we're doing and we're having some nice success with it. A small cadre class, whatever you want to call it: a beginning class. I'd try to build it around getting some spiritual mentors involved that could kind of, during the week hook up with these people. You know, for example, if Brevan was in there with you and was hooking up with Steve for coffee in addition to what you're doing, it kind of makes it an exponential thing. So, there's some one on one spiritual mentoring fellowship opportunities to kind of break down barriers. Have them either become a new small group or get into a small group so it's an ongoing thing. I really like the idea of a, kind of a BCB 2. It just takes them from where you leave them... You kind of really get them started and they keep going with somebody for... and that could actually keep going for 3 months...

Appendix F: BCA Spiritual Growth Plan

“Grow Plan”

BCA Spiritual Growth

BCA puts a prime focus on Spiritual Growth! The Great Commission instructs us to “make disciples of all nations.” It is our goal to provide a plan and system where Christians can embark on an exciting journey of spiritual growth at BCA! We want to immediately engage new believers and provide an ongoing plan for every believer.

New Believers at BCA

BCA cherishes those who make an initial step towards Christ. We encourage each new believer to attend our Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB) Class as a simple and immediate follow up step for them to take. Additional steps flow from there.

Plan:

1. Encourage new believers to attend Basic Christian Beliefs
 - A. Ensure each new believer has a Bible.
 - B. Offer this class on our website so those who choose to work thru it alone can do so.
2. Encourage new believers to attend the Water Baptism Class.
 - A. Provide the opportunity for new believers to consider taking the step to be water baptized.
 - B. Provide the opportunity for new believers to go on video and share how Jesus has changed their life.
3. Share the BCA Spiritual Growth Plan on the last week of BCB.
 - A. Explain the opportunities for spiritual growth at BCA.
 - B. Help new believers determine a plan for their next steps for spiritual growth.
4. Encourage involvement in an ongoing Small Group.
 - A. Share the date of the next small group Link.
 - B. Discuss small groups that may be a likely “fit” for the new believer.
5. Encourage Ministry Involvement
 - A. Provide a brief Spiritual Gifts Assessment.
 - B. Help new believers determine a plan for their next steps for involvement.

Every Believer at BCA

BCA has a system to educate and disciple new Christians as well as those who have been serving Jesus for many years. This system includes different group opportunities that work together to grow Christians. Each of these groups will function as small groups and work to practice 3 of the 5 Community Building Components (CBC) as demonstrated by the early church in Acts 2:42-47. Each of these comprise our overall strategy to educate Christians.

Plan:

Sunday and Wednesday Seminars

- Faithbuilders
- Bible Explorers
- Growing Together
- Basic Christian Beliefs
- Ladies Evening Edition
- Topical Seminars such as Parenting, New Testament Survey, and Finances
- And more!

Home Groups and Shared Interest Groups

- One of our 5 CBC is “Word”, which means each group must have some aspect of Bible Study. This encourages life change.

Periodic Support Groups

- Such groups as DivorceCare and Addictions provide support and guidance for those experience specific life challenges.

Comprehensive Financial Ministry

- Annual Seminars such as Financial Peace University.
- Annual Teaching Series on Sundays.
- Personal Financial Coaching for one-on-one assistance.

Annual Conferences and Seminars

- BCA hosts seminars that will encourage spiritual growth. Examples of these are our Men’s Conferences, Beth Moore Conference, Student Ministries Winter and Summer Camps, Kids Nitro, and more!

Sunday Teaching Series

- Each Sunday we will prioritize Bible Study so people are encouraged in their spiritual growth.

Encourage Personal Bible Study

- BCA provides an annual Quiet Time Journal to resource people for their personal Bible Study.

Membership

- The Bible teaches a spiraling commitment to church. We will encourage the membership process so people make a strong commitment not only to God, but to their local church. This will also encourage people to tithe, serve, and join a small group.

Promotion

We will use all avenues to promote spiritual growth. Some of those avenues will include:

- Video Announcements
- Sunday Teaching
- Use of Website
- E-newsletters, Twitter, and Facebook
- Word of Mouth

Appendix G: Basic Christian Beliefs Survey

Basic Christian Beliefs Survey

Survey for those who have attended Basic Christian Beliefs within the last 5 years

1. What did you think about the class Basic Christian Beliefs (BCB)?

2. Since attending BCB, please describe your ongoing spiritual growth in a short paragraph.

3. What do you feel has been the biggest challenge in your spiritual growth journey?


4. How would you describe BCA’s new believer process *as a whole*?

a. What are some areas you feel we may be lacking in?

b. What could we have added to BCB that would have made it more effective?

5. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements by filling in the appropriate circle:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. 8 weeks was a good length for BCB class.	①	②	③	④	⑤
b. The content of BCB adequately addressed the needs of a new Christian.	①	②	③	④	⑤
c. Clear “next steps” were communicated for continued spiritual growth after BCB was completed.	①	②	③	④	⑤
d. BCA gave adequate resources to help me on my journey as a new believer.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Please see reverse side 

6. Please answer yes or no, keeping in mind this will be anonymous:
- | | | | |
|----|--|-----|----|
| a. | Are you currently involved in a small group? | Yes | No |
| b. | Do you read the Bible daily? | Yes | No |
| c. | Are you currently serving in ministry? | Yes | No |
| d. | Have you been water baptized? | Yes | No |
| e. | Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? | Yes | No |
7. Is there an individual (non-family member) whom you would consider a mentor or “Spiritual Coach” at BCA?
By “Spiritual Coach” I mean a person praying for you, connecting with you, and someone who is there to answer questions you may have.
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
- a. If yes, how has that individual been instrumental in your spiritual growth process?
-
-
- b. If no, would a spiritual coach have helped as you began your spiritual journey?
-
-
8. Would you be willing to be interviewed by Pastor Jeff to discuss this further? Yes No
If you are willing to be interviewed, please contact Darlene Thompson (darlenet@bca-online.com or 425.339.3303) to make an appointment. Thank you.