

**Marketplace Leaders of Legacy Church and
the Great Commission**

LEAD—A Leadership Formation Pathway

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Abstract

This world is marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). Coupled with ecclesial ambivalence, Legacy Church seeks to address believers who can be salt and light in a struggling landscape. The Great Commission is Jesus' final instruction to His disciples as the invitation to seek out the world and make disciples.

This project focuses on how marketplace leaders of Legacy Church understand their role in fulfilling the Great Commission. Legacy Church is a marketplace church committed to impacting our geographical area by engaging in missional and incarnational living outside the construct of church activities.

This is an ethnographic study exploring how marketplace leaders view themselves as disciples and how they participate in the Great Commission due to their adoption into the Kingdom of God. The exploration of the data reveals a deep sense of belonging in Christ that shapes the way marketplace leaders live and engage in church activities and also reveals a gap in their comfortability to engage in faith-based conversations at home, in the neighborhood, or at work.

This gap compels Legacy Church to add to its Growth Track and produce a learning engagement that will equip marketplace leaders to have curious and courageous conversations about their faith outside the church. Life Groups are a core activity for developing authentic relationships; the study reveals the impact of these groups. This project leverages the natural relationships of Life Groups within Legacy to develop marketplace leaders who will be equally empowered in their faith at home, at work, and in neighborhoods as they are within Legacy Church.

Dedication

I want to first thank the Lord Jesus Christ for His sacrifice that made it possible
for me to live, dream, and experience this abundant life in Him

To Melissa, the beautiful woman of my youth, I am forever grateful to the Lord
for your love, sacrifice, loyalty, and unending support

To Moriah, Lauren, and Christian, Dad loves you always

To Legacy Church, it is a joy to be a part of the prophetic assignment
for which you were born

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Eric, “I blew it with a client today.” In a recent conversation, this lament came from a marketplace leader, who is a CEO and a parishioner at Legacy Church. Jay was disappointed and frustrated due to a perceived missed opportunity with a client. He had recently gone through a family health challenge with his wife, and the client had inquired about her well-being. Thankfully, Jay was able to share the struggle and the joy of his wife being declared cancer-free by the doctors. The following statement from the client was the catalyst for the disappointment and frustration that Jay carried. “I have been wondering about faith and God. I think God is real, but I am not sure.” A series of questions flooded Jay’s mind: *Why is he telling me this? Is this a trap? What is happening?*

Jay chose silence rather than taking the risk of sharing his faith. Jay recognized that he missed the opportunity to share his faith and, in turn, questioned his own. In his deep sense of failure and fear, I assured him that it was a learning moment, and God’s grace and mercy were available. The awkward moment of silence while waiting for the other person to move on from the inquiry is not uncommon. I have personally been on both sides of the conversation. The one inquiring about faith and the one hoping the topic would change.

Jay’s predicament is an example of a more significant issue in the Church today, specifically in the United States. In a recent survey, practicing Christians in the United States admit that when it comes to faith in society, they feel misunderstood, persecuted,

marginalized, silenced, and afraid to speak up.¹ Only two in ten adults from the general population think that sharing their faith is their responsibility. One-quarter of Christians “believe they are called to promote the gospel.”²

Jay’s predicament is but one story that leads to this research. Ethnographic inquiry was conducted throughout this project in order to understand the role of marketplace leaders of Legacy Church in fulfilling “The Great Commission.”

Research Problem

Marketplace leaders are willing to share their faith in practical ways (food, shelter, clothing), yet they lack the know-how to effectively model and communicate their faith.

The Great Commission is God’s invitation and command to believers to worship, baptize, and teach all peoples from all nations and to make disciples.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:16–20, ESV).

However, research has shown that believers in the United States are reluctant to engage in spiritual conversations and have an aversion to evangelism and the erosion of

¹ David Kinnaman, *Spiritual Conversations in a Digital Age*, Barna Group, 2018, https://prismic-io.s3.amazonaws.com/barna-access-production/0ceb1041-3593-4444-9166-cef393a987c3_Spiritual+Conversations+in+the+Digital+Age+-+Slides.pdf.

² Ken Ham, “Study: The State of Evangelism in America (and It’s Not Good),” *Answers in Genesis*, April 27, 2017, <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/ken-ham/2017/04/27/study-state-evangelism-america-and-its-not-good/>.

religious belief and practice.³ Many marketplace leaders are unwilling to engage in conversation due to a lack of understanding of where faith and work intersect.

The marketplace leaders of Legacy Church are interested in seeing others come to faith in Christ and are willing to participate in this endeavor as investors, financiers, or volunteers. However, these leaders lack the know-how to model their faith within their spheres of influence, and the lack of biblical understanding in their role related to fulfilling the “Great Commission” is not known.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, ethnographic research is to illuminate the understanding of Legacy Church’s marketplace leaders regarding their role in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Research Question

What are the understandings of Legacy Church marketplace leaders regarding their role in fulfilling the Great Commission?

Significance

Understanding the perspectives of the problem for Legacy Church marketplace leaders is significant for three main reasons. First, Legacy Church is no longer a church plant but an established church without a clear process for fulfilling our primary aim of

³ “Why People Are Reluctant to Discuss Faith,” Barna Group, August 14, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/reasons-for-reluctance/>.

fulfilling the Great Commission. Engaging while sharing one's faith is a national churchwide problem in the United States. Evangelism has changed in the past quarter-century. The way Christians share how often they engage in spiritual conversations and their goals for sharing faith are different. In a culture where relativism is normal, fewer people believe in absolute truth. The attitudes and responses of those who hear the gospel have evolved. The most common reason for the reluctance of American adults to engage in spiritual conversations is avoidance and ambivalence.⁴

Second, this research is significant because it is central to the purpose, identity, and mission of being a congregation. In the absence of sharing faith, there will likely be a continued decline in the impact and influence of the gospel in the believers' lives. Ultimately, those who have not had the opportunity to encounter hope and love are found only in Christ and the Church. The void created by the abdication of responsibility as active followers of Christ may result in missed opportunities to influence the lives of unbelieving marketplace leaders for Christ.

Finally, this research is significant because it moves the needle on the reluctance of sharing the gospel at work. First, marketplace leaders could grow in their understanding of the significant role before them as they model their faith in action. Second, marketplace leaders could gain a vision for their vocation. Next, marketplace leaders could learn to be present based on their activities and engagements with others because of the Great Commission. Marketplace leaders could grow in their ability to rest in the rhythms of the grace of God at work through their giftings and vocational assignments, as found in the promise within the Great Commission. A clear benefit of

⁴ "Why People Are Reluctant to Discuss Faith."

this work is that it will inspire believers to discover their purpose, making a difference in the lives of those within the scope of their influence.

This research is primarily to help Legacy Church, yet it is an offering to other congregations in urban and city environments seeking to expand the practice of sharing the gospel. This research can both inform and equip marketplace leaders in other contexts to obey and embrace the Great Commission. As disciples make disciples, Kingdom impact occurs.

Research Setting

The setting for this research is Legacy Church, located in Farmington, Connecticut. Farmington is the corporate headquarters for health care systems, manufacturing, boarding schools, and several private and state universities. Farmington is among the upper levels of socio-economic influence in the state.

Legacy Church is a growing multicultural, multi-generational church that thrives amid the tension of the communal claims of post-positivism and pragmatism. The congregation primarily consists of professionals and marketplace leaders. Legacy Church is a non-denominational free church, presently portable, and meeting in Irving A. Robbins Middle School (IAR). Legacy Church has adopted IAR as a local mission outreach. The weekly interactions on the school campus afford us the unique opportunity to serve and encourage the administration, teachers, and students in practical ways. A few examples are educators' appreciation days, where we deliver coffee, donuts, and lunches. We provide after-school snacks and weekend care packages for struggling families and adopt several families for Christmas (the kids think their parent[s]/guardian[s] are

providing the gifts, not Legacy, as we want to protect the parents). The people of Legacy Church are kind, unashamedly generous, and good investors in people locally, regionally, and globally. Legacy is intentionally generous. The congregation, which has a median age of thirty-five, has grown in attendance over the past eight years from eleven to over five hundred. Legacy Church is a place where we celebrate, enjoy the presence of God, and have fun.

Rationale for Setting

Legacy Church was chosen as the setting for this research for three main reasons. First, I am the lead pastor of Legacy Church, and conducting this research is beneficial both for my leadership and for the elders with whom the Great Commission is a primary concern. Second, Hartford County is one of the most post-Christian cities in America.⁵ The corporate landscape of Hartford County, specifically Farmington, Connecticut, continues to attract marketplace leaders. As such, many potential opportunities exist for Christian marketplace leaders to model their faith. Third, Legacy Church is a collective of highly driven marketplace leaders who understand life from the posture of an achiever versus a receiver and are, therefore, motivated to enact change and learn from the research results.

⁵ “Why People Are Reluctant to Discuss Faith.”

Ecclesial Tradition

Legacy Church is a non-denominational church rooted in the traditions of the charismatic movement, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the use of spiritual gifts, and equipping and empowering the saints. The charismatic movement has influenced Legacy Church in our expressiveness in worship, energetic singing, and openness to the Holy Spirit's gifts in our services. Many of our congregants have some connection to charismatic Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, or Pentecostal roots. The diversity represented within the congregation requires a steadfastness in presenting the basics of the Christian faith. Many are re-engaging in the basics of biblical practices and growing as active followers of Christ (e.g., through prayer, worship, Bible reading). Many coming to Christ need training in becoming and making disciples. The culture at Legacy makes room for curiosity and learning. Congregants returning to faith discover that performance, drivenness, and any need for affluence or influence are not prerequisites for acceptance or growing as active followers of Christ.

Study Assumptions

This ethnographic project seeks to understand Legacy's practice of equipping and empowering the saints. While this research does not discount other aspects of church life, it focuses on finding simple and concrete ways to help people model their faith in crucial ways. Connections to and implications from this study's data will bring clarity and specificity to the tools that will equip Legacy Church's marketplace leaders to model their faith. The outgrowth of this research is a set of tools that can help marketplace leaders recognize and embrace their skills and curiosity.

This research is guided by several key assumptions that affect how I have framed and implemented its plan. First, I assume that each interviewer and interviewee comes from multiple realities in their life experience (as opposed to a single reality). I assume that the interviewer will ask questions with limited bias, and the interviewee will answer the questions earnestly and honestly. The methodology that moves from the abstract to action captures stories and analyzes artifacts. This project will equip marketplace leaders at Legacy Church to live their faith as participants in the *missio Dei*.

Chapter 2: Study Methodology

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study is qualitative, ethnographic research. Ethnographic research is qualitative, inductive, exploratory, and longitudinal. Ethnography, as a method, pursues a thick, rich description over a relatively small area.¹ Given that I am embedded in the culture of Legacy Church as an insider (lead pastor), ethnography provides a means to shine a light on what matters most to people in the community. The multi-ethnic makeup of Legacy Church requires a researcher to embrace interpathy.² The desire to help marketplace leaders model their faith must not be shaped by speculation or preferences; thus, ethnography was an appropriate study design for this research. Instead of using theological reasoning to summon a reluctant congregation to affirm his agenda for faithful action, a pastor doing the ethnographic study is more likely to engage the congregation's current faith practices in theological reflection. Pastors rarely know a congregation's theology; ethnography gives the pastor-researcher the tools to listen and discover theology through the stories of how members practice their faith.³ By acknowledging the theological wisdom that is already present in the congregation through the way congregants live, a pastor can lead with and for the people.

¹ Stuart Hannabuss, "Use Ethnographic Methods & Participant Observation," Emerald Publishing, accessed March 21, 2022, <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/how-to/observation/use-ethnographic-methods-participant-observation?part=1>.

² Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2008).

³ Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, 40.

This research is ethnography for transformation and pursuing the concrete, material, cultural, and social dimensions of faith in Legacy Church. In the face of this confusion, it may be tempting to rush in and impose a unified theological vision or a structured business-model program upon a congregation, school, or agency.⁴ During the transcription process, the ethnographic method allowed the researcher (myself) to listen, learn, celebrate, and imagine the possibilities as stories were shared. Also, this study method allows revisiting the data and continuing to understand transformational leadership opportunities before us, both structured and semi-structured. The interview process allowed for flexibility in the process of selecting the length and number of interviews, obtaining informed consent, and maintaining the time and expenses of the interviewer.

Study Participants

To participate in this study, participants needed to be marketplace leaders attending Legacy Church when this research was conducted (2019–2022). It was logical to choose Legacy Church attendees because I have access to the stories and knowledge of the culture. The participants represented various vertical markets such as Construction, Real Estate, Hospitals, Judicial, Information Technology, Education, Government, and several others. There were six different ethnicities represented. A total of twenty-four participants met the inclusion criteria and chose to participate in this study.

⁴ Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, xiii.

Use of Peer Interviewers

I chose to utilize peer interviewers (instead of conducting the interviews myself) to minimize bias. The ethical challenge of managing the complex role of pastoral ethnographer was daunting and at times confusing.⁵ The choice for the particular interviewers was based on personal relationships, trust, and expertise. The depth of experience of these interviewers afforded them the opportunity to gather data in a timely and precise manner, ask clarifying questions, and engage in reflexivity.

Peer Interviewer Recruitment and Training

I recruited interviewers for this study via one-on-one in-person conversations. I asked if they would be willing to help gather the information that would assist in learning how to serve the people of Legacy Church best. Then the interviewers were contacted via email with an embedded video⁶ inviting them to prayerfully consider participation in the administration of a project and requesting they share their willingness or unwillingness within a week (see Appendix B). I sent a second email to the interviewers, thanking them for their willingness to participate and sharing the details regarding the training date, time, and location. This email also included a menu from which interviewees could choose a lunch option (see Appendix C). I sent a third email to the interviewers, thanking them for taking the time to help. The email included details for the interview protocols; a link was shared via Dropbox to share that information (see Appendix D).

⁵ Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, 87.

⁶ *Invitation from Legacy Church*, Vimeo, 2022, <https://vimeo.com/461921980/a0c9ecc2a9>.

Next, the interviewers gathered for four hours on a Saturday morning for training. Dr. Kyle J.A. Small, PhD, facilitated this. During this training, each interviewer also served as an interviewee through practice sessions. These interviews were utilized as data for this study. Following the training, interviewers contacted members of Legacy Church and requested their participation in additional interviews. Data collection was scheduled to take place within three weeks from the training date.

Participant Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited by one of the trained interviewers. The interviewers personally recruited interviewees via phone, in person, or email. They were asked to participate based on their availability and that they were marketplace leaders. A script was created to assist the interviewer in making the participant ask nine uniform questions (see Appendix E).

Source of Data/Data Collection Procedures

The source of data for this research was scripted, semi-structured in-person interviews. The interview protocol consisted of nine questions. The first four questions focused on their connection to Legacy Church, the next four focused on personal faith and leadership, and the last question focused on the culture of leadership development at Legacy Church. Each interview was recorded via iPhone. The interviews were forty minutes each. Upon completing the interview, the interviewer thanked the participants and ended the interview.

Data Analysis

Data Transcription and Organization

The following data analysis procedures were followed for data elicited by the structured interviews. First, each interviewer sent a digital copy of the audio recording of their interviews along with notes on the demographics for each interview. All interview files removed personal information, so no interviewee names were sent with the files. Next, each audio interview was then transcribed by a third-party transcription service. Each transcription included a title page with the interviewer's name and interview number and demographic information describing the interviewee.

To facilitate ease of data analysis, all of the interviews were loaded into a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was organized by demographic information. All of the interviews were then printed and combined into one PDF, bound together as a book to easily refer back to each interview.

Data Coding

Phase I Coding

I used the in vivo coding and analytic formatting methods in phase I of coding. Then I reviewed the interviewers' transcripts and other participant-generated data to cull words and phrases that seemed to stand out. I italicized, bolded, underlined, or highlighted keywords and phrases for visual emphasis. In vivo coding is a suitable

method for learning how to code because it requires the researcher to give special attention to interviewee language rather than one's perspective.⁷

Phase II Coding

During phase II of coding, I went through the entire transcript and used process coding. Process coding was used to identify and understand the context of the stories and the regularity of shared experiences.

Phase III Coding

Lastly, during phase III of coding, I utilized values coding. Values coding was employed as it helped understand the values attributed (beliefs, personal knowledge, attitudes) by the interviewees regarding themselves and situational norms. An attitude is the way people think and feel about themselves, other people, things, or ideas—evaluative perceptions and sets of cumulative reactions that reflect the beliefs they learned through time.⁸ Finally, the data was coded and charted using letters representing Values (V), Attitude (A), or Belief (B).

I utilized values coding to yield descriptive themes regarding the marketplace leaders' understanding of their role in sharing the Great Commission.

How Data Will Be Presented to Readers

The results of this research will be written up in chapter 4 of this manuscript and organized to align with the four steps in Legacy Church's Growth Track in equipping the

⁷ Johnny Saldaña and Matt Omasta, *Qualitative Research Analyzing Life* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2022), 121.

⁸ Saldaña and Omasta, *Qualitative Research Analyzing Life*, 128.

saints. This Growth Track’s four components are intended to equip parishioners to become all that God made them to be:

(a) Know God: Knowing God is the key to life. We want people to know God, Jesus Christ, and the gift of salvation. We want people to know the Holy Spirit who wants to empower, lead, and guide them. We want people to know God personally. Before we can dive into building a deeper relationship with God, we first need to establish the foundation for that relationship (Jn 3:16).

Knowing God is not about religion, a great sermon, or small groups.

“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws’” (Matt 7:21–23, NLT).

The word “know” that Jesus used in Matthew is an intimate term. The Greek word *ginosko* goes beyond intellectual knowledge or mental awareness to imply personal, firsthand experience. It is the difference between “I know who the mayor is, but I have never met him” and “I know who the mayor is, and he’s my best friend.”⁹ We want people to know God personally, relationally, and intimately. Knowing God happens through scripture, prayer, talking and listening. We believe that whatever people are going through, the fuel for their spiritual journey comes from a close relationship with the living God.

⁹ Chris Hodges, *What’s Next?: The Journey to Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose, and Make a Difference* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2019), 6.

(b) Find Freedom: Freedom is one of the major reasons Jesus came to Earth: to live and die and rise again in His defeat of the enemy once and for all. Once we begin our relationship with God, we start to know and walk by faith and experience transformation, healing, and freedom. Often the sanctification process is painful as one faces scars from the past. This struggle is not a heaven or hell issue but the battle for quality of life on Earth and the reality that Jesus has already won the battle. The enemy of our souls would love for us to be distracted, distressed, depressed, and never realize the potential and victory found in Christ. When Jesus began His public ministry (Luke 4), He went to the synagogue, opened the scroll and read from the prophet Isaiah, proclaiming the good news of *freedom*.¹⁰ Overcoming strongholds and living in freedom is so essential to the Christian life that our church has an entire ministry built around it. We have *Freedom* small groups and encourage everyone in Legacy Church to experience them once they have accepted Jesus as their Savior and have started their spiritual journey. In these community-based small groups, our people go through a twelve-week curriculum that exposes the many lies they may have believed, replacing them with God's truth. We want Legacy Church to find freedom, live empowered, and be equipped.

(c) Discover Purpose: The gap in the church is striking when we realize that God not only wants us to know our own individual purpose but also to help others to know their unique purpose (Eph 4:7, 11–13). In the first sentence of verse seven, the word “gift” translated means a special gift, divine enablement. It's not a reference to grace as we think of it concerning God's mercy and our salvation. This kind of grace refers to

¹⁰ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery for the blind, to set the oppressed free to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Luke 4:18:19 NIV.

something you do to bring fulfillment and makes a difference in the lives of those around you.¹¹

Legacy Church also takes people through several different assessments to help them discover their God-given design (DISC, Thinking Wave Lengths, Enneagram). We use various tests and instruments to reflect a clear pattern of strengths, talents, gifts, and abilities. God is the ultimate creator and has designed us with gifts, talents, and the ability to discover purpose.

God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful (1 Cor 12:4–11, MSG).

(d) Make a Difference: When you know that you are living out your God-given purpose and you are making a difference in the lives of others for all of eternity, everything changes. Jesus said, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples... I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (Jn 15:8, 11, NIV). Making a difference requires taking on the heart attitude of a servant. While being a servant isn’t easy, nothing is more beautiful than seeing people give themselves to the needs of others, like the CEO who rolls up hers or his sleeves and pitches in to get the envelopes stuffed in the mailroom when they find the intern overwhelmed by such a task. Alternatively, the young teen or young professional mows the grass or shovels the sidewalk for the elderly neighbor

¹¹ Hodges, *Journey to Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose, and Make a Difference*, 121.

without being asked. Or the couple willing to sacrifice their long-awaited vacation to help feed and shelter people in their city or another nation devastated by storm or war. The Bible tells us, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interest but each of you to the *interest of the others*” (Phil 2:3–4, NIV).

In addition, a fifth component will be created based on the data to assist the marketplace leaders of Legacy in the *missio Dei*.

The results of this study were used to frame an engagement pathway. The purpose of this pathway is to assist marketplace leaders effectively in growing in their theology of work and vocation and model/share their faith. This engagement pathway will be presented to the marketplace leaders and available to them via the Growth Track.

Theology of Method

This research was guided by a missiological approach to church leadership. The Church cannot be defined simply by preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments on Sunday morning. The Church’s true nature belongs to a society that was constituted and sent forth once and for all by Jesus Christ.¹²

Understanding cultural contextualization is a departure from the traditional way of doing theology in the Church today. Contextual theology realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and

¹² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 59.

tradition, as valid sources for theological expression.¹³ Ministry leaders must have biblical and theological soundness; personal experience as powerful as it is must be grounded in the context of scripture.

My theology aligns well with the chosen research methodology of ethnography. Listening allows us to hear the stories told in the many voices and versions and read the theologies that are expressed and enacted in the everyday life of the group.¹⁴

God is growing me into curiosity and wonder. This transforms my more competitive nature and traditional views of pastoral leadership. Ammerman writes, “In theological language, I am convinced that not every congregation is called to the same mission. In sociological language, I am convinced that there will inevitably be a wide range of responses to change, a range that will move forward a religious ecology that serves a new community.”¹⁵ Ethnography affords the opportunity for curiosity, discovery, and perspectives from both the insider and outsider within the community of Legacy Church.

Ethnography, as curiosity and wonder, joins the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. Focusing on fixing people or winning makes for transactional relationships, but Paul reminds pastors and teachers of their role and responsibility, which is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry and building up the body. Pastors are called to speak the truth in love and help the body (each part) function in unity, health, and love.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of

¹³ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013).

¹⁴ Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, xi.

¹⁵ Nancy Tatom Ammerman and Arthur Emery Farnsley, *Congregation & Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 4.

Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (Eph 4:11–16, ESV).

The ethnographic study creates deeper theological discussions. Rather than imposing abstract doctrines upon the people, the pastor as ethnographer becomes an interpreter of the theology that the people are already expressing through their lives. A pastor doing an ethnographic study is more likely to engage the congregation's current faith practice in theological reflection.¹⁶

In an effort to discover their purpose, many churches have given their time and energy to the programs and events made available by the Church. They have not given any consideration that the leadership is called to equip them for their work of service for the building up of the body of Christ. The equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry happens as the people of God have the opportunity to explore, discover, and exercise their gifts. Equipping leaders, speaking the truth in love, and creating a culture that facilitates curiosity and learning includes steps of faith and failure.

¹⁶ Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, 41.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As lead pastor and communicator at Legacy Church, the goal for this overall project is to explore the possibilities of creating a multi-cultural leadership development process that could incorporate coaching, training, and resourcing to equip leaders in joining God in mission within their spheres of influence in the marketplace, neighborhood, education, and government with Legacy Church. The people range in age from early thirties to mid-sixties. The vision is to provide a biblically based understanding of their purpose to glorify God. This definition transcends monetary gains, being better donors, putting in volunteer hours, or merely becoming better humans. In this document, the questions that are explored primarily focus on social location, theology of work, and seeking to understand the implications of having a new creative vision for one's vocation within a body of believers and in the world.

In the Beginning

My statement of focus at the beginning of the program was driven by the sincere desire to empower and equip those who influence the marketplace, education, and vocational ministry leaders within Legacy Church. The premise was to see these influencers trained to win people to Christ by leveraging their platform within their social location. My time in the program reframed my understanding of my role and responsibility as a lead pastor; I am now called to equip the saints for works of service.

Prior to this doctoral program, the challenge was not surrendering to the latest, greatest "church growth" or leadership development model. Most models were geared

toward mobilizing the saints to embrace my vision and work as my servants. This was a point of concern and a colossal difference between the pattern Jesus set and the way church life is normally conducted.¹

The paradigm shift of embracing the need to join God in mission as opposed to God joining in my mission has been liberating. Christians affirm that Jesus is the way, the true and living way by whom we come to the Father (Jn 14:6); they are not claiming to know everything. “They are claiming to be on the way and inviting others to join them as they press forward toward the fullness of the truth, toward the day when we shall know as we have been known.”² My social location is predominantly made up of those who come from a cross-cultural mission and historical framework. The cross-generational gap of the post-positivism and pragmatism congregants within Legacy Church requires a broad scope of understanding. The intercultural dynamics that are at work within the congregation require a willingness to honor and learn the origins of their theological locus.

Theology of a Congregation

The desire to define the practice and approach to laity and leadership in Legacy Church was a pressing question to be answered. It seems more appropriate to articulate the missiological approach of Legacy Church first. Volf defines “participatory ecclesiology” as the presence of Christ in the Spirit, which constitutes the Church and is

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today's World* (London: Mowbray, 1985), 19.

² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2014), 316.

mediated not merely, and not even primarily, through ordained ministers but through the whole congregation. Consequently, the entire church is called to engage in ministry and make decisions about leadership roles.³ This definition was helpful in constructing a theologically responsible perspective for a Free Church that acknowledges *each part* doing its work.

When answering the question “What is the Church?” Volf defines it as God’s eschatological new creation as presented in Revelation 21–22 and 1 John 1:3. Volf, of course, gives a more in-depth definition in his other writings. This question continues to be explored with the marketplace influencers who attend Legacy. This question helps Legacy Church stay attentive to *missio Dei*.

When asked “What is the Church?” the answer most consistently given by marketplace leaders is one or two answers, depending on their understanding, “A place where people gather to worship God” or “We are the Church.” The definition Volf provides gives me the language to help my friends understand that participation in the very life of the Triune God is not only a future hope but also a present experience.⁴ The cultural shift I am contending for requires a paradigm shift in thinking; it is not merely those in vocational ministry, but as a body we have a responsibility, a mission.

There is a new readiness to acknowledge the missionary character of the Church, to confess that there is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world. I am reminded in scripture of Peter’s response when the disciples were given the opportunity to walk away from Jesus: “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the

³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 140.

⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 135.

words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (Jn 6:68–69, NRSV) There is nowhere else to go. “The church is a pilgrim people of God, called to visible unity under one God to spread the knowledge of Christ to all people.”⁵

The questions that Newbigin raises about the nature of the Church resonate with me as the mission statement of Legacy Church is the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 18–20 (NRSV).

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

When speaking to the disciples in their commissioning, Jesus affirms them as His followers, being under His authority, having the authority to make disciples, baptize, and to teach. They were to tell others the good news of the Kingdom. It went beyond the Jew, the next town, the next country, or one’s cultural comfort zone or preference; it was to all nations. The disciples were to baptize people because baptism unites believers with Jesus Christ in their death to sin and their resurrection to new life. The Great Commission was in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was promised upon Christ’s ascension to never leave them (Jn 14:16, Acts 1:8).

Legacy Church carries within its root system Catholicism, Protestantism, and Pentecostalism. In some instances, this could be considered to be a place where “immense stress on the Christian religion in its differences” is present. However, the

⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 34.

Great Commission unifies the house as we continue to recognize the works of the Spirit among us. The Christian mission is to act out in the whole life of the whole world the confession that Jesus is Lord of all.⁶ Yielding to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit will enable Legacy Church to encourage the marketplace to live a life that demonstrates love and service.

We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ (Eph 4:14–15, NRSV).

British missiologist Anthony Gittins speaks eloquently about the nature of the mission being rooted in God's "bountiful, boundless, expansive outgoing goodness." Mission, says Gittins, is God's job description, describing "both what God does and who God is," and Christians engage in mission not by doing this or that particular kind of work or going to this or that particular place, but being conformed "to the mission and ministry of Jesus (which is the extension of the *missio Dei*, the mission of God)."⁷

Believers living in the freedom of knowing that their assignment is to bring glory to God join in the mission to see humanity restored to right relationship and have at their disposal all of Heaven's resources. Contrarily, any efforts to make one's life count according to the systems of this world are inevitably fueled by fear, pride, and self-centeredness.

For many high achievers (marketplace leaders), the measure for success has been based on things and people and not pleasing God. The message to the Corinthian church

⁶ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 230.

⁷ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 292.

from the Apostle Paul was the reminder that, as believers, their assignment as ambassadors was to represent the King and the Kingdom and to look at people and situations with eyes of mercy and to share the message of reconciliation.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:16–21, NRSV).

The term *missio Dei* became prominent after the 1952 World Missionary Conference in Willington, Germany. It was a way of referring to the idea that God is active in the world, is working to redeem the entire creation and that the Church's task is to participate in that mission.

If God is indeed the true missionary, it was said, our business is not to promote the mission of the church, but to get out into the world, find out “what God is doing in the world,” and join forces with him. And “what God is doing” was generally thought to be in the secular rather than in the religious sectors of human life. The effects, of course, was to look for what seemed to be the rising powers to identify Christians missionary responsibility with support for a range of political and cultural developments.⁸

David Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission*, writes that *missio Dei* is firmly grounded in Trinitarian theology and the past; mission was primarily viewed as a

⁸ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 250.

category of soteriology (to save souls) or as a category of ecclesiology (to expand the Church). The Trinity is by nature “sending.”⁹

The foundational principle of mission and missional theology is to make sure that we, as a people, know the God who is on a mission. I resonate with Bevin and Schroeder’s position: “The Church only comes to be as it understands and accepts mission anywhere and everywhere in the world.” According to scripture, God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4, NRSV), and we are assured that people from “every tribe and language and people and nation” will be present in heaven (Rev 5:9, NRSV).

I have a deeper appreciation for the cross-cultural diversity we are presently experiencing in life-on-life interactions in small groups, fellowship, and as a staff and leadership team at Legacy Church. However, in many instances, these interactions within the congregation are lost because of the life pace of these marketplace leaders. When Christianity is itself increasingly marginal to the Western intellectual discourse, that discourse needs to come to terms with Christianity as a non-Western religion.¹⁰ The church must adjust.

Here and Beyond

Legacy Church is a young, growing local church with a single congregation established in 2014 in Farmington, Connecticut. Legacy presently lives in the tension of

⁹ David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), chap. 12, Kindle.

¹⁰ Andrew Finlay Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 240.

the philosophical claims of post-positivism and pragmatism.¹¹ The post-positivism knowledge claim regarding the congregants of Legacy Church is within the ranks of the older churched or formally churched Boomers. This group of people is primarily (but not exclusively) upper-class to upper-middle-class Anglo professionals who have found their way back to church after years away.

We also have over twenty different nations represented within our congregation, and while many are second or third-generation immigrants, they bear the cultural imprint of their forefathers. The draw for many of these new congregants is that our multi-ethnic culture feels more contextually relevant to their work and relational circles. Many of the congregants at first glance look Anglo but are conversational in another language and have a spouse of another ethnicity. This multi-ethnic and mixed-race desire is embodied in our staffing and leadership as well as in our worship attendance. I am a Black American married to a White American. Together, we serve and lead the church; this includes sharing the platform during worship.

There is a new appreciation to create a place to celebrate the cultural heritage and worship dynamics that are embedded in the people who call it home. The difficulty of being a multi-ethnic congregation rather than a melting pot is something to hold in tensions; the very mission of God invites us to do so, or as Dana Robert writes, “To understand mission in the age of World Christianity requires uncovering not only the human connections in local situations, but a multi-cultural, global matrix as well.”¹²

¹¹ D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000).

¹² Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), Kindle.

The Boomers return to Legacy with a desire to see church growth (numerically) and to finance short-term mission trips. They want to see the church go and do, and a hallmark is reliability and validity in living out the Great Commission. Their definition of a thriving church would be framed as a place that holds services and hosts meetings to help Christians become better people and help hurting people heal.

However, for the efficient doer (marketplace leader) working hard to filter through a postmodern mindset (relativistic) and grow in a Christian community, Legacy creates tensions within social circles. It is a migration back to faith in God but not so much in the church.

There has been a marked increase in this type of marketplace influencer coming to Legacy Church from the beginning of our existence. This group consists of young professionals (Millennials/Gen X) who are interested in making a difference in the world we live. They do not just write a check but instead personally engage in a cause.

These tensions between post-positivists and post-moderns show up in the desire to have connection in the form of friendship without consistency (church attendance). Others see connection as valuable, but community as inconvenient; relational proximity creates accountability and being known (the potential to be judged). In the post-modern view, there are fewer absolutes. There are no universal truths or criteria for beauty or goodness. Thus, there is a return of relativism (no absolute truth) in the sphere of morality. With that return, there is also the threat of chaos in which relativism spawns. As a reaction to this trend of moral relativism, there is an increase in the number of people

returning to religion and religious principles as the foundation for their moral lives.¹³

People are asking for help in marriages and child-rearing practices.

The younger members of Legacy are best characterized by gendered, historical, and ethnocentric definitions of truth, as well as an insistence on the social construction of worldviews. However, the basic post-modernist movement is unfortunately but inextricably bound to factionalism (differing groups) and centrism (equality and acceptance) of all sorts and supportive of primitive tribal, clan, and ethnic groupings and validations for all beliefs.¹⁴ These people are problem solvers and willing to take a risk (experimentation) that, in some cases, their older peers might find irresponsible. They will walk or run for cancer, engage in community action, or protest social injustice. This group presents the necessity for a more in-depth dialogue as it relates to “groupings and validations.” Clarifying conversations regarding the mission of Legacy Church are happening on a consistent basis.

Legacy Church is a relatively young church, but the draw for many of the marketplace leaders who call us home is the fact that we are making a measurable difference locally, regionally, and globally by our giving and going. These people are driven by a version of the Great Commission by their way of giving and going but lack understanding in making disciples. There are opportunities every month to serve others, and we make sure the congregation is aware of the needs and the successes of our

¹³ Stephen O’Sullivan and Philip A. Pecorino, “Chapter 10: Post Modernism : Pragmatism.” In *ETHICS* (Queensborough Community College, 2002), https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialsciences/ppecorino/ethics_text/Chapter_10_Postmodernism_Pragmatism/Postmodernism.htm.

¹⁴ O’Sullivan and Pecorino, “Chapter 10: Post Modernism : Pragmatism.”

stewardship. The events and opportunities for serving created by Legacy eliminates for many the need to look where God is actively at work in their sphere of influence.

My role as a lead pastor at Legacy Church requires a level of cultural consideration and relational flexibility as we have had an influx in the past several years of Brazilian and Latinos into our congregation. These beautiful people are coming to Christ and inviting their family members to come with them, and they are grateful for the simplest things. Also, these people are highly educated professionals enjoying our highly relational culture, but my desire is not, as Wall says, “to indigenize” but to live as Christians while honoring a member of own cultural upbringing. We want to hold pilgrim identity even while Legacy Church might feel like a home.

I would not have given much thought to my Western-leaning mindset as we are, in fact, in the United States of America. However, I desire to transmit faith across linguistic and cultural differences within Legacy Church that reveal Christ’s glory expressed in redeemed humanity without diminishing their significant contribution. This journey to overcome the current marketplace’s cultural mindset (keep your faith to yourself) of these high-level influencers is steeped in the idea of individualism and a lack of understanding of the divine nature of the Church. The building of a vibrant community life, where real sharing, mutuality, justice, service, and solidarity take place, is of the Church’s essence as a sign and foretaste of its own destiny and that of all creation.

Küng argues that what makes the people of God distinctive is that every member belongs to it through God’s call; there must be no attempt to make the Church private and exclusive. Legacy Church seeks to be primarily engaged in mission beyond the

programmatically church, primarily in the workplace. This is how we understand mission and how we seek to empower and equip the saints for ministry.¹⁵

Theology of Work

Theology that is contextual realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression. And so today, we speak of theology as having three sources or loci: scripture, tradition, and present human experience—or context.

Understanding cultural contextualization is a departure from the traditional way of doing theology; it is vital in my social location. We are working through the attempts to contextualize culture as non-participants. I need to do a better job creating opportunities to learn the different cultures representing a theology of work.

In my pursuit to host a better conversation for the marketplace leaders within Legacy Church, I will continue this discussion more pointedly. Newbigin blames the outworking of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment—promoting the sufficiency of individual human reason with no need for faith in God—for a great deal of the shift that has happened in the Church. My desire is to present a thought-provoking theological perspective on work. According to Volf, there are three significant problems when developing a theology of work.

First, the New Testament, which is the critical source of developing a Christian theology of work, addresses the topic of human work only occasionally and as a sub-theme at that. The few relevant New Testament passages consist of specific instructions

¹⁵ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 106.

about how Christians should work but make no fundamental affirmations about the meaning of human work.

Second, a deep divide separates the world of work in biblical times from work in present industrial and information societies. The explicit biblical statements about work are, for instance, irrelevant to fundamental contemporary questions such as the connection between work for unemployment and human identity, the character of human work in an information society, and the relationship between work and nature in an age of permanent technological revolution.¹⁶

Third, even when biblical statements about work are applicable to the present, it is still not immediately apparent what significance should be ascribed to each statement in relation to the others and hence, also, precisely how they should inform Christian thinking and behavior.

Any attempts to define work based on my own personal experience is limiting and deeply biased and must not drive the ministry. A theological interpretation of work is valid only if it facilitates the transformation of work toward ever-greater correspondence with the coming new creation.

A theology of work must investigate the relation of work to the future destiny of the whole creation, including human beings as individuals and social beings, and the non-human environment. The appropriate theological framework for developing a theology of work is not anthropology, but it is all-encompassing eschatology. The theological framework is, therefore, crucial for determining the import of local individual statements

¹⁶ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 173.

on work. The present context for recognizing that one's vocation is not merely a means for acquiring things personally and donating for a good moral cause, but, in my opinion, is the primary mindset driving the investment practice for Legacy marketplace leaders. This would be considered normal for the Church, especially in the Northeast; social work is a sub-theme for most clergy and not given much consideration as compared to volunteerism.

For the marketplace leader who has re-engaged in the journey of faith as an active follower of Christ, the unlearning of an achiever-driven mindset can be a painful process. The unlearning comes by way of realigning one's faith, allowing scripture to define success in leadership. In conversation, many of these leaders are looking for examples of leadership and success outside the construct of scripture that has led to the misalignment and weariness of the soul. In the name of leadership, development has been proven to be costly for those desiring to be "Leaders." The leadership industry assumes that good outcomes depend on good leaders: those good leaders are good people and good people can be trained, educated, or developed to be good leaders. Thus, leadership development is the equivalent of individual development. The leadership industry is dedicated to searching for a savior, a single individual who is the apotheosis of the great man or great woman. More practically, it is dedicated to training a leadership cadre, a cadre of consummate professionals, who can and will take charge.¹⁷

For the marketplace leader who fixes their eyes on Christ, their work is not winning, achieving, or attending church. The work of the Christ-focused leader is witness, wonder, grace, and curiosity.

¹⁷ Barbara Kellerman, *The End of Leadership* (New York: Harper Business, 2012), 168.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart (Heb 12:1–3, NRSV).

When there is an opportunity within the congregation to serve or lead, that is when the impact of the pluralist culture for these marketplace leaders is most obviously at work. In the face of doing something, opinions about perception outweigh the need at hand: “Pluralism is conceived to be a proper characteristic of the secular society, a society in which there is no officially approved pattern of belief or conduct. It is therefore also conceived to be a free society, a society not controlled by accepted dogma but characterized rather by the critical spirit which is ready to subject all dogmas to critical (and even skeptical) examination.”¹⁸

This pluralistic mindset revealed itself to be more pervasive in conversations regarding mission and influence in our community. Many were more comfortable serving as a group of thoughtful people with a social cause rather than representing the Kingdom. The question “Why do people need to know where we are from?” was presented as pure curiosity, but it was because of their domesticated faith and sense of secular “do good” at work. There were suggestions from a small contingency of millennial marketplace influencers desiring to do more church-based projects that their unbelieving friends could participate in and not “make faith a thing.” It has become evident that both personally and corporately, as a people, we need to explore together the context and culture that we find

¹⁸ Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 104.

ourselves engaged. The Church is, indeed, the “universal sacrament of salvation” (Lumen Gentium 48, Ad Gentes 1), “imbued with the hidden presence of God.”¹⁹

These series of conversations confirmed my sense of purpose in seeing the people of God move beyond what Newbigin calls a “domestication of the gospel” that causes one to seek a more “reasonable Christianity,” which could be defended on the terms of an intellectual formation. This “reasonable Christianity” definition helped in hosting stronger biblically based conversations with both new and seasoned believers who are influential in the marketplace. This congregation is primarily made up of professionals and marketplace leaders who consider business and mission as separate entities.

It became quite apparent during this journey how significant the role church history and culture have shaped my understanding and, thus, shaped the respective initiatives that have gained attention within this ecumenical congregation. There is a high Christology within the hearts of my former Catholic congregants (an emphasis on Christ as divine Redeemer and Savior) and those without a story and tradition who seem to have a low Christology (Christ is more like a human teacher and example). This Christological skew within Legacy Church has given a reason to work to present a more unambiguous answer for those who lack a biblical foundation, the “Who, Why, and Where of the church.” We have kept these four cultural initiatives at the forefront of our congregation, “why we do what we do,” on a weekly basis: Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose, and Make a Difference. This cultural credo, in many ways, is our desired state for our people and a work in progress.

¹⁹ Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 426.

Equipping the Saints

We must, as church leaders, reconsider our understanding as to how we can equip the saints to have a Kingdom-based understanding of the redemptive work of Christ. The new creation is the end of all God's purposes with the universe, and as such, either explicitly or implicitly is the necessary criterion of all human activities that can be considered good. For this reason, normative principles are implied in the concept of the new creation, which guides Christians in structuring the reality of human work.²⁰ Having a defined theology of congregation and a theology of work enables the people to discover their purpose and to see their vocation as a participatory act and extension to the love of God *in the world as the Church*. That is the best part of a vocation—to love and serve with gladness and singleness of heart. When we take the wounds of the world into our hearts—not just for a day, but for life—“we long to see the work of our hands as somehow, strangely, part of the work of God in the world, integral to the *missio Dei*, not incidental to it.”²¹

My expectations as I continue to process my theology of work is a stronger definition. Theology is a vocation; as such, it does not depend on external validation and, from time to time, may well involve persisting in the face of resistance and seeming irrelevance. And yet it is hard for theology to persist when it has forgotten its purpose: to critically discern, articulate and commend visions of the true life considering the person,

²⁰ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 81.

²¹ Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 126.

life, and teachings of Jesus Christ.²² There are a few more books that have my attention where I would like to further explore this topic.

Visions of Vocation in Legacy Church

I have had the experience of living and serving others based on my desire to please the Lord and yet, at the same time, living under the pressure of performance based on another leader's interpretation of what it means to be a faithful minister. Starting out as an impressionable young leader with some formal Bible training and a willingness to serve others, I was encouraged by the pastoral team that the most impactful way to win others to Christ would be to leave my corporate job and go full time at the Church.

I oftentimes reflect on the uncomfortable conversations in my pastor's office when mentors would recount the terrible worldly influences in corporate America (marketplace leaders enamored by lust, greed, and the pride of life, and probably forsaking their calls). This continues to make me sad. Though there was some truth to idea that many in the marketplace were driven for status and stuff, it is not true for everyone. In my corporate experiences and great successes, there was always someone curious enough to ask me the secret to my winning large business deals and the humility modeled in the winners' circle. I was keenly aware of the source of my success and had no qualms sharing. The drive that I demonstrated in the workplace was the will to win and influence bigger circles for Christ. This may sound trite, and a more lucid theology of work would have made a bigger difference. I long to offer this to my people at Legacy.

²² Miroslav Volf, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2021), 44.

Those who are busiest trying to figure out God’s purpose for their lives are often the least purposeful about the work they are already doing. They can look right through the people they work with, since those people are not players in the divine plan. They find ways to work that are not part of the divine plan. The mission to read God’s mind becomes a strategy for keeping their minds off their present unhappiness, until they become like ghosts going through the motions of the people they once were but no longer wish to be.²³

It is illusory to think that we can treat the biblical statements about work like pieces of a large jigsaw puzzle that we only must arrange according to the pattern implicit in the pieces themselves to get a theology of work that is both biblical and relevant.²⁴ The challenge in the past as a young marketplace leader was to have both a relevant and biblical perspective that would quell the consistent pressure applied by the old guard, who were convinced that vocational full-time ministry was the highest call. This mindset is still at work in many of the marketplace leaders within Legacy who will mistakenly call me “Father” or refer to our gatherings as a “mass.” These leaders think that their roles and responsibilities pale in comparison to my “Holy” calling. This happens with others as well; this also has to do with a person’s ecclesiastical history.

Küng is critical of the unhealthy distinction between clergy and laity, which attempts to remove the decisive activity and initiative away from laity in the Church.²⁵ This is an essential statement as there are many people coming to new levels of faith and

²³ Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 119.

²⁴ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 78.

²⁵ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 19.

laity engagement and cautious in their areas of service due to the aforementioned distinction. One of the pressing questions in my statement of focus is, “What or How will these leaders engage to impact this local body?”

Volf’s trinitarian ecclesiology interaction with the ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Free Churches was beneficial in that it assisted in my ability to articulate Legacy Church’s biblically based structure. Volf contends that the presence of Christ in the Spirit, which constitutes the Church not merely (and in Volf’s case, not even primarily) through ordained ministers but through the whole church, is called to engage in ministry and make decisions about leadership roles.²⁶ The priesthood of the believer, and the role that we as a body share, allows for discovery of expression and purpose and the curiosity to explore within Legacy Church. A church is an assembly, but an assembly (of any kind) is not yet a church. This is an indispensable condition for ecclesiastical people who assemble in the name of Christ. Gathering in Christ’s name is the precondition for the presence of Christ in the Spirit.²⁷

Vision for One’s Vocation as a Marketplace Leader

To develop a theology of work means to consciously place biblical statements about work in the context of a reading of the Bible as a whole and to apply both these individual statements and the overarching translation of the Bible to the contemporary world of work. I want to form better questions for the marketplace leaders as my initial imagination was to help them see vocation as something sacred and a platform for

²⁶ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 134.

²⁷ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 137.

Kingdom impact. That is still my aim, but for the Christian marketplace leader in Legacy, “What does making a Kingdom impact look like to them?” I want to know how investing in their lives, on their terms, will help them find personal significance and communal service, or as God says, how will they “love their neighbor [and] themselves?” The Church is a participant in the Kingdom; the Church is a contrast community and change agent, yet how we amplify this witness is my central concern. Tim Keller, in his book *Center Church*, says this:

In Scripture, mission calls a people into a radically different vision on a journey bigger and other than ourselves. Scripture calls us into the memory of an amazing story ... not for ourselves but for the sake of the world. The strangeness of this story is its illogical and irrepressible meaning: find life by losing it; only by leaving the places of security are the purposes of God discovered. The God revealed in Scripture gives himself away for the sake of the world.

My journey has been a powerful exploratory exercise for me personally as I have begun to gain clarity on what fuels my desire to help marketplace leaders to find their voice, freedom, and to courageously respond to the invitation to join God in the mission to reconcile humankind. Some of us will wear ourselves out trying to change ourselves before we realize that it is not about fixing; it is about letting go—letting go of old patterns that no longer serve us.²⁸ The desire is that the Legacy Church would nurture this courageous culture for generations. I look forward to continuing to discover the questions and answers that arise in this journey.

Garber offers a central perspective for our missional movement at Legacy and in my own understanding of vocation: “One of the great challenges for everyone is finding a

²⁸ Ruth Haley Barton and Gary A. Haugen, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 53.

place in the world—seeing a lot, hearing a lot, reading a lot, and then deciding where we will be and what we will do. Knowing what we know, what will we do? How is it that our habits of the heart become a life? How do we grow our love into a life? How do our deepest commitments become who we are and the way we live? No one finds that easy; in a thousand different ways, we start and stop, wonder, and try again.”²⁹

²⁹ Garber, *Visions of Vocation*, 124.

Chapter 4: Description of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative, ethnographic research is to illuminate the understanding of Legacy Church marketplace leaders regarding their role in fulfilling the Great Commission.

This ethnography explored the following research question: What are the understandings of Legacy Church marketplace leaders regarding their role in fulfilling the Great Commission?

Life Groups were referenced throughout the interviews. Everyone at Legacy Church is encouraged to participate in a Life Group once they have accepted Jesus as their Savior and they have started their spiritual journey. In these community-based small groups, the people go through a twelve-week curriculum that exposes the many lies that they may have believed and replace them with God's truth. Overcoming strongholds and living in freedom is so essential to the Christian life that Legacy has based its entire ministry around them. The mission at Legacy Church is to help people find freedom, live empowered, and be equipped.

Within that framework, the marketplace leader interviews revealed that the respondents see relationships as the catalyst to participation and building community. Community was identified as an accepting culture (inclusive vs. exclusive) that facilitates growth—personally, spiritually, and corporately. That growth has created a desire to invite others to “come and see.”

Data analysis yielded four distinct themes and a significant gap when it comes to marketplace leaders understanding their role in fulfilling the Great Commission and being equipped to participate as disciples in the marketplace.

- Theme 1: Relationship Leads to Participation
- Theme 2: Participation Leads to Community
- Theme 3: Community Leads to Acceptance
- Theme 4: Acceptance Leads to Growth
- The GAP: Areas for Future Growth

Theme 1: Relationship Leads to Participation

Participants in this study cited the importance of relationships as the primary gateway to their participation in Legacy Church. Although some participants discovered Legacy through the non-relational methods of outreach such as flyers, mailers, TV commercials, and social media marketing, most people came to know about and chose to attend Legacy because of relationships. Some participants cited the “sense of connection” from the outreach methods. Relationships could have taken several forms, but in all cases, a personal connection was what led to deeper engagement within the community. There were several participants who had relationships with friends in leadership at Legacy that spanned decades. Many of the stories shared were personal in nature, and specific people were named as being the catalyst to a deeper sense of connection beyond a Sunday morning experience.

The one reference most frequently mentioned in these findings was Life Groups. Life Groups are simply small groups of people from Legacy Church who meet throughout the week. Life Groups are how members of the church care for each other. Sharing life through community is part of the design because meaningful relationships aren’t always easy to find. Life Groups exist to make these life-changing relationships

relevant and accessible. Our Life Groups meet for three semesters a year—winter/spring, summer, and fall.

Elaine’s connection to the Legacy community came by way of her closest friend. She said, “I would have to say, too, like the previous groups with whom I have done Life Groups, I am closer to them because of those common bonds.” Elaine values Life Groups for connection as well because she does not feel alone in the battle. “I was searching for someplace where I didn’t dread going or didn’t become physically sick just thinking about going. It sounds funny, but it’s so true. I would literally want to cry, or the inner me wanted to have a tantrum, but I didn’t go there.” Elaine shared the struggle of not feeling connected in times past in church, and when people would talk about their churches so much and say, “Oh my God, I love my church,” she could not relate. She said, “Truthfully, I’d never experienced that, never really loving the people whom I went to church with.” Elaine was looking for a place where she could be herself and, more importantly, she was looking for a version of God that didn’t seem so intense and scary. Elaine said, “I didn’t even know I was looking for a version of God until I started Freedom Groups (a Life Group).”

Brian shared that he was looking to reconnect with his faith. He said, “I’d lapsed as a Catholic for probably thirteen or fourteen years. I went to Mass on Christmas and Easter because my mother expected me to.” Brian and his wife were invited to Legacy Church by another couple who are members, and they accepted the invitation. Brian shared that experience as being a really nice day meeting people, and the highlight was the food truck after the service. He said, “There were a couple of hundred people, big screens, and a real community feeling. That connection made me want to come back.”

Brian shared that he and his wife, Mari, talked to one of the pastors after service and learned that the pastor's Buddhist background was similar to his wife's, and she found comfort in continuing to grow in her faith journey.

Dave and his wife were looking for a smaller church. He said, "We went to a large congregation and did not feel very connected. So, we started looking around for connections and saw the Legacy commercial on TV, and we decided to check them out." Dave shared that they appreciated the spirit given off by the pastor and his wife in a commercial and both felt a call to check it out. Also, they valued the messaging and communication style in the commercial, and as believers in the Holy Spirit, something about it drew them to Legacy Church.

Dave said, "When we got there, we experienced a very similar feel and vibrant congregation like the one we previously attended. Immediately, we felt a connection to the way the services spoke to us, the way they were structured, the worship music that was coming through, the weekly sermons felt very comfortable for us and very much on point with what we believe as Christians." Dave values the spirit of acceptance at Legacy. He said, "I believe that we're all coming from a position of following, all as sinners, and doing what we can to keep Jesus first and foremost in our lives and continue to talk to other people about that and the life-changing relationship you receive when accepting Jesus."

Scott shared that he and his wife had been in a couple of other churches. His wife had held various leadership roles in churches before. He said, "Without getting into too much of the specifics, things grew political in terms of the church (not Democratic or Republican), so we stepped away from that situation as it was painful." Scott shared that

it was probably three or four years since attending a church before coming to Legacy Church. When they saw the Legacy commercial, his wife wanted to try the church but Scott was traveling. They both attended the next week and have barely missed in the four years since. They are connected in different roles: they serve on the setup team, lead a life group, and are heavily involved in other church activities. Scott said, “I think some of the things that we’ve enjoyed about Legacy is meeting some people and sharing a common faith.”

For the sake of clarity, the Legacy Church commercials were an outreach project that a marketplace leader helped create and finance. There were fifty different commercials, thirty-second spots that were invitational in nature. Commercials ran for a total of six years on forty-eight channels. The frequency of the commercials was four thousand times a month and the reach was 195,000 people within a five-mile radius of Legacy’s location. Based on the analytics, the commercials reached 98% of the community before needing to limit the commercials to seasonal airings (Christmas and Easter).¹

Theme 2: Participation Leads to Community

Participants shared the importance and impact of being loved, nurtured, and of God being present in the ministry of Legacy Church. Beyond the relational connections or community impact, the shared value of being known and their belief in God being

¹ “Legacy Church Commercial Examples,” Dropbox, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/sp3itmp8i30h6p/AACf7tM6GptumF3nIL_5_zsYa?dl=0.

present was the reason they are here. The stories affirmed the Finding Freedom element of the Legacy Church.

Glenda explained it this way when asked how she would describe to a new Legacy Church attendee how they would be loved and nurtured: “I would say to them that this church represents a cross-generational, cross-cultural environment. But there’s a general sense of acceptance in that everyone’s welcome, everyone’s honored, everyone’s respected. If they’ve had maybe not a great experience in church before, please give this church a try because there is support and encouragement. I don’t want to say a lack of judgment, but in the sense, acceptance is such that people can feel welcome.” Glenda feels that there are a lot of different opportunities to connect with people. She said, “Some things are done non-traditionally like Life Groups. They give us an opportunity to experience getting to know people and different activities such as hiking, which I’m doing now. And I did bike before, and so forth.” Glenda values the activities and ways to have fellowship and meet people. She said, “Plus, you get to learn about the Word and the church is friendly.”

Diana started coming to Legacy Church by way of her boyfriend, now husband, who had a connection with Pastor Eric. She shared her personal experience of love and nurture. This experience began for Diana the moment she first entered Legacy Church. According to Diana: “When you walk into the front door, you have someone greeting you. However, it continued much beyond a simple greeting.” Diana recognized the ongoing relational support offered at Legacy Church. “If you need prayer, guidance, or someone to listen, whether it is a life issue requiring prayer or you need advice, there is always someone to listen and pray with you.” Diana cited the ongoing and personal

nature of the support she received: “I remember the encouragement that I had and the constant follow-up weekly from Eric and Melissa when I was looking for a job.” Diana shared that she feels seen at Legacy. She went on to say, “They knew I was a lawyer applying for jobs and was stressed about it. Anytime they saw me, they followed up and asked me how it was going and whether there were any new developments. They continued to pray that I would end up where I should be, whatever the situation may be.” Diana felt that in those moments it was beyond nurture and love. She said, “It was also a celebration; Legacy is a Spirit-filled church and through the people, you can receive strengthened prayer and reliance.”

Dave and his family have been attending Legacy Church for almost five years, and he described his involvement. Dave said, “I think I start from the position of being accepted because we are all children of God. From there you have a group of people who are not feeling judged by what happened in their past or what sins they may commit in the future. It’s the type of experience that you get when you come to our church.” Dave and his wife have hosted several Life Groups in the past and have enjoyed very frank and free conversations (he identified himself as a lawyer). Dave shared that he has never left a church meeting feeling judged. Dave values that Legacy has a very similar type of approach to the Bible. He said, “We are all imperfect and fall short. If you allow yourself to just be present in a sermon, in a worship experience, in a Life Group, you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit just working within your life.”

Lauren shared her perspective regarding the value of a culture of care and cultivation. She said, “One of the things I love at Legacy Church is that we are multi-generational and multi-cultural. I feel we really do appreciate the differences and the

similarities in one another as far as faith goes. There is a really varied expression at Legacy.” Lauren shared that “as a woman, I appreciate that there isn’t something that I’m being told I can or can’t do, and that’s big deal for me.” She said, “I have known Pastor Eric a lot of years; he was my youth pastor and one of the things I’ve always appreciated about him is that he’s not looking at anybody as, ‘Well, you’re just a man; you’re just a woman.’” Lauren appreciated that even as a teenager, she saw young women lead and speak in the youth ministry despite not seeing it modeled amongst the adult congregants in her church. She said, “It didn’t matter who you were; it mattered what God had given you to share. So, whether it’s upfront or behind the scenes, you can add value just as the men do.”

Katelynn has been connected to Pastor Eric prior to Legacy Church because he was her youth pastor. When Legacy Church was planted, she and her family came.” Katelynn and her husband have been involved by serving in several areas. She said, “I really enjoy having people that I’m friends with and have relationships with outside the church service. There is an encouraging and nurturing aspect of having relationships with people within a community of people who have similar spiritual beliefs as yourself.” Katelynn feels it is also encouraging to have people who will stand with you during tough times and in the good times, to support you no matter what is going on.

Rachel has been a member of Legacy Church since its launch and is serving in a few areas; she shared her thoughts on the cultivation of care and the sense of God being present. She said, “I would say that the continuum for care happens in Life Groups, just in the conversation with others you realize that they are having doubts and things are bothering them as well. I feel there is authenticity.” Rachel shared a story of when she

was always so concerned about getting what she said right because she feared the rejection that came with getting something wrong. Since being connected to a small group, she is seeing people differently. When asked, “What tells you that God is present in the ministry of Legacy Church?” Rachel said, “The first word that jumps in my head is change. I feel that for me as an individual, my perspective has changed so much that I know that God is changing my heart and helping me to see others with eyes of love.” Rachel attended a Life Group and experienced transformation in several areas of her life and has led several of these groups. Reflecting on the fruit of care and communion with God, Rachel shared this: “I have been at the end of a Freedom Life Group session where in the beginning people did not believe that God loved them, but when they encounter the presence of God and stop trying to earn it, freedom happens. God loves us and delights in us.”

Bernardo is from Brazil and was a leader to a young adult pastor; he has been attending Legacy Church for over three years and is a member. Bernardo said, “I was always surrounded by people and that led to a discipling relationship. But when I arrived in America, besides being with family, I missed being around people, until I connected to the church.” He shared his love for discipleship, friendships, and talking to people. Bernardo used the opportunities within Legacy to get more involved and connected. He said, “It’s natural for me and I am getting closer to people. I love the people and the connectivity; it’s life-giving and transformative for me and community is key for the other Brazilians here as well.

Theme 3: Community Leads to Acceptance

The marketplace leaders shared their thoughts regarding what they would expect to see at Legacy Church in the next five years if they left and came back—what they see by faith in the God-sized plans for Legacy Church, for others, and for themselves.

Participants shared what they could see in the future for Legacy Church based on how they see God leading Legacy presently. Each story had a level of concern regarding the idea of being disconnected relationally. Initially, the idea of being separated elicited a concern for feeling cared for and they shared the expectation of being contacted. Congregational increase is expected in visitors, members, leaders, and Life Groups based on what God is doing. Participants shared their expectations of Legacy acquiring a building instead of the present meeting space, which is in a middle school.

Marcia said, “I hope that if I left for five years, somebody would have contacted me after a few months and not waited five years.” Marcia found herself very focused on the personal impact of disconnection and the disappointment associated with not being cared for. Marcia continued, “If you let me go for five years, I don’t know if I would return. The only way I could see that I would be gone for five years is if I moved.” Taking that scenario into consideration, Marcia said, “If I came back, if I moved, I would like to feel welcomed back.” Throughout the interview, Marcia stressed the importance of feeling connected to the people in Legacy Church and used the word “accepted” several times as it pertained to the community.

Sean expects to see continued growth in the multi-ethnic makeup, especially amongst the young families. He said, “Diversity is in the identity of Legacy Church, and I would not expect to see anything different. I love that Legacy seems to have no desire to

be a mega-church and so there is continued access to leadership.” Sean values the interactions with church leadership and has observed that the pastors know if you are new or not, and if you are, they walk up to you and greet you. Sean has been attending Legacy Church for six years and expects to see continued growth but doesn’t expect that growth would make him feel “lost in the crowd.”

Eve recently began attending Legacy Church and hopes to see Life Groups increasing in numbers because she really enjoys them. Eve said, “I would hope to see more diversity, for Legacy to have its own building, and things would continue to grow.” Also, Eve loves that Legacy is not just concerned about what happens within the four walls of the church but also the community, so outreach would continue.

Diana was thrown off by the idea of not being connected to Legacy Church. She said, “If we left for five years, I would not even think about returning. My expectation would be a call from Pastors Eric and Melissa checking on us to make sure we were okay, especially if we went missing based on our relationship. However, if we did move and come back and the church has continued to grow, then maybe there is a third service. I don’t see the identity of the church changing; it would be still passion-filled, just being bigger.”

Asley is a member who serves in several areas, and her family has been a part of Legacy for six years. Upon returning, she expects to see church growth and the same spirit of welcoming and embracing people. “I would expect us to have our own building and more people in leadership because there will be new members.”

Lauren shared her expectation that there would be growth both in numbers of people and those who serve in Legacy and an increased impact in community

partnerships. Lauren said, “I think our heart has always been to participate and partner with areas of outreach.” Lauren was the only participant who shared the expectation specifically that there would be larger and thriving youth and senior ministries. Lauren is a thirty-something single female not presently serving in either of those ministries.

Theme 4: Acceptance Leads to Growth

Participants widely defined their understanding of the impact Legacy has on home, work, and community beyond Sunday morning. Participants were asked to share the influence and impact that Legacy Church has had in assisting them in leadership, serving, and reaching family, friends, and neighbors. They were asked to consider the common unity of vision, “to make a difference” within their sphere of influence (we now call it the “relational reach zone”). Also, participants were asked to share anything that excites or stirs them on a personal level or even keeps them up at night.

Diana shared the pressures that weighed heavy in the workplace. She said, “I have requirements for billable hours, so I am motivated to get to work and bill as much as possible so I can have the most productive year. I don’t care where anyone else is; it is a competition with myself to work hard and produce great work in the process. I also am dedicated to exercising to stay in shape and stay healthy. I also need to relieve stress so I can sleep at night.” Diana shared that her connection with friends at Legacy Church is important for her family to have a community that can stand in prayer with her. Diana’s co-workers know she goes to church and is a Christian, but it has not gone beyond more than them being aware. “I think the only thing that I would say Legacy has helped modify in my life is my relationship with my husband in that I never really had a strong prayer

life at all but going to church helped to understand that God's grace is bigger than Sunday." Diana feels that she has brought that into her weekly practice for herself but not her firm.

Scott has been attending Legacy for the past few years and serves in several capacities. He shared his perspective on the impact Legacy made in his everyday life; "I think there is the consistent reminder of what is important. So, we can get sidetracked in life and Legacy is always very biblically based. It just brings you back to what is important." Scott holds a leadership role in a high-pressure manufacturing environment that is performance driven. He struggles to not be so hard on himself. He recognizes the impact of being connected to a Life Group. Scott and his wife receive training to be Life Group leaders and mentioned the personal benefits that were afforded by it. "Also, we asked to do a walking/hiking Life Group, which had never been done, got the go-ahead, and it has been impactful for personal growth."

Sean feels that the impact that Legacy brings is a level of accountability. He said, "All the sermons are available on podcast, so I can play those in the car or at work; it keeps me accountable to my family and my job." Sean does policy work in the area of unemployment compensation for the state, and the impact of COVID has been very demanding and emotionally taxing. Sean said, "Sometimes it is so easy at work to forget about being a Christian and just bite someone's head off before you think." Sean thinks it is because of the shepherding he receives that his attitude has changed when dealing with stress in his family and work. Sean also believes being connected to other leaders in Life Groups helps foster growth. Also, having access to the pastors and being coached and disciplined is making a difference. Sean said, "You could call Pastor and let him know you

have an opening in the next six weeks and want to do breakfast every morning at 6:30, and he would just invest an hour into your life. And over six years, that has really made an impact and difference in my attitude.”

Lisa has been a part of Legacy Church since the beginning of the ministry. Legacy helped impact her relational reach zone as a young mom. “I am not just taking care of my kids. I am building and influencing the future, and there is a ripple effect for every action.” Life Groups have also helped bring impact beyond Sundays and are a great place for connection and gaining different perspectives on life circumstances. Lisa said, “Legacy has given such encouragement to my life and, really, the people have been so consistent in their strong love that it goes beyond the church. It’s a true bond.”

Participants feel that Legacy Church is a place to grow in their relationship with God and with fellow believers. Respondents repeatedly shared that Legacy is a welcoming and inclusive church, so it is easy to invite their family, friends, and colleagues to church services and activities. Legacy also provides numerous opportunities for leaders to serve in outreach initiatives where they can live out the Great Commission in sharing God’s love with others in word and deed. Growing in their faith resulted in wanting to invite others to a life transforming relationship with Christ.

Participants were focused primarily on relational in-reach (those within Life Groups). However, several shared a desire to expand their ability to invite others to discover God through conversations outside of church activities and were looking to Legacy Church to help.

Participants shared a high degree of trust in the ability and culture of Legacy Church to equip them to be more effective in living out the Great Commission in the marketplace.

The GAP: Areas for Future Growth

Participants were asked to describe the leadership development culture at Legacy Church and identify one thing they would need to increase their impact within their spheres of influence (home, work, neighborhood). The stories shared were insightful as they shared their struggles to impact others outside church activities. Marketplace leaders don't often ask for help or feel ill-equipped to tackle a project or initiative in their work life so this is a place of vulnerability for them. They desire to invite others to encounter God and to have faith-centered conversations but are hesitant to do so on their own.

Also, the description of the leadership culture at Legacy Church was primarily focused on personal development and personal impact. This response would be considered normative for most marketplace leaders as the fear of failure causes them to armor up with knowledge, experience, and self-absorption. The problem is that in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world, this is no longer a script that's good for business. Rather than success, it's a playbook that invites avoidable and often painfully public failure. Lowering their defenses and engaging in conversations that invite colleagues to deeper conversations about faith outside of church settings is a missing element for marketplace leaders in living out the Great Commission.

Landon and his family have been a part of Legacy Church since the beginning and serve as a family in a few areas. He said, "I live it (his faith), but sometimes I get

opportunities to have conversations about my faith, and they don't go so well." Landon shared that he did not know how to disciple someone. He wants more confidence in sharing and thinks personal growth is needed. The culture of leadership development for Landon was described as purpose driven as it has helped him find purpose and feel pushed to make a difference because he now believes that his life can add value to others. He said, "There has really been a push to find and activate our gift, and that has been huge for me. My family has grown and developed here at Legacy."

Anna shared her need to increase her impact at home with her family. She is looking for creative ways to engage her parents in the culture of Legacy. "One day, I decided to watch the service online from home and invited my parents to watch the service with me; my mom did and that was cool. I would ask that you just keep doing what you are doing to help share." Anna has been coming to Legacy for just over a year and has been connected to several Life Groups and just recently became a member. Anna works in the political forum, and she said, "I have always had a problem with leadership because sometimes it can be tainted and aggressive." I found that leadership at Legacy has literally been the opposite, and I would describe the culture as warm, open, and loving."

Diana shared that Legacy gives options to get involved in service, but she has not taken the cues and the encouragement to put it into action. She said, "I feel like it is a personal thing. I have the encouragement from the church, so it isn't anything lacking on Legacy's side." Diana took responsibility for the need to reach others but is afraid to take a step in sharing. However, in describing the leadership culture of Legacy Church, "passionate, encouraging, and approachable" were the words used. Diana said, "The

people in leadership roles at our church are very approachable in the sense that if you need further leadership, development is available.”

Elaine has been attending Legacy with her family for nearly six years and has served for several years as a Life Group leader. Elaine struggled to ask Legacy Church for anything. “I don’t know that we *need* anything. We can be home if we need to be home. We have an insane amount of Life Groups, and you are not limited to what it can be focused on, within reason. They have online media for devotional content. We have access to sermons.” Elaine, like many of the participants, focused on the servicing of their needs or what was important to them right now. Elaine said the woman’s nights filled her cup for relationships and described the culture of leadership development as being “encouraging, supportive, and committed to developing leaders.”

The findings indicate that Legacy Church is succeeding in fulfilling the Great Commission when it comes to making disciples within the context of church services, events, and activities. Simultaneously, the data revealed a gap in the way marketplace leaders are equipped to live out the Great Commission within their spheres of influence outside of church.

Interpretation of Findings

This research addresses the question: What are the understandings of Legacy Church marketplace leaders regarding their role in fulfilling the Great Commission? The findings, as described above, revealed that people of Legacy Church engage in the Great Commission by inviting people to church services and activities. They move through the Growth Track and experience growth and transformation in their lives and in their

relationship with God and with others. This growth creates a desire to share with others the impact of Christ on their lives. They are comfortable doing this by inviting friends, family, and even colleagues to church services and activities, but are longing to learn how to move outward and share with confidence outside the church setting.

The four themes discussed in the findings align with the four pillars of the mission of Legacy Church: Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose, Make A Difference. Additionally, they reveal a gap that must be addressed to equip marketplace leaders to live out the Great Commission in their daily lives. In fact, 98% of the respondents shared their comfortability with participating in the Great Commission through events associated with Legacy Church. However, they felt ill-equipped to live out the Great Commission incarnationally outside of church services and settings.

Interpretation of Theme 1: Relationship Leads to Participation

The connection between relationship and engagement was embedded in every story shared by these marketplace leaders. There was a level of engagement (steps of faith taken) required to get to the community of Legacy Church. It was either a direct invitation from a friend a staff member or something even more surprising: a commercial.

There were several who mentioned that a commercial was the spark that set them on the road to discovery and visiting Legacy Church. The participants had a desire for a life-giving relationship. In some instances, it took years to muster the faith to respond to the prompting of the Lord to re-engage with a community of faith. Several participants had been church attendees and for one reason or another (they were often hurt), basically

quit church (people). These marketplace leaders were willing to take the steps to re-engage the church (people). We know this happens only by the draw of the Holy Spirit.

Non-traditional Invitation That Reflected Relationships

Embarking on the Legacy commercial was a risk. The Elders took a step of faith to do something (unorthodox for a church in Connecticut) for the sake of reaching the community with a hope-filled invitation.

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!” (Rom 10:14–16, NLT).

This step of faith was not without pushback from other leaders in the community. It did not fall in line with the expected conservatism befitting a church in New England. However, based on the feedback from the participants who found relationships and are now engaged in the life of the church and serving others, the risk was worth the reward.

Risking reputation for *the sake of the gospel* was worth the risk. Newbiggin states, “There is a right kind of conservatism in the Church, but it consists of this: to keep absolutely firm in allegiance to Jesus who is Himself the great revolutionary; to keep absolutely central in our thinking the Cross which is the final ‘No’ to every human order that claims to be perfect and self-sufficient; and by so keeping close to the Cross, to receive constantly afresh the power of His risen life which is always power for radical renewal.”

The first part of the mission of Legacy Church is: Know God. It all begins with a personal relationship and that relationship leads to participation in the body of Christ. The

study showed that 100% of the participants found Legacy Church as a safe place to begin or continue their journey toward Knowing God. Most of the participants placed value on being connected to a culture that values “whosoever will” in the call to be an active follower of Christ (Mk 8:34–35).

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it (Mk 8:34–35, NRSV).

The participatory role that marketplace leaders see as it relates to the Great Commission is often understood as extending an invitation: “Come to Legacy Church.” Marketplace leaders have, in many instances, lived from the assumption that the pastor (professional) is the only able minister in the church. So, the message is, “If you bring them to church, they (pastors) will do the rest.” However, the Great Commission is an invitation to know God in the provision of redemption, relationship, and reconciliation (authority, serving others, with the backing of Heaven). It is participatory. The data shows that people in Legacy Church are comfortable with connecting with one another internally but not comfortable with how they connect (regarding their faith) with others externally.

For marketplace leaders, participation leads to connection, so the mindset is “come and let’s live, learn, and grow together at Legacy.” These marketplace leaders are aware of their desire to grow and be in a relationship. All the participants are either currently in a Life Group or have been trained as a Life Group leader. There appears to be a gap in their understanding (and their sense of feeling equipped) to participate in the Great Commission in their daily life, outside of church.

Interpretation of Theme 2: Participation Leads to Community

Participants have taken steps to relationally engage beyond the Sunday morning gatherings with each other and are experiencing the benefits that a loving community provides. The friendly environment cultivated within Life Groups draws people together beyond a welcome at the door. Legacy Church is facilitating the opportunity for community through Life Groups, and 100% of the respondents are, or have been, actively involved in them.

The value and impact of participating in a Life Group was a consistent response from the study. Having a place where they felt seen, known, and heard contributed greatly to their personal growth as a disciple of Christ and to their connection to the body of Christ at Legacy Church. Again, the mission pillar of Know God is met in Theme 2 as community provides a place to grow deeper roots as a disciple.

In a busy, fast-paced world, often marked by shallow connections, Life Group offers a place for leaders to be seen, known, and heard. The connections that leaders develop provide a way for deeper growth through an inner knowing. The shared value of being known and supported, especially during life challenges, was a hallmark of a leader's involvement in Life Groups.

The data shows that marketplace leaders look beyond a leader, staff, others, or programs to solely meet the desire for connection. James Hopewell begins his book *Congregation* with the observation that “a group of people cannot regularly gather for what they feel to be religious purposes without developing a complex network of signals and symbols and convention, in short, a subculture that gains its own logic and then functions in a way peculiar to the group.

Participants shared the joys of being involved in Life Groups, either attending or leading as a time of sensing the presence of God in their midst. Life-changing and life-giving moments also happen in these settings. These answers exemplify how participation leads to community.

However, the community focus is inward and personal, with little *intentional* focus on how they can take the security of a loving community and their growth as a disciple of Christ into marketplace relationships and conversations. The Great Commission is met in Life Groups as community creates disciples, but there is a limited view toward equipping leaders to move outward.

Interpretation of Theme 3: Community Leads to Acceptance

The responses show that marketplace leaders find high value in relationships and authenticity. People long for a church culture where people are accepted just as they are. The majority of the responses are summed up in Brian's words, "I was looking to reconnect with my faith (he defined himself as a lapsed Catholic who married a Buddhist) and found the community to be accepting and the leadership very welcoming."

Marketplace leaders are driven by metrics, performance, and results. Their value is typically not intrinsic to who they are but what they do. The majority of the respondents shared that Life Groups provide a safe place where they can explore their unique stories and wrestle with the struggles in their lives. They find a place of acceptance by Christ and by other believers. Respondents discussed how they have Found Freedom (Pillar 2 of the Legacy Church mission) in these times. Experiencing the love of their Life Group community enabled them to more fully receive the love and

acceptance of Christ, not only in salvation, but in the journey of sanctification. An inevitable, though often ignored, dimension of the quest for “wholeness” is that we must embrace what we dislike or find shameful about ourselves as well as what we are confident and proud of. Theme 3’s Community Leads to Acceptance aligns with Legacy Church’s mission pillar Find Freedom.

Respondents spoke of the confidence they found from the love of Christ and the love of community and how it led to love and acceptance of self. Learning to live in the truth of being delighted by the King of Kings takes the pressure to perform off. They can simply be present in the moment, intentionally incarnational, and trusting the Holy Spirit to work in and through them. The mirror of Christ’s love lived out in community is an impetus for marketplace leaders desire to share Christ with others. This ignited a desire for their friends and colleagues to enjoy this level of acceptance and feel this same freedom and sense of wholeness.

Marketplace leaders need courage to engage in the Great Commission free from the pressure of performance. Participating in the Great Commission is not results-driven; it’s being willing to present the invitation of the Lord and not own the “yes or no” of others. There is no need to take responsibility for the answer; it is God who does the work.

However, the majority of respondents fell short in being confident to have conversations outside of church that would help others find this same acceptance and freedom. Their desire to participate in the Great Commission outside of church settings is limited by their lack of skills and the performance driven mindset of the marketplace.

Interpretation of Theme 4: Acceptance Leads to Growth

The data overwhelmingly indicates that people at Legacy Church feel accepted and valued. It is beyond just a warm welcome. Respondents expressed that they had experienced some measure of impact in their lives because they were being influenced by Legacy Church and were being assisted in their daily lives to be better people. Again, participants acknowledged that being connected to a Life Group and having the ability to share their hearts and challenges in the context of community was very beneficial in the journey of growth as a disciple of Christ. All of the participants commented on how the culture of acceptance (i.e., other like-minded people having the same challenges who were willing to share) was conducive for their growth.

Participants also mentioned the impact of having established relationships within Life Groups and leaders to create a sense of hope and encouragement. The marketplace leaders of Legacy Church gave insights into their understanding of impact beginning with their personal growth and then from that growth a desire to impact others. Leaders are able to Discover Purpose, the third pillar of Legacy Church's mission.

It became clear in reading these answers that the growth track is effective in the journey to a deeper relationship with Christ. The Life Groups are yielding exactly what was hoped in making disciples. Furthermore, Pillar 4's Make a Difference is evidenced in the fact that people began to serve on the Dream Team and to look at how they could serve in the church.

When asked about their understanding of "defining impact in their spheres of influence" (i.e., relational reach zone), participants' first focus was on their own personal journey. The participants were able to immediately apply the understanding of the impact

on their personal growth and how they were able to perform better in their workplace and workspace. However, only two out of twenty-four said their growth as a disciple compelled them to have faith-based conversations in the marketplace.

The Gap: Participating in the Great Commission Outside of Church

While the data showed that marketplace leaders are comfortable in their personal discipleship journey and with inviting others to church activities to encounter Christ, they felt uncomfortable and ill-equipped to have faith-based conversations of inquiry or invitation in their daily lives—especially in the marketplace. This is a gap in both Make A Difference (the mission of Legacy Church) and leaders engaging in the Great Commission in the marketplace.

When asked what Legacy Church could do to equip them to be more effective and define the culture of leadership development, again, the focus was inward toward personal growth. However, part of the desired personal growth was being equipped to confidently have faith-based conversations in the marketplace. It is not a lack of desire but overcoming the awkward and uncomfortable feelings that arise when these conversations occur. Marketplace leaders as a rule do not engage in activities where they may fail or feel ill-equipped to succeed. The marketplace leaders come from a perspective of producing, problem-solving, and avoiding failure. There is a desire to impact others but the challenge for many is understanding how to talk about their faith with their colleagues.

While the mission of Legacy Church of Knowing God, Finding Freedom, Discovering Purpose, and Making a Difference were clearly born out in Themes 1–4, there was a clear gap in participating in the Great Commission in the marketplace.

The data shows that the participants took the question or questions to heart as well. This level of community led to an acceptance by God, by their community, and by themselves. This acceptance led to an increase in their involvement in church life, such as Dream Team (serving), church outreach, and a commitment to growth. The growth that leads to being deeply rooted in Christ equips the marketplace leader with the confidence to live with a posture of invitation, based on intentionally living an incarnational life. Jesus' call to "follow me" was based on a relationship and presence.

To marketplace leaders, there is always a pressure to perform. Results are king, so any effort should yield a yes, a win, or a positive outcome. For these people, "No means not yet; find another way to make this happen." A posture of invitation, rooted in the growth that comes from being deeply and loved by God, choosing incarnational presence, brings rest to the marketplace leader. The invitation gives the marketplace leader permission to move from a place of wonder and curiosity and being rather than doing. They can move from the pressure to live out the Great Commission, weighted down by performance, to a powerful presence that radiates the invitation of Christ. This shift to an invitation through incarnational presence equips marketplace leaders to trust God to work in and through them with confident humility.

The research revealed the need for a fifth part of the Growth Track for marketplace leaders to fully participate in the Great Commission. Equipping them to make a difference in the marketplace and not rely on church activities is essential.

Moving forward, Legacy Church will add LEAD to the Growth Track
“curriculum” to equip them.

Chapter 5: Application of Findings

Equipping Marketplace Leaders to Fully Participate in the Great Commission

The findings from the study reveal two crucial things that determine the actions necessary to move forward. First, the majority (83%) of respondents indicated that they are very comfortable at Legacy but often feel uncomfortable and ill-equipped to live out the Great Commission outside of church activities. The need for equipping them to have conversations around faith in the marketplace, apart from Sunday morning and other church activities, is essential for Legacy Church to fully become a marketplace influencer.

Second, Life Groups are the best place to learn, grow, and address the uncomfortable feelings triggered by how to live out the Great Commission in their daily lives.

Legacy’s mission statement is: Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Your Purpose, and Make a Difference. Up until this study, Legacy had a four-step Growth Track to equip the saints toward fulfilling that mission: Connect, Belong, Equip, Team. The data revealed the necessity of creating a fifth track to align with the mission of Make A Difference: LEAD.

LEAD—The Fifth Step in the Legacy Church Growth Track

LEAD is the Growth Track “curriculum,” an engagement pathway. LEAD is the fifth part of the Growth Track (a part of the mission statement Make a Difference)

designed to equip marketplace leaders to discover and participate in opportunities before them when “fields are ripe for harvesting” (Jn 4:35, NRSV).

This engagement pathway will assist marketplace leaders in understanding their roles and equip them to engage with intention and confidence regarding their participation in the *Great Commission*:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:18–21, NRSV).

LEAD is being added to equip marketplace leaders with their colleagues at work and in daily life, outside of the church setting. The data revealed that marketplace leaders are comfortable inviting others to church and Life Groups. Nevertheless, they want help in learning to have conversations when their friends and colleagues ask questions.

This dissertation opened up with a story about Jay, a marketplace leader who expressed frustration regarding a missed opportunity and feeling ill-equipped to talk about faith with his colleague while at work. LEAD will assist in facilitating Great Commission conversations among Life Group members to practice the vulnerability and confidence they need for discussions outside of the church setting.

LEAD incorporates the 5Ds of Discipleship: Discover, Decision, Delight, Devotion, and Destiny and will help people like Jay and other marketplace leaders to have curiosity-driven conversations prior to conversion and discipleship conversations afterward as part of a focus on incarnational life in the marketplace.

The 5Ds address both pre-conversion conversations and move to a discipleship training component equipping leaders for the Great Commission impact.

The Method of Delivery

Based on the data, Life Groups are the most beneficial path for marketplace leaders to participate in LEAD. According to the findings, in the context of Life Groups, marketplace leaders shared their sense of safety in sharing wins, needs, losses, and feeling seen and heard. A Life Group is the perfect context to learn together while stepping out in faith to “go” into the harvest field and serve others through conversations prior to conversion and creating a discipling relationship.

As part five of the Growth Track, LEAD will be an additional component to Legacy Life Group Leader Training.¹ LEAD implementation will begin with the Life Group leaders as they assist “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12, NRSV).

Legacy Life Group leaders are assigned a coach to assist and support the group sessions. Also, Life Group leaders gather together twice during the sessions for check-ins, sharing wins, challenges, and connections. The current Life Group leadership structure will facilitate learning and implementation to increase the effectiveness of the LEAD curriculum.

The Power of Equipping

LEAD: The 5Ds of Discipleship curriculum will equip marketplace leaders for incarnational living in the marketplace, essential to living out the Great Commission.

¹ For more information on the Legacy of Life Group Leader Training Manual, contact Eric Peoples at EPeoples@legacychurchct.org.

Often, marketplace leaders misunderstand their role in the Great Commission because of a lack of biblical understanding (commonly thinking the Great Commission is only about overseas missionaries). Daily living can create conversations and opportunities for missional living; life itself is fertile soil for planting hope, love, and joy. Through the LEAD curriculum, Life Group leaders will train marketplace leaders to see opportunities to make a difference by engaging others with conviction and courage. Life Group leaders will provide a safe place to practice conversations that may be uncomfortable and encourage members to take a step of faith without fear of failure.

Since marketplace leaders are often success-driven and excel in their areas of work, engagement with others about their faith, when they don't know exactly what to do, can feel risky. Faith conversations that are perhaps awkward and uncomfortable may actually feel like a "fail" if it doesn't go well. LEAD will address their context for "success or failure" in these conversations as they risk being vulnerable while sharing their faith in the marketplace.

Marketplace leaders will grow in understanding that their role in the Great Commission is one of invitation and participation, thus taking the fear of failure out of the equation. They will better understand the journey of obedience and serving another with God's help. All believers have to right-size their role and responsibility before God. Paul reminds us, in his conversation with the Church in Corinth, while trying to identify with a particular leader, saying:

It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow (1 Cor 3:7, NLT).

God brings the increase, but we have a role to make a difference. Either in planting a seed or watering that which someone else has planted, in the end, God makes it grow. LEAD is not a program but a process to help active followers of Jesus develop a lifestyle of service and availability unto God, the *missio Dei*.

The LEAD 5Ds Curriculum

The curriculum starts by asking leaders to explore defining moments in their lives—moments that compelled them to assess the way they lived out their faith.

As an example, in the LEAD guide, I share a story about one such moment for me. It was April 1999. My wife and I were on vacation with another couple, Bob and Jennifer. Bob and I were snorkeling, and we got caught in a powerful undertow and struggled to return to shore. The defining moment for me was a choice: Do I help save Bob and maybe die myself in the effort or save myself? Because of my walk with God and knowing that Bob was not a believer, I had no hesitation to focus on saving him. Thankfully, and miraculously, we both reached the shore. Then, when Bob asked me out of curiosity why I chose to save him, I was able to share my faith with confidence.

Jay had a defining moment at work when he chose to stay silent in the conversation about God with his colleague. The data reports that his feelings of failure and shame are common in marketplace leaders. Research has shown that marketplace leaders in the United States are reluctant to engage in spiritual conversations and have an aversion to evangelism and the erosion of religious belief and practice. LEAD and the 5Ds will help them step into these moments confidently. Identifying their defining

moments and the choice they have to offer the invitation or participate in the faith journey of others is the beginning of living out the Great Commission.

Life Group leaders trained in LEAD and the 5Ds will be able to direct these conversations of self-discovery and provide marketplace leaders a safe place to unpack their choices and discuss how they might engage with confidence moving forward.

Discover

Discover is where we first encounter Christ. Prior to conversion, we become aware, through the Holy Spirit, of the God who created and loves us. For many, this happens through church activities and Sunday services. For marketplace leaders to truly live out the Great Commission, they must be comfortable having discovery conversations with their friends and colleagues outside of the church.

Equipping marketplace leaders to have curiosity-driven conversations and impact others through an incarnational living will help them engage in the discovery phase when questions about God and faith arise during their daily life.

Decision

The decision to follow Christ is the beginning of a new life. As marketplace leaders change, they now view their life, meaning, purpose, and possibilities through a new lens. Realizing the impact of this shift will begin the process of showing up differently. Their colleagues may notice, ask questions, and provide the opportunity for further discussion. As a marketplace leader whose life is forever changed, how they

conduct business and engage in the workplace is now part of how they live out the Great Commission.

Delight

“Living loved” is another way to describe the wonder of being the delight of God. No longer burdened by the pressure of earning acceptance, approval, success, or forgiveness, a marketplace leader can live free of fear as the power of being delighted by their Savior takes root. This posture will profoundly impact their freedom to try, and risk perhaps getting it wrong, when it comes to conversations about faith with their peers outside of church settings. The marketplace leader, prior to conversion, is not used to unconditional acceptance. Their finding freedom will invite others to discover more about the delight that undergirds their lives and work. As marketplace leaders disciple others, they will be able to help them make choices to embrace the wonder of “living loved.”

Devotion

Devotion is an invitation for living *differently*. Knowing that God has good things for you and you can’t earn them allows marketplace leaders to cease striving and instead live and work in faith, trusting God and not relying solely on themselves. This is a powerful shift for marketplace leaders as they realize they pursue God and find fulfillment beyond their worldly success. And as they disciple other believers or have conversations about the reality of struggles that we all face, they are equipped—knowing God is good—to encourage their peers to either be curious about God and come to faith, or continue to ask, seek, and know.

Destiny

Marketplace leaders are planners. The very nature of their position requires them to look forward, building a foundation for success at work. Understanding that God's plan is for them to build on a solid foundation, a life of trust and expectation and of serving and growing will enable them to withstand the storms and move forward confidently. Part of their destiny is to participate in the Great Commission and live incarnationally being participants in the work of God. This gives purpose and meaning to every marketplace leader in their life in Christ as they see others come to faith.

Again, LEAD is not a program per se but a facilitation of incarnational living. Its purpose is to help marketplace leaders explore daily opportunities and develop their listening skills to hear what God is speaking. As ministers of reconciliation, we all have the privilege to help people see others as God sees them (2 Cor 5). We want to help people obey God and teach others to do the same while walking together in a discipling relationship.

With the addition of LEAD to the Make a Difference Growth Track, marketplace leaders will be equipped to exercise faith and have life-giving conversations. Also, joining those in the journey by having a disciple relationship always begins with a discussion and an invitation. The LEAD curriculum will help them be better "inviters" into a deeper, life-giving relationship with God, which is the essence of discipleship.

The purpose of LEAD is for the members of Legacy Church to be just as influential outside of the church as they are inside of the church (relational reach zone). Marketplace leaders can embrace the role of being "a disciple who makes disciples" in all settings.

This paradigm shift will help everyone at Legacy Church to live out the Great Commission in a more confident and robust way.

Limitations of the Study

I found it very difficult to be objective about the data as these are my people, and I am privileged to serve them.

Ongoing Questions for Research

The analysis of the data raises questions based on ethnographic findings.

- Are there particular external factors (age, vocation, ethnicity, or social location) that have influenced marketplace leaders?
- What ongoing opportunities for growth could assist marketplace leaders in living out the Great Commission?
- What personal and organizational model(s) is presently influencing the leadership, staff, and infrastructure at Legacy Church, and what is the impact of those constructs on their understanding of “equipping the saints” for the Great Commission?
- As a multi-generational, multi-cultural, very diverse group of believers, how do we draw on our unique and particular influences as they impact incarnational living in the marketplace?

I am curious to understand the organizational theories that have influenced the mindsets of marketplace leaders and Legacy leadership.

Generalizability

To make sure the findings were reliable and valid, an internal team of leaders was deployed to minimize any potential for bias. External sources also checked these findings.

Personal Context

The vision for Legacy Church began in my heart in the winter of 1986. I walked toward my dorm in Bible college; in front of me was fresh snow, with no footprints. Before that moment, the Holy Spirit had spoken to me, saying, “I’m calling you to be a minister of racial reconciliation, and you will walk places where others have not walked before.” I had that word in my heart during that time and seeing that fresh, undisturbed snow before me brought it to mind. I knew the call would be in some unique space and require a measure of faith and preparation that I had yet to experience. The scripture verses remind me that I am a minister of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5). That is my assignment (calling) as a reconciled beloved son.

Fast forward to today and I realize that I had many years of preparation in serving the Lord before I embarked on the journey of planting a church. My life is full of multi-cultural moments and influences. Ministry assignments to fifty nations have required relinquishing any self-preserving cultural barriers that would influence or hinder my ability to receive hospitality from another.

It was almost ten years ago, on a cross country flight (AA1528), when the Lord spoke to me about planting a church in Farmington, Connecticut. The Lord gave me a vision of several scenarios. The first was a woman staring into the mirror, putting on

makeup to hide bruises. The second was a young person walking into their home and seeing their parents preoccupied and paying no attention. The third picture was of a husband who would look at his wife's phone and see inappropriate texts from another person. I found myself overwhelmed by those pictures, feeling both hope and despair simultaneously. The only answer for these people was love, and I knew that this kind of love, the God kind of love, was required.

In my vision, the people in these homes were affluent, successful in the eyes of the world but broken and hurting in their souls. When the flight landed, I shared this vision with my wife and my soon-to-be leadership team. We wanted people to know that Legacy was birthed out of conviction and not convenience.

We still share this vision with anyone who goes through the Legacy Growth Track "Connect" segment. Legacy Church is a church with people of influence and affluence who use their gifts, talents, and resources to serve one another. Now we stretch beyond the safety of the known and extend ourselves to impact others. I have the privilege to serve with others in the *missio Dei*.

Personal Significance

What I heard from the hearts of the people as shared in the interviews was humbling. My heart is whole with gratitude that I have the privilege to walk with the people of Legacy Church as their pastor and friend.

My last three years have been a bittersweet, beautiful season filled with significant loss and great fulfillment. I, too, am learning to live in the wonders of God's love for me. This wonder keeps me in the posture of trust, compassion, and curiosity.

There is no need to try and figure it all out. It is resting in the reality that God is up to something. I just need to keep saying “yes” to God.

I have received compassion and care from my congregation beyond words. My mother and sister passed away, and my son was diagnosed with an auto-immune disease. As the church and staff grew, the love and compassion made me weep as I wrote this—the congregation’s willingness to stand, pray, and walk with us as friends was a gift. A spirit of curiosity has become a part of the culture of Legacy Church. There is freedom to explore and listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying. Curiosity has revolutionized our Life Groups, as noted in one of the interviews. We are okay with trying something new, seeing if it works, and learning if something fails. Wonder, compassion, and curiosity have been the most significant gifts activated in the congregation. I have no doubt that with a little more equipping (LEAD), this will overflow outside of the church as much as it overflows inside the church.

I desire to see people make courageous decisions and help them grow up in their faith. In my own journey of discovery, I recognize that I am a marketplace leader in my influence and relational reach zone. From hosting masterminds for executives and entrepreneurs, executive coaching, and working with athletes and the Armed Forces, there are unique opportunities to make Jesus known.

My desire, and the catalyst for this project and research, is to see marketplace leaders (the people of God) in all the chaos and uncertainty of the day, discover that their lives are for thriving, not just surviving, and in that awareness, impact the world for Christ. The marketplace leader’s role in seeing the Great Commission fulfilled is a journey, a work in progress, and as each part does its work, the Kingdom grows.

Concluding Thoughts

My project revealed that Legacy members love Legacy—their pastors, their friendships, worship, and their Life Groups. Legacy Church began as a place to make a marketplace impact; we have, as born out in the data, become a safe and loving place for people to find respite and relationships. We are a Body of Christ with depth and connection. How can we use this sense of belonging to move outward as agents of the Great Commission? Legacy is not failing, but we are at the organizational stage to re-enliven our original mission—marketplace influence. With God’s help, this is the task ahead of us: to love one another and make disciples of all the world.

Appendix A

LEAD: Living in 5D: The 5Ds of Discipleship

Discipleship is foundational to our Christian faith's nurturing, growth, and development. Remember, discipleship is not an event to be checked off our list but rather a genuine and sometimes bumpy journey.

This is not a textbook, but a guide that will lead you through a process intended to live more fully and mature.

This is also a strategic tool for anyone serious about making Jesus' last command of making disciples their first priority.

This guide will equip you to grow deep roots in your faith and begin to live more powerfully, both personally in your walk with God and in your relationships, both personally and professionally.

As a Life Group leader, you are in a unique position to help others become comfortable to participate in the Great Commission through incarnational living.

The Journey of Discipleship

When you dedicated your life to make Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior, you joined a new family—the family of God. We understand that salvation through Jesus Christ is a completely free gift; we have to believe in Him, confess with our mouth that He is Lord, and we will be saved.

However, that is just the beginning; our Christian life does not stop here. God has called us to move on to become disciples. A disciple is simply someone who believes and

becomes a Christ follower in all aspects of life. Spending time with Jesus and coming to know and love Him will be the most incredible journey you have ever known.

Discipleship was really best modeled by Jesus as He taught, trained, and did life with His disciples. To this day, as Christ followers, we still become more like Him as we spend time with Him and other believers. True discipleship begins with relationship.

We had you in mind when we wrote this small book that you are holding in your hands. Our prayer is that, in these brief moments we get to spend together working through this discipleship course, you would grow in your faith exponentially. You will be transformed as you take these practical steps in knowing Him and growing up in your faith.

We also want to equip you with this practical tool to help you guide your friends and family through the simple but powerful process of becoming Christ followers. We believe in the Great Commission. As leaders, you are uniquely positioned to influence and impact others and will have opportunities to share your faith. This guide will help you understand how to do that with confidence.

No matter where you are in the lifelong journey as a disciple in the faith, take someone with you. By leading others to Christ, we spread the good news of God's grace throughout our region, one relationship at a time.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you dig deeper into your faith and grow as a disciple. Each person who has made a decision to follow Jesus should go through this

guide with a coach or mentor. There isn't any special training to be a coach or mentor; you just need to have already started your faith journey with Jesus Christ.

Commitment

Both the coach and disciple need to make a four-week commitment to meet together and discuss the scripture passages and the Active Follower Action Steps.

- Week 1: Discover—Your life speaks
- Week 2: Decision—Your before and after story
- Week 3: Delight—Your everyday kind of love
- Week 4: Devotion—Your personal pursuit
- Week 5: Destiny—Your blueprint for living

Tips

- Be sure to exchange telephone and email information so you can stay in touch over the next four weeks.
- Before you meet each week, read through the chapter and make some progress on the Active Follower Action Steps.
- Write down any questions you may have about what you read and talk about them with your coach.

This guide is designed to be used as part of the Growth Track: LEAD and done in a Life Group setting. This is the ideal place for you to explore these questions and the call of the Great Commission with vulnerability, authenticity, and confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit to grow you in maturity in Christ.

Action

Set up a day and time to meet each week:

Day: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Coach's Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Purchase a Bible if you don't already have one. The scriptures quoted in this guide are from the New Living Translation (NLT). This is a good, easy-to-understand version of the Bible.

Before We Begin

Working through the 5Ds of Discipleship is a two-level journey. First, as you personally grow in your walk with God, and second, as a tool to equip you to live out the Great Commission and share your faith as a marketplace leader.

There are unique challenges for marketplace leaders when it comes to sharing their faith—work culture, preferred practices, and acceptable conversation topics in the workplace, as well as reputation risk whenever we choose to be vulnerable.

The key to LEAD and doing the 5Ds of Discipleship in Life Group is to provide a safe and comfortable setting to dig deeper, be vulnerable, and grow personally while

simultaneously equipping you to share your faith in the workplace through incarnational living. St. Francis of Assisi is often credited with the quote: “Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.” The way we live speaks. Our lives speak to others. They are watching, wondering, and maybe will ask questions. Living well and being equipped to enter into discovery and discipleship conversations is a call on the life of a disciple.

Incarnational living is embodying the love of Christ in all we do, in the relationships we encounter, and the conversations we have. While you have experienced this in church settings, the goal of this guide is for you to be comfortable in having a conversation of discovery and discipleship with colleagues, peers, and others outside of regular church activities.

Defining Moments

We all have them. Those moments we are faced with a choice: how we act in this moment is a game changer. Do we speak up, step up, engage, or do we stay silent, still, and observe?

As we begin this journey, take some time to explore the defining moments in your life.

I, Pastor Eric, remember one that impacted how I lived out the Great Commission moving forward for the rest of my life. The choice to live deeply rooted in Christ, to act with an eternal perspective, to engage in a courageous conversation—all shaped my view of discipleship and my work with marketplace leaders.

The day was picture perfect, like something on the cover of a swanky travel magazine. We had a clear blue sky, soft sugar-white sand beach, crystal-clear ocean, and no one in sight as far as the eye could see. We had found the perfect place to rest, relax, and connect with our new friends. The plan was to go to the beach to hang out for the afternoon after two days of luncheon speeches and awards dinners. But unbeknownst to us, the utopia-like atmosphere would change ten minutes after entering the water. Life would never be the same for any of us.

Bob, the VP of marketing for a Fortune 5 company, was tall, an intimidating six feet four inches, slightly overweight, and a former pack-a-day smoker. The gray-streaked, dark, curly hair that came to rest over a deeply lined face and piercing brown eyes almost joined together at his very pointy nose. Bob looked more than forty-five years old. Corporate sales are a stressful business.

The crystal-clear ocean was warm like a freshly drawn bath, perfect for snorkeling without a wetsuit. The wives were content to bask in the warm sun and gentle breeze on the quiet beach, but Bob and I had other plans. We dove in to get close to the colorful Hawaiian reef and experience the beautiful sea life.

We had gone little more than fifty yards when Bob let me know he was winded and needed to head back to shore. Swim as we might, the invisible tentacle-like undertow dragged us back to sea. I was positive he regretted not wearing flippers or floatation devices. I was getting tired.

It is moments like these that cause you to wonder about your purpose in life. They say it is at these times that your life flashes before your eyes. My mind quickly raced while struggling against the undertow. I had been married for only fourteen months. We

were young and in love, on fire for God, and full of faith and hope. Melissa and I had talked about the goodness of God that very day. I was working for the company for just over a year and had achieved the rank of number one Marketing Representative for Sales in the entire country. The Lord had made a name for Himself in bringing great success to our young lives. My wife and I often talked about the days ahead, our ministry, family, and travel. My mind played the videotapes of the great life I had enjoyed up until now; eternity was at stake. Bob did not know Christ as his Savior, so it was an easy decision in my mind.

I popped my head above this now watery death trap to find Bob vainly attempting to tread water; things quickly worsened. After ten minutes of swimming, we were farther from the shore. I tapped Bob on the shoulder and told him to put my flippers on. Having been an athlete all my life, I was in good shape. He was grateful despite struggling to put his feet in them. Thank goodness we wore the same size.

We started for shore again, and this time it seemed like we were making some progress. Bob slowed down within five minutes when fatigue set in, and my legs and lungs burned like they would after a five-mile run.

Bob resurfaced after a few more sluggish kicks; he seemed to turn to one side like a goldfish giving its last effort in the fishbowl. He told me in between wheezes, "I am all done; I need to try and float for a minute." We both knew what that meant. Being forty yards from shore, this man was essentially saying, "I will die; let me go."

I knew this was a defining moment in my life and that the true meaning of sacrifice was here before me. I told Bob, "Stick your legs out straight stiff like a board and move your arms; I will swim for both of us." Putting my face in the water, I again

began to plod on. I prayed for strength not for me but for Bob to get to shore, resigning myself that his life was more important than mine. I gave Bob my final push past the breakers. The undertow quickly sucked me back into the quiet ocean depths.

I thanked the Lord for the privilege to serve Him in this way, closed my eyes, relaxed, smiled, and peace surrounded me. Death no longer scared me; its power was broken. In an instant, a wave grabbed me and threw me onshore. It was a miracle moment, and I was in awe. Without the strength to move an inch, I saw Bob lying on the sand like a wet piece of driftwood, completely exhausted. Sometime after returning from Maui, we talked about this harrowing experience. It was then that I had a chance to share with Bob why I gave up on me and not on him: the love of God.

Bob died about six years later. At the funeral, his family thanked me for giving them six more years with him. I will never forget that day in April 1991 when I discovered that love conquered the sting of death. As scripture says, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

This moment shaped my willingness to step out and act and speak in faith with a profound sense of trust in God protecting and equipping me. As a pastor, it is often assumed that the choice isn’t hard.

As a marketplace leader, I understand the risk involved in speaking up about our faith and the drive to do it right. Taking on the role of discipling another or having discipleship conversations has risk and no guarantee of positive outcomes for your efforts. As leaders, we are used to calculated risk, investment with a return, and yet the Great Commission calls us to go and make disciples everywhere. This means at work, in

our conversations, by our actions, by our willingness to engage in courageous conversations with those who have yet to make a decision for Christ.

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!” But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, “Lord, who has believed our message?” (Rom 10:14–16, NLT).

One leader I work with, Jay, shared a painful defining moment for him that did not go so well. He had an opportunity at work to discuss his faith with a colleague. He backed away, feeling ill-equipped with what to say or how to proceed. That is common for many who call Christ as Savior but don’t have the skill set or heart set to have courageous conversations. This guide will change that.

Not only will you grow deeper in your own walk with God, you will learn the skills to have conversations as well as the ability to work through the awkwardness and uncomfortable feelings that can accompany them.

As you look at your defining moment—the courageous ones and the ones that you shied away from, be gracious with yourself.

We all have tough moments where the risk felt to great—but take courage. It is in identifying them and assessing the motive behind our decisions that open the door to explore a different choice the next time.

Questions to Consider

- What was a defining moment for you when you chose to share Christ in word or deed outside regular church activities? How did it feel?

Celebrate your courage and the way God used you.

- What was a defining moment when you realized you had shied away from sharing your faith in a workplace situation? How did you feel?
- Be gracious with yourself and trust that God is working in their lives and will provide you other opportunities. Share your stories with others in your Life Group.
- Determine in your mind and heart to move forward in faith, both to grow as a disciple and to engage in sharing your faith with others.

As an ACTIVE FOLLOWER of Christ, you will begin to make choices that reflect the love of God *in* you and expressed *through* you. After each of the 5Ds, there will be some Active Follower Action Steps to help you actively apply all you are learning.

#1 Discover

Discover is where we first encounter Christ. Prior to conversion, we discover the God who created us and loves us. Often, this is limited to church activities and Sunday services. For marketplace leaders to truly live out the Great Commission, you must grow in being comfortable with having courageous conversations with your friends and colleagues outside of the church. These are the times when your engagement helps others DISCOVER Christ.

Equipping you to have curiosity-driven conversations and impact others through incarnational living will help you engage in the discovery phase when questions about God and faith arise during their daily life. Becoming a disciple of Christ begins with discovery of who He is and the centrality of His life, death, and resurrection.

Tell Your Conversion Story

- When did you first begin to ask questions about God?
- Who did you talk to? What conversations helped you understand God's love for you?

Engaging with Others as They Discover Christ

Here are a few tips to help coach courageous conversations.

1. Ask the right questions. The goal is discussion—not a right answer. The discussion questions are designed to have multiple “right” application answers. Open questions ensure personal growth!
2. Don't be afraid of silence—let people think. If they are too quick with the answers, then maybe the question didn't really need to be asked.
3. Follow the leader (the Holy Spirit). Sometimes a discussion can take a turn and go somewhere else. It's your job to decide if it's a Spirit-led moment or if you need to get back on track. At times, this can be a way of really getting to the core of what God is doing in someone's life while, at other times, it can just be a comfortable topic, a pet peeve, or soap box, etc.
4. Watch for the quiet ones—they have a lot to give but may require encouragement on your part. You may need to be creative in getting everyone involved. It may be good to ask everyone to share something in kind of a go-around-the-room fashion, but maybe it would be good to just directly ask someone what their thoughts are. For instance, “Amber, I'd love to hear what you are thinking...”
5. Help the wordy! Some people just feel obligated to answer every question themselves, and they feel like everyone wants or needs to hear how they are seeing

things. One way to help them out is to direct a question to a certain person or area of the room before you even ask it, like “Okay, for this next one I’d like to hear from Joe or someone in that corner over there.”

6. Affirm the sharers without favoritism. Always thank people for sharing but be cautious of showing too much appreciation for any one person as this could put others off from sharing or make people who already shared feel like their sharing wasn’t up to par.

7. Expect change in people. When you view people as growing in the Lord and not stuck in their issues, then God can really use your empowering to help people see who they could be. Jesus was such a great model of this. So be cautious not to “freeze-frame” people where they are at but, instead, believe them into who they could become. We as leaders need to keep this in front of us.

8. Be careful not to preach or teach. This is a small group for a reason and the reason is for people to think and apply truths to their own lives in a comfortable and real setting.

9. Defer when necessary. Sometimes deep issues can come to the surface during a small group discussion. The small group is normally not the place for in-depth personal ministry by the group. So, when necessary, you may need to assure someone that God has a plan and say something like, “I can see that God is really moving in your heart. Let’s talk about this later so we can make sure you are getting the support you need for God to help you work through this.”

10. Model vulnerability. If you share your “stuff,” people will be more open to sharing theirs.

Our mission is to lead people in a growing relationship with Jesus, helping them find their purpose in Him. The discussion environments created by small group leaders are a primary place that can happen!

Questions to Consider and Discuss

- Have you considered the impact you can have in the marketplace as a disciple of Christ?
- What fears and worries do you have about engaging in conversations about your faith?
- What do you need to increase your confidence in answering questions about your faith or describing your life in Christ?

Active Follower Action Steps

Talk to God (Prayer)

As you talk to God this week, ask Him to give you the eyes to see opportunities to engage in courageous conversations.

Ask Him to give you the confidence to engage in the conversations that would be a natural place to share your faith.

Hear God Speak (Bible Reading)

Monday: Colossians 2:7

Tuesday: Matthew 28:19

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 3:7

Thursday: John 4:35

Friday: Philippians 4:13

Spend Time with Others

Share some of your courageous conversations with your coach. When you meet with your coach this week, make sure you talk about the feelings of fear, confidence, faith, or the movement of the Holy Spirit in the moments of opportunity.

Do What God Says

Write down two to three practical ways you can seek out opportunities to live out the love of Christ in the marketplace in word and deed.

#2 Decision

You are not bound by your past, but now you live as a son or daughter of God the Father.

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

— Matthew 5:13–16 (NLT)

Your decision to follow Jesus Christ and declare Him as your Lord and Savior is an incredible change in your life. You now have direct access to God through your prayers and live under the inheritance of God’s Kingdom.

This means you will have the ability to change the world around you with God’s love working through you.

In the scripture above, Jesus tells us that we are the salt and light of the earth. Life is no longer bland and hopeless. We have been given the ability to be environmental changes. We can do this by bringing God's perspective to everyday situations. Both salt and light bring change. Salt preserves food and enhances the taste, and light removes darkness and guides those who are in darkness. What a great picture of how God's love changes the world around us! His love preserves and enhances lives. His love removes darkness and guides those who are lost to Him. We are God's salt and light-bearers on Earth.

Just as you would decide to put salt on your food or turn on a light in a room, we also need to decide to spread both salt and light to those around us. Salt can be withheld and light can remain unlit. How we live out our decision to follow Jesus determines who will experience God's salt and light.

It had only been a week since I (Eric) had prayed the prayer that changed everything, and now the first test came with the ring of the doorbell. I opened the door and there was my friend Mike smiling with our standard pre-party serum. He said, "Look what I have; this stuff is wicked." My usual response would have been one of celebration, but things were different now. Mike was a faithful friend, but he had no idea how true his statement was. I shared the better news of my decision to say "yes" to the gift of salvation and become a Christ-follower. Mike was stunned and disappointed at my "good news;" maybe more like blinded by the light. However, in the months that followed, Mike got a chance to see the reality of my faith and personally made the decision to follow Christ himself. Mike is in heaven now, and I know he was impacted by the light, salt, and power of my decision to be a Christ-follower.

Salt and light bring permanent change to an environment. Once something has been salted, the flavor has changed. Even if you turn a light off, what was revealed still remains. As salt and light, you are also a permanent change to your relationships and the world around you!

This week think about who could experience God's love by you being both salt and light.

Active Follower Action Steps

Talk to God (Prayer)

As you talk to God this week, ask Him to bring to mind those to whom you can demonstrate His love to. As each of these people comes to mind, pray for them by name and ask God to show favor and blessing to them.

Hear God Speak (Bible Reading)

Monday: Acts 2
Tuesday: Philippians 1:6
Wednesday: 1 Peter 1:2–8
Thursday: 2 Corinthians 12:9
Friday: John 3:16

Spend Time with Others

Share some of your highlights and lowlights of the week with your coach. When you meet with your coach this week, make sure you talk about what you feel has already changed in your life since your decision to follow Jesus. Pray with your coach that those you both know will experience the same kind of change.

Do What God Says

Write down two to three practical ways you can be God's salt and light bearer to those around you this week. What are some small acts of generosity or simple acts of love you could do? Take a bold step and try some of these out!

#3 Delight

You no longer have to live under the pressure of performance. Now you live for the pleasure of God.

²⁵“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, ²⁹yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³²These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

— Matthew 6:25–34 (NLT)

Have you ever worked really hard to get something you wanted? Maybe it was a promotion at work, a good grade in a class, or maybe an item you wanted to purchase. There is something really satisfying about reaching a goal! Most of the time when we want something, it has to be earned; it involves hard work, and it is possible we might not attain our goal. That’s a lot of pressure!

God’s Kingdom doesn’t work like that at all. There isn’t anything we need to do to gain God’s approval. Before Jesus was born, people who wanted God’s favor and

forgiveness had to perform certain rituals or religious acts to earn it, but when Jesus paid the debt for sin on the cross, He completed all the requirements of the Law in the Old Testament and released us from it.

When Jesus was talking to the crowd in the passage above, He spoke to the common pressures we all feel. Although there are many different things we may need in our lives, we all need food, shelter, and clothes. We want to provide for our families and take care of those we love. For most of us, there are two ways we react to these pressures: we perform or we worry. If we have the means to meet our needs, we perform and use our natural talents and abilities to get the job done. If we don't have a way to provide for these basic needs, we worry.

Several years ago, a friend was in a difficult circumstance and shared this story: I had moved my family across the country but was unable to sell my old house, even after several months of having it on the market. I was stressed. I had a rent payment and a mortgage payment. We were burning through our savings to keep everything paid on time. I was wracking my brain trying to figure out how I could sell my home. I was considering every opportunity to get this weight off of my back.

Finally, I was at the end of coming up with my own solutions. I didn't know what else to do. One evening I found myself at a worship event with a popular musician. As good as the worship was, I found it difficult to worship God myself. I was just overwhelmed with worry. I raised my hands, but my mind was focused on my problems. It was in that moment I felt the Lord speak to me. He said, "My job is to sell your house. Your job is to worship me." I immediately obeyed. I turned my mind away from my problems and I focused on God. It was a relief to fully worship God.

The next day, my wife and I received a call that there was a purchase offer on our home. For me, that experience made Jesus' instruction in verse 33 come alive. "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need."

Jesus writes a prescription for worry or performance in the passage above: seek Him. Now, it isn't about what we do—it is about who we are.

This week, try God's prescription for worry or performance. Do your job, take care of your family and other responsibilities, but start the day by seeking God. As we find our delight in our Heavenly Father, He will become more known to us and we will see His true and good nature revealed in how He cares for us.

Active Follower Action Steps

Talk to God (Prayer)

Take a practical step in delighting yourself in the Lord and let the theme of your prayers this week be centered on seeking God. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you in new and fresh ways.

Hear God Speak (Bible Reading)

Monday: Psalm 37:4

Tuesday: John 15:4–5

Wednesday: Acts 17:28

Thursday: Isaiah 55:9

Friday: Philippians 4:19

Spend Time with Others

Talk with your coach about what has been on your mind the most this week. Share with your coach a couple of examples of what you feel you work the hardest at or what you worry the most about. Spend some time together in prayer over those areas of your life.

Do What God Says

Before you go to bed at night and when you wake up in the morning, give a few moments to God in prayer. During this time, pray over the things that give you the most concern.

#4 Devotion

God Has Good Things for You and You Can't Earn Them

⁷“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! ¹¹So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

— Matthew 7:7–11 (NLT)

Considering this portion of scripture in Matthew, we see Jesus encouraging His audience to actively pursue the Father in prayer by asking, seeking, and knocking. There is no set rule about the order in which we do these things; we just need to respond to the offer. God has good things for you, and you can't earn them. Our Heavenly Father is a promise keeper and can be trusted to provide good things, based solely on His merits.

David, in the Old Testament, was appointed king by God's choosing and not because of any man's succession plan. The Bible describes him as a man after God's heart. David's life was highlighted by his “attitude of gratitude” toward God and his willingness to draw near to God despite the challenges he faced.

As we grow up in our faith as Christ-followers, there will be times we will struggle to rest in God's grace. Simply put, all the amazing blessings that we have access to come as a result of receiving the gift of salvation. This amazing invitation that you have responded to doesn't end with an initial prayer. There is more!

Active Follower Action Steps

Talk to God (Prayer)

Ask. Seek. Knock. This week during your daily prayer time, ask God your Heavenly Father for good gifts in your life. Seek Him and ask that your desires become just like His desires for your life. Keep knocking. Be persistent each day with your requests.

Hear God Speak (Bible Reading)

Monday: Romans 12:1

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 10:31

Wednesday: 1 Kings 17:7-6

Thursday: Luke 11:1-4

Friday: Psalm 19:7

Spend Time with Others

Have your coach share with you a few ways they have seen God provide in his or her life. Share with your coach what you would like God to do in your life that you cannot earn.

Do What God Says

This week, spend time in worship and prayer by increasing your alone time with God by ten minutes. This is a chance to focus on being someone after God's heart.

Purchase or download a worship album, read God’s word, and spend time in prayer, too.
Rest in His grace, forgiveness, and love.

#5 Destiny

God’s lifelong plan for me is to build on a solid foundation.

²⁴“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

— Matthew 7:24–29 (NLT)

The problem with not following the instructions (building plans) is that the leftover parts go to something. But rest assured that when you follow heaven’s instructions, there are no leftover pieces. The wise and foolish builders both heard the instructions. The foolish builder chose to ignore them. We need to be wise builders. God’s lifelong plan for you is to build on a solid foundation.

God has a plan for your life that is greater than you have ever been able to imagine. One of the most beautiful aspects of the Christian life is God-designed to be bright and full of adventure. As you grow in your faith, you will find that the Bible is filled with instructions, or blueprints, for our life. Jesus Himself taught on many of these principles, and as a Christ-follower, you have the benefit of the Holy Spirit to speak and guide you each day. The role of the Holy Spirit is to provide peace, wisdom, and joy for the journey.

Scripture tells us that, before we were formed in our mother's womb, God knew us (Jer 1:5). We are also told that God has an incredible plan for our lives.

For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope (Jer 29:11, NLT).

Following God's instructions will get us where He has called us to go. A building on the bedrock, like the wise person, means we are not only listening to God but also doing what He says.

This week, use the reading plan to discover some of the blueprints for your life.

Active Follower Action Steps

Talk to God (Prayer)

Each day this week, recite this prayer to God: "Father, I declare that my desires come in line with your instructions and plans for my life. I set my heart to build on the solid foundation of your promises. Like the wise builder, I will not fear the rain and challenges of my life. I trust your intentions toward my destiny, in Jesus' name. Amen."

Hear God Speak (Bible Reading)

Monday: Jeremiah 29:11

Tuesday: Ephesians 1

Wednesday: Hebrews 12:1–5

Thursday: John 5

Friday: 1 Peter 2:9–10

Spend Time with Others

As you meet with your coach this week, spend time reflecting on the past four weeks of discovery. What has been the most significant for you? Be sure to bring any questions you may have about this week's scripture reading to discuss with your coach.

Do What God Says

Make an action plan. Based on what you read in the Bible this week, what are two of God's instructions you want to apply to your life right away?

Final Suggested Active Follower Action Steps

Congratulations on finishing the **5Ds of Discipleship**. Before you end your final meeting with your coach, talk through how you would like to continue being an Active Follower of Jesus. Below are some suggested final Action Steps for you to take:

Talk to God (Prayer)

Spend time daily with God in prayer. Set a time in your schedule for this personal time with Him.

Hear God Speak (Bible Reading)

Go to YouVersion.com or download the YouVersion Bible app and choose a reading plan for your next step in hearing God speak.

Spend Time with Others

Consider joining a small group. Ask your coach how to get connected to a small community of Christ-followers.

Do What God Says

Make a daily commitment to take the next step in doing what God says. Ask yourself, "What is God asking me to do today?"

Active Follower Next Steps

Each one of the next steps below will help you discover a new level in your spiritual discipleship journey.

Water Baptism

“I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt 3:11, NLT).

Life Group

“And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near” (Heb 10:25, NLT).

Serve

“In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly” (Rom 12:6–8, NLT).

Membership

“They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God

and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47, NLT).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit Class

“John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:5, 8, NLT).

Appendix B

EMAIL #1: Sent 09.25.20

Subject: Special Request

Hello,

I hope you've each had a good week!

Pastor Eric asked me to send you this video where he has a special request for you. Once you've watched the video please reply to this email and let me know whether you are willing to help him out with this.

Watch Pastor Eric's Message: <https://vimeo.com/461921980/a0c9ecc2a9>

Thank you and have a great weekend!

We're building legacy together,

Lauren Wood // Executive Ministry Director
250 Commerce Circle // New Britain, CT 06051
P 860.404.6465 // **W** legacychurchct.org

Appendix C

EMAIL #2: Sent 10.09.20

Subject: Pastor Eric's School Project Training

Hi Team,

Thank you so much for saying yes to Pastor Eric's request for help with his school project! Here are the details for the training meeting.

- Date: Saturday, October 17
- Time: 8:30am–12:30pm
- Location: Courtyard Hartford/Farmington, 1583 SE Road, Farmington, CT 06032
- Coffee and light snacks will be provided in the morning and lunch will be brought in.

We will be ordering boxed lunches from Panera so please let me know by Wednesday, October 14, of your choice of a sandwich, salad, or half and half (see the attached menu for sandwich and salad options). Please also let me know your choice of a side (chips, bread, or an apple) and dessert (candy cookie, chocolate chipper cookie, oatmeal raisin with berries cookie, or lemon drop cookie).

Thanks again and have a great weekend!

We're building legacy together,

Lauren Wood // Executive Ministry Director
250 Commerce Circle // New Britain, CT 06051
P 860.404.6465 // W legacychurchct.org

Appendix D

EMAIL #3: Sent 10.20.20

Subject: Interview Details

Hi All,

Thank you again for carving out the time to meet on Saturday and for being willing to take more time to help with these interviews. I hope you all had as much fun as I had on Saturday!

Here are the details for the interviews:

- Attached are the updated interview documents for both internal and external interviews
- Also attached are copies of just the questions that you can print and hand out to your interviewees. Keep in mind these should not be passed out ahead of time but can be handed out at the beginning of the interview to help them follow the questions.
- The deadline for these interviews is November 1. I know that is coming up fast so if you have any concerns, let me know.
- When sending in your notes and audio recordings, please use the following nomenclature: Interviewer's Last Name, Internal/External, Interview # (e.g. Wood, Internal Interview #1)
- You can text or email me your audio recording and notes or upload them to this Dropbox folder: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/uqjzdirnws1xp/AADw7ajY3-mP6Um9j5SaHmroa?dl=0>. If you have any trouble, don't hesitate to contact me.
- If you need to meet over Zoom and need a room, let me know and I can set that up for you.

If I've missed any details or you have questions, please feel free to reach out at any time. Thank you all again!

We're building legacy together,

Lauren Wood // Executive Ministry Director
250 Commerce Circle // New Britain, CT 06051
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Appendix E

Discovery Interviews Congregation Name: Legacy Church Fall/Winter 2020

Script:

Hello, my name is _____. I am conducting a series of interviews with members and participants affiliated with Legacy Church. Thank you so much for your willingness to meet with me for this interview. This is a project seeking to discern how Legacy Church is investing in and developing leaders of faith for world impact. It is also part of my pastor's (Eric Peoples) Doctor of Ministry project at Western Theological Seminary. Our hope is that this conversation will both help you and Legacy Church better understand how leaders engage a local church and how a local church encourages leaders.

We will spend about 40 minutes together, and I will be taking notes and repeating back what I hear you saying. If, at any point, I have not captured your response fairly, please do not hesitate to correct me. In these interviews, it is really vital that you feel free to express your feelings and ideas openly and honestly. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to know what you think and have experienced. All comments will remain anonymous.

I would be grateful for your verbal consent to record this conversation. (Make sure they say yes/sure before you begin.) I will be recording this interview, and if, at any point, you would like me to stop recording, please let me know, and I will simply take notes on paper.

Person Conducting Interview: _____

Date and Time: _____ AM/PM

Person Interviewed: _____ Gender: Male / Female

Age (estimate by decade): 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Member/Non-Member _____

Total years affiliated with Legacy Church: 0-2 3-5 6-10 11-15 15-20 20+

Total years in Farmington, CT (area): 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31+

Respondent Relationship: Family / Friend / Friendly Stranger

Connection to Legacy Church

1. How did you become a participant with Legacy Church?
 - a. *Follow-up:* Who are your closest connections at Legacy Church?
 - b. What is your current participation at Legacy Church?
 - c. Why do you stay connected at Legacy?
2. Describe this congregation to someone new and tell how they would be loved and nurtured here.
 - a. *Follow Up:* Is there an experience that makes you describe Legacy this way?
3. What tells you that God is present in the ministry of Legacy Church?
4. If you were to leave the congregation for five years, without any contact, what would you expect to see when you returned? What would you hope to see?

Personal Faith and Leadership

5. As a leader at home, work and/or in the community, what gets you out of bed in the morning and what keeps you awake at night?
6. How does your connection with Legacy Church impact your life at home, at work, or in your community (beyond Sunday morning)?
7. How have you have been encouraged in your leadership and service during your time at Legacy Church?
8. If you could ask Legacy Church for one thing to increase your impact at home, work, or in your neighborhood, what would you ask?
9. Last question: Describe the culture of leadership development at Legacy Church in three words.

Glossary

active follower of Christ. The experience of conversion to Christ by repentance and Faith, resulting in justification, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and the intimate, personal relationship with Christ marked by prayer, the wholeness of life, worship of God, and active participation in the Church of God's people.¹

curiosity. A strong desire to know, learn, inquisitive, explore, wonder, amazement, to discover something.²

Great Commandment. The New Testament reference describes the first of two commandments cited by Jesus (Mt 22:35–40, Mk 12:28–34, Lk 10:27a) to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength and to love another as you would love yourself.

Great Commission. From Matthew 28:16–20. The instruction of the resurrected Christ to His disciples to spread the gospel (good news) to all nations and make disciples.

Growth Track. The weekly five-step engagement pathway for Legacy Church is hosted online and in-person.

LEAD. The fifth step in the Legacy Church Growth Track engagement pathway for equipping marketplace leaders.

marketplace. The vocational space or arena for commerce and competition.

marketplace influencer. This person has a sphere of influence in the marketplace, not a management position, but a position that influences an organization's outcome (including but not limited to an administrative role).

marketplace leader. This person has a sphere of influence and a professional leadership role. This could be a chief executive officer or anyone in a management role.

missio Dei. The “mission of God” or the sending of God, a missiological term in understanding the mission of the Church. Our participation in the movement of God's love toward people both in the Church and the world. The understanding of *missio Dei* in this context is related to understanding the vision of one's vocation and daily work of service.

¹ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

² Diana Lea, Jennifer Bradbery, and Albert Sydney Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

vocation. Vocation comes from *vocare*, or calling, and arises from an understanding of both self and world, which gives rise to moments of power when self and purpose become aligned with eternity.³

work. Any human activity “that can and must be recognized as work, in the midst of all the many activities of which man is capable and to which he disposes of by his very nature. Human work as cooperation with God.”⁴

³ John Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice Is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

⁴ Neafsey, *Sacred Voice Is Calling*.

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